

Cambridge Translation Studies Network

Easter 2026 Events

Welcome to our programme for this term!

All events are open to all and free to attend. You can read about us and sign up to our mailing list [here](#).

Thursday 7 May, 5 – 6 pm

Room 142, Raised Faculty Building

Karen Leeder

Rendering Rilke: Rilke's Afterlives in English Translation

It is paradoxical that Rilke, who felt no affinity with English, and indeed despised American culture, has had such a profound and broad reception in various English-speaking countries. This contribution focuses on recent developments, highlighting the often radical conversations that take place within translations and versions of Rilke in the English language. The first section explores the reception in general terms and suggests ways of thinking about the extraordinary uptake over the last two decades. A second section explores concrete examples: especially the dialogical relationship of a number of poets from different English-language traditions (Scottish, English, Australian, American). In close readings from collections over the last two decades, and drawing on interviews and essays, it demonstrates how Rilke is used by contemporary poets to treat some contemporary issues quite alien to Rilke's own thinking, thus testing the limits of authority and kinship. A Conclusion examines how far contemporary poetry has worked its way out from under the shadow of Rilke's achievement and asks what this reception tells us about the importance of Rilke for posterity and how his afterlife is mediated through the English language.

Karen Leeder is a writer, translator and Schwarz-Taylor Chair of German Language and Literature at the University of Oxford. She teaches and publishes especially on modern and contemporary poetry. She is currently Einstein Visiting Fellow in Berlin working on the project "AfterWords". She was editor of the *Cambridge Companion to Rainer Maria Rilke* (with Robert Vilain) in 2015 and is preparing the volume *After Rilke* for 2026. She also translates German-language poetry, most recently Durs Grünbein, *Psyche Running: Selected Poems 2005-2022* (Seagull, 2024), winner of the Griffin Prize 2025; some of her Rilke translations will appear in Edmund de Waal, *How to Begin* (Chatto and FSG 2026).

Two talks by **Rita Kothari**:

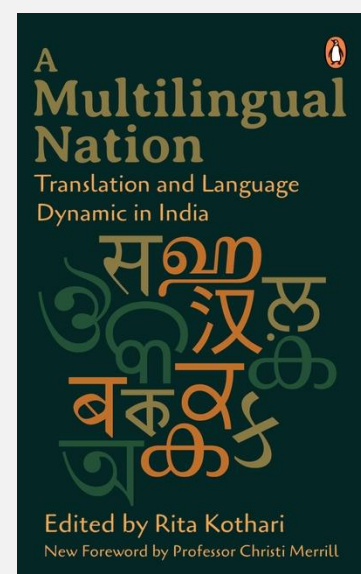
Talk 1:

Wednesday 20 May, 5 – 6 pm

Room SG2, Alison Richard Building

A Multilingual Nation: Language and Translation Dynamics in India

The phrase "multilingual nation" sounds like an oxymoron. Nations are very often based on one language, at least the European principle shows us that. Nations also have a national language. What is to have a nation without a national language? My talk will show how India's multilingualism is not simply a presence of multiplicity of languages, but it is a constitutive principle in every language. In that sense, the many languages are not discrete and bounded but intertwine in intimate and even uneasy ways. Languages in India jostle with each other, rub shoulders with each other and also become echoes and memories. Through both textual and everyday examples, the talk will take the reader through situations that demonstrate the quotidian nature of linguistic interactions. It will complicate the idea of 'source' in the context of translation. Arguing that a 'source' is not monolingual and sedentary, this talk hopes to demonstrate that we need to revise our understanding of source and target text in the Indian context.



Talk 2:

Wednesday 27 May, 5 – 6 pm

Room SG2, Alison Richard Building

Antar: The Afterlives of Gandhi's Autobiography

My talk traces Gandhi's relationship with the form of the autobiography and shows the unease surrounding the idea of telling your own story. What was Gandhi doing to mitigate this unease? I argue that the autobiography's relationship with Gandhi's interiority needs attention. Gandhi uses the word *antaryami* for the driving force that makes him write what he writes, but also one that structures the spiritual in the political realm. I complicate the word *antar* by looking at it both as an interiority and also the

suffix of names for translation in India. It is in examining the untranslatibility of the *antar* that I study the *antar* of translation by moving in and out of several languages and their translations of the autobiography.

Rita Kothari is one of India's leading multilingual literary theorists, scholar and translator. Her monographs and edited volumes have been noted for shifting discourses on communities, identity, language politics, border studies and most importantly, translation. She has been the recipient of several awards and fellowships in India and overseas. Her noteworthy works include *The Burden of Refuge* and *Unbordered Memories* – based on Sindh region and Sindhi language. Her study *Translating India* and the edited volume *Chutnefying English* as well as *A Multilingual Nation* have made a significant mark. Kothari is the translator of *Angaliyat: The Stepchild* (the first Dalit novel in Gujarat and India at large). She is a rare scholar who moves between multiple under-represented languages and engages deeply with India's multilingual diversity. Kothari is a Professor in English at Ashoka University where she also co-directs the Ashoka Centre for Translation. Kothari is currently curating (along with Abhijit Kothari) *The Big Book of Gujarati Literature* and her most recent translation is *Kahe Latif* – a Hindi re-telling of Shah Abdul Latif's sufi poems *Shah Jo Risalo*.