

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26A – Modern Languages		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Translating, Printing, Singing: Creative Engagement with the German Reformation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> Jan 2015–July 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Henrike Lähnemann	Professor of Medieval German Literature & Linguistics	Jan 2015–Present
Lyndal Roper	Regius Professor of History	Oct 2002–Present
Edmund Wareham	Post-Doc in Modern Languages Early Career Fellow in History	Oct 2016–Sept 2019 Oct 2019–Present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Jan 2016–July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> <p>Research in the Faculties of Medieval and Modern Languages and History on translating, printing, acting and singing the Reformation changed the perception of musicians, religious groups, and print practitioners in Britain and Germany. This empowered them to communicate their own responses to the Reformation to concert audiences, congregations and community groups. Critical engagement with the Reformation from a medievalist, Germanist, and women's studies perspective highlighted it as a creative, ongoing process. This influenced printing practice, artistic engagement, dramatic performances, exhibitions and forms of protest, and resulted in concerts, paintings, recitals, plays, and workshops. It challenged dominant narratives in a creative way and added a distinctive performance angle to events surrounding the 500th anniversary of the German Reformation.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>For the quincentenary of the German Reformation (2017), Henrike Lähnemann (Medieval and Modern Languages) joined forces with Lyndal Roper (History) and Edmund Wareham (Medieval and Modern Languages/History) to make their common interest in female experience, the change in communication structure, visual expression, material culture, and performance more visible via three main research strands:</p> <p><b>a) Printing: Reformation as Communication Revolution</b></p> <p>The team collaborated with colleagues and libraries across the university, highlighting the significance of Reformation pamphlets for the early modern print revolution. Lähnemann launched the Taylor Reformation Editions [<a href="https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/">https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/</a>], which combine new critical editions, English translations, and the 'material turn' in Modern Languages Studies, situating texts in a cultural history of publishing, translating and literature. By tracing the University of Oxford holdings back to the sixteenth-century printing presses, she demonstrated how specific early modern publishers shaped the success of the Reformation movement. Linking observations on Taylorian copies with economic data from Dondi's 15Cbooktrade project (University of Oxford) and exploring the propaganda potential of Reformation illustrations and woodcuts, she provided new evidence on printers' roles as agents of change and the business side of the book market [R1, R2]; wide distribution of these publications during the quincentenary was funded by a German Foreign Ministry grant. This innovative approach has led to collaboration with Reformation Studies centres in Germany and in the USA, (e.g. a Reformation Collection Research Fellowship at the Pitts Theology Library for Wareham to work on a joint publication for the Taylor Editions series.)</p>		

**b) Translating: The Women's Reformation**

Lähneemann approaches the Reformation through the experience and writing of late medieval women and has published extensively on how their fifteenth-century reform movement interacted with the Reformation. As editor of 'the nuns' network' [R3], Lähneemann is in the process of publishing the largest corpus of medieval letter-writing, the exchanges of nuns from Northern Germany 1460–1555 (1,800 letters), which showcase their response to the Reformation and their activity as translators of theological knowledge into the vernacular; as post-doc in the UoA, Wareham contributed a chapter to the resulting volume [R3]. Lähneemann's recovering the hidden legacy of female reform behind the Lutheran Reformation [R4], Roper's humanising of Luther [R5], and their shared interest in the socio-economic background of the period in convents and cities work together to diversify understanding of the German Reformation by highlighting the variety of actors and voices debating religious issues. On the basis of this research, Lähneemann, Roper, and Wareham organised a series of linked events in Oxford focused on rediscovering women's agency during the Reformation: an annual 'Early Modern German Culture' seminar (since 2014), a network on 'Cultures of Lutheranism' (2015), a workshop 'Women's Responses to the Reformation' (2016), and the Women in German Studies conference 'Reform and Revolt' (2017).

**c) Singing: Reformation as Vocal and Performative Form of Protest**

In studying the first Protestant hymn-book, Lähneemann explored another aspect of the Reformation's dissemination strategy: making songs available through cheap print copies; through her analysis of the 'little handbook of Christian songs, to be constantly consulted' [R6] (as the title 'Enchiridion' translates) she demonstrated how Luther repurposed strategies of lay-involvement developed in late medieval convents. Thanks to the print medium he was successful in claiming this as a new, Protestant means of giving the people a voice. This in turn influenced the development of English hymn singing [S9.5].

Working together, around the Taylor Institution Library and its early modern German holdings, the team challenged historiographical myths and sparked academic debate on controversial issues such as the negative impact of the Reformation on women, the commercial side of Reformation publishing, and how much the singing movement of the Reformation owes to medieval roots.

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

- R1.** [Scholarly Edition] Henrike Lähneemann (ed): *Martin Luther, Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (2017), (*Treasures of the Tylorian. Series One: Reformation Pamphlets*, ed. by Henrike Lähneemann, vol. 1). ISBN13: 9780995456419  
Open access <https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/editions/sendbrief/> 200 copies and related activities funded by a German Foreign Ministry grant (GBP14,950).
- R2.** [Scholarly Edition] Henrike Lähneemann (ed): *Martin Luther, Sermon von Ablass und Gnade. 95 Thesen* (2019), (*Treasures of the Tylorian. Series One: Reformation Pamphlets*, ed. by Henrike Lähneemann, vol. 2). ISBN: 9780995456426  
Open access <https://editions.mml.ox.ac.uk/editions/ablassgnade5/> and [ablassgnade6/](#)
- R3.** [Scholarly Edition, listed in REF2] Henrike Lähneemann, and Eva Schlottheuber (eds): *Netzwerke der Nonnen* (2016–). PURL: <http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000248/start.htm>  
open access at the HAB Wolfenbüttel  
2016: First letters uploaded and made open access available  
2020: 300 letters of Hs. 15 and 200pp introduction published, chapters by Henrike Lähneemann (Bilingual Writing) & Edmund Wareham (Network theory).  
Grant by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung 1: 2016–2019 (EUR149,000); 2: 2019–2022 (EUR153,000), both Lähneemann (Co-I); two postdoc positions, plus payment for full documentation;  
Monies administered via German institutional partner: Open Access Award and a

grant for IT staff support by the VolkswagenStiftung 2020-2022 (EUR69,500); Grant for Digital Humanities by the Thyssen-Stiftung 2020–2022 (EUR49,550).

- R4.** [Journal Article] Henrike Lähnemann: 'Der Medinger ‚Nonnenkrieg‘ aus der Perspektive der Klosterreform. Geistliche Selbstbehauptung 1479–1554', in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 87 (2016), 91–116. DOI: [10.2143/OGE.87.1.3200541](https://doi.org/10.2143/OGE.87.1.3200541).
- R5.** [Authored Book, listed in REF2] Lyndal Roper: *Martin Luther. Renegade and Prophet* (2016). ISBN: 9781847920041. Award: Gerda Henkel Preis (jury report: 'conceptualises the debate in a radically new way').
- R6.** [Chapter, available on request] Henrike Lähnemann: 'Das Erfurter 'Enchiridion' in der Goslarer Marktkirchen-Bibliothek', in: *Marktkirchen-Bibliothek Goslar. Beiträge zur Erforschung der reformationszeitlichen Sammlung*, ed. by Helmut Liersch (2017), 232–243. ISBN: 9783795430320.

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

'Translating, Printing, Singing. Creative Engagement with the Reformation' succeeded in bringing research-informed contributions to a broader public and benefitted congregations, community groups, and professional artists in Oxford, Holland, and Germany. Starting from Oxford's Taylor Institution's German holdings, through publications, public lectures and workshops the team changed the perception of Germany's sixteenth-century Reformation, from a historic event to a dynamic, creative process, driving change in the here and now. Contemporary resonances became tangible and audible in performances which involved active audience participation; overall, the anniversary events changed the way in which lay-members of congregations as well as professional artists approached historic material. Print practitioners seized the idea of the Reformation as Communication Revolution, visual artists and dramatists were inspired by the new image of Luther, musicians and religious communities translated the message of the singing Reformation as liberating legacy into their own practice.

##### a) Improving the Understanding and Practices of Printers

The new Reformation pamphlet editions **[R3, R4]** worked as a catalyst for engagement with the Lutheran Reformation's material legacy. Print practitioners curious to understand the success formula of the early presses used direct access to primary material located by Lähnemann in Oxford libraries to experiment with recreating historic products. Lähnemann's description of the technical details and errors of Lutheran pamphlets were posted on the Bodleian website as a 'how-to' guide for typesetting, composing, and producing illustrations in the style of 16<sup>th</sup>-century woodcuts. Printers acknowledged they 'were challenged to extend the ambitions of the press technically', prompting new practices like including historic fonts in different languages **[S1.1]**. As a result, the Bodleian Print workshop launched more technically ambitious hands-on events tailored to different audiences like typesetting in historic black-letter type with 50 visitors from Bonn celebrating 70 years of town-twinning **[S1.1]**. Printing as a medium of change became tangible when one mixed Oxford-Bonn group on the day after the Brexit referendum decided to include a pro-European message alongside the first of the '95 Theses' in their typesetting exercise with Lähnemann **[S1.2]**.

##### b) Changing Artistic Practice: Visual and Dramatic Transformation

The materiality and physicality of the Reformation, a key theme in Lähnemann's research, is also present in Roper's biography of Luther. The artist Neel Korteweg responded to this emphasis on the body and painted Luther as complex human being, a 'warning against what might happen when influencers become someone of political importance' **[S2]**. For Oxford, Lähnemann developed a web-based 'Reformation Walking Tour' on the oxfordstories platform **[S3.1]**. On the day of the quincentenary itself, Lähnemann and Roper staged a re-enactment of the iconic publishing of the theses, with Wareham as Luther using a print-sheet typeset on the Bodleian's historic printing press. The format of the broadside and the set-up of the press on-site were based on Lähnemann's research for the Reformation Pamphlet

series [R3, R4]. The film documentation of Luther and the printing press in action was viewed nearly 30,000 times on Cherwell Online's public Facebook page [S3.3]. The collaboration during the actual quincentenary led to a Reformation-period piece *Schwestern unter sich*; the author commented on Roper's influence: 'Your work on the physicality and the role of the women in the Reformation inspired me to write my quincentenary piece in the form of a feminist drama' [S4.1]. In a follow-up workshop, arranged by Lähnemann, the actresses of the drama reflected on how the performance experience had changed their view of the agency of women [S4.2].

### c) Changing perceptions of female agency and musical practice

Exhibitions and performances have rendered this focus on female agency visible and audible. The current Protestant Abbess of Kloster Mariensee observes that the now permanent exhibition (set up in 2017, annual visitors 6,000) on the last Catholic Abbess, based on Lähnemann's research and part of a long-standing collaboration with the convent, 'changed the perception of the role of women in the late Middle Ages for us and our visitors' [S5]. As a result, the convent was recognised in 2017 as significant place for female emancipation ('FrauenOrt Niedersachsen', equivalent to the blue plaque scheme), the first to celebrate a Catholic female figure of the Reformation period.

The Abbess of Kloster Lüne, which houses the letterbooks edited in the 'nuns' network' project by Lähnemann [R5], confirms that 'hearing about how learned and politically and religiously active our predecessors were, is inspiration and obligation for us as a convent; we want to pass on a sense of this dedication to all those who come to us' [S6]. The concert for the 2016 '*kloster mahl anders*' series was based on new insights provided by Lähnemann into the liturgical practise and vernacular singing of the nuns and how Protestant hymn culture developed. The Oxford Bach Soloists (est. 2015) used Lähnemann's research into Reformation hymns and their medieval 'back-story' to develop their concept of liturgically-informed performance in ten shared cantata performances and a 2016 concert tour to North German convents [full list S7], organised by Lähnemann: 'Working with Lähnemann opened up the historic depth and European dimension of the music we make', said the group's Artistic Director [S8].

### d) Singing as an Expression of Protestant Identity but also a Form of Protest

Lähnemann's presentation of the legacy of the Reformation as a singing movement is particularly significant for congregations across the Protestant spectrum (Methodists, United Reformed and Anglican congregations). A member of the Kidlington Methodist Congregation spoke for many participants in the workshops and study days (ecumenical events, cantata introductions, overall ca. 1,200 participants [S7.1–2]) voicing the congregation's 'delighted surprise' on discovering the deep roots of their tradition of hymn singing [S7.1a]. Similar responses sprang from seeing (and hearing) the Reformation tradition of Psalm singing continued in today's hymns, documented e.g. in reflections by the Secretary of St Columba's URC, Oxford, who stressed that 'hymnody is no respecter of human barriers; a good piece will travel far beyond the confines of its author's confessional or national background – as we saw this morning when German and British people from Protestant and Roman Catholic backgrounds shared in singing familiar hymns' [S9.2a].

A particularly poignant statement came from a Hong Kong Sociology Professor. After attending a lecture by Lähnemann [S9.3], he took the pamphlets and the message of the power of Singing the Reformation back to his Protestant church. This resonated with his congregation who participated in the 2019 Hong Kong protests while singing hymns. Reflecting on the response Lähnemann's presentation about singing as a form of protest inspired in his congregation [S9.3] he observes: 'Reformation should not be viewed as something of the past history of Europe, it is still relevant and inspires the world like contemporary Hong Kong.' [S10]

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Some sources are in German.



**S1. Selection of 'Printing the Reformation' events**

1. Statement by the Oxford printer who did the live printing at the re-enactment of the publication of the 95 Theses and the workshop with the Bonn group on the impact of Reformation research on printing practice at the letterpress. (14 Mar 2020)
2. FAZ Article (29 Jun 2016) about the Brexit referendum, referencing the bespoke anti-Brexit typeset version of the first five of the 95 Theses.

**S2. Blogpost by the Dutch artist Neel Korteweg** who painted the 'Stout Doctor' Luther Portrait about her collaboration with Lyndal Roper. (19 Nov 2020)**S3. Details of selected 'Printing the Reformation' events**

1. Web-based 'Reformation Walking Tour' on oxfordstories.ox.ac.uk
2. Blogpost on the Re-enactment of the publication of the 95 Theses (31 Oct 2017)
3. Film (1 Nov 2017)

**S4. Feminist Reformation Drama events 2017- 2018**

1. Blogpost by the author of the feminist Reformation drama 'Schwestern unter sich'
2. Interview with the actresses (in German). <https://youtu.be/FWKk8EwcVww>.

**S5. Interview with the Abbess of Kloster Mariensee**, about establishing the 'FrauenOrt Odilie von Ahlden' and working with the Oxford Bach Soloists. (23 Dec 2019)**S6. Interview with the Abbess of Kloster Lüne**, referring to the visit of Henrike Lähnemann with the Oxford Bach Soloists for the 'kloster mahl anders' in 2016 and the ongoing project of editing the letters of the nuns. (8 Dec 2019)**S7. Selection of 'Singing the Reformation' events**

1. Singing the Reformation workshops
  - a) University Church (24 Feb 2016, 30 participants)
  - b) Summertown URC Spring Talk (24 March 2017)
  - c) Methodists Kidlington (6 Sept 2017)
  - d) Wheatley URC (15 Oct 2017)
  - e) Study Day: Reformation 500-Ecumenical Perspectives, St Edmund Hall (17 June 2017)
  - f) Magdalen College School (2 Nov 2017)
2. Introduction to performances of the four Bach cantatas for Reformation Day
  - a) St Columba's URC (27 May 2017): *Gott der Herr ist Sonn' und Schild*; Reflection by the Secretary of St Columba's URC (United Reformed Church) Oxford, on how the appreciation of Psalm-based singing strengthened the engagement of the congregation with the Protestant roots of the URC and transcends national borders,
  - b) St Michael's Northgate (10 Sept 2017): *Gelobet sei der Herr*
  - c) Exeter College (29 Oct 2017): *Nun danket alle Gott*
  - d) New College (31 Oct 2017): *Ein feste Burg*

**S8. Documentation of the Collaboration of Lähnemann with the Oxford Bach Soloists**

1. Interview with the Artistic Director (14 Jan 2016)
2. Film feature and documentation of the concerts from the tour with the Oxford Bach Soloists in 2016 (11 Nov 2016)

**S9. Selection of 'Legacy of the Reformation' public lectures**

1. What is Reformation? (22 Jun 2017, 70 participants)
2. Remembering the Reformation – Lessons from 1983 and 2017 (29 Aug 2018, 50 participants)
3. The Success Formula of the German Reformation (24 Jul 2017, 30 participants)
4. Vorreformatorsche Lieder im 'Enchiridion', (2 Jul 2017 in Goslar, 150 participants)
5. Singing the Reformation in English: A Historical and Practical Introduction to Miles Coverdale's Goostly Psalmes and Spirituall Songes (Oxford, 25 Oct 2017, 40 participants)
6. Remembering the Reformation from the Right (11 May 2019, 25 participants).

**S10. Video Statement** on the use of the University of Oxford Reformation pamphlets in Hong Kong. URL provided.(20 Aug 2019)