

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 31 Theology and Religious Studies		
Title of case study: The Oxford Psalms Network: Influencing Musical, Poetic, Artistic, and Liturgical Practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008-December 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof. Susan Gillingham Dr Francis Leneghan	Professor of the Hebrew Bible Associate Professor of Old English	Sept 1995-present Oct 2013-present
Dr Helen Appleton	Career Development Fellow	Oct 2015-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 Feb 2017 - 31 Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Oxford Psalms Network is an interdisciplinary research network attached to the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, that examines the influence of the Psalms in the development of Judaeo-Christian culture, language and identity, and their historical reception from the earliest times to the present day. Led by Gillingham, Leneghan and Appleton and inspired by their research, the Network has shaped the interpretations of Psalms beyond academia. Since the foundation of the Psalms Network in 2017, the project leads have organised a series of public talks on the Psalms by artists, academics, musicians, poets and illustrators, leading to a series of activities and outputs involving these interested communities and the wider public. The Network has thus influenced thought and practice in various contexts, including within Christian and Jewish places of worship, and in wider public practice as undertaken by poets, artists and musicians, as well as informing the reception of the Psalms among members of religious communities.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The three project leads who have coordinated the Psalms Network have, between them, produced dozens of books, articles and research papers relating to the Psalms and their reception in cultural history, both from ancient times up to the Middle Ages [R1, R2, R4], from the medieval to the early modern periods [R5, R6] and up to the present day, examining both Jewish and Christian traditions [R1, R2, R3, R4]. All three leads have expertise in the reception of psalmody through music, poetry, and art.</p> <p>Susan Gillingham, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, is a leading international authority on the reception history of the Psalms. Her 600,000-word reception history commentary on the Psalms is widely acknowledged as the most extensive study yet written on the subject [R1, R4], and has acted as the major inspiration behind the thematic framework of the Psalms Network. This study explores the reception of psalms through Jewish and Christian translations, commentaries, interpretations, and their use in liturgy, prayer, art, music, poetry, and ethical and political discourse, ranging from the earliest written records in the Dead Sea scrolls through to contemporary rock music. The work counters the tendency to think of the Psalms as a purely liturgical text, demonstrating the pervasive presence of the Psalms in world culture across widely divergent belief and secular systems, and criticising ideological distortions of the tradition in recent centuries. Gillingham also advises and initiates works on the Psalms for musicians, artists, and poets, for concerts, exhibitions and museums. She also has wide liturgical experience of the use of the Psalms in Christian worship, presenting examples of new readings for clergy, lay ministers and laity across churches and synagogues, both nationally and internationally.</p> <p>The concern with the reception of the Psalms is shared by the other convenors of the Psalms Network: Francis Leneghan and Helen Appleton, both from the Faculty of English, University of Oxford. Leneghan has edited a collection of essays on the interpretation of the Psalms in medieval English literature, with his own Introduction tracing the reception history of the <i>Great Miserere</i> Psalm—probably the most popular of all the Psalms—via its changing forms from c. 700 to 1500 in early English prose and verse [R5]. His essay on the Old English <i>Metrical Psalms</i> demonstrates the popularity of versifying psalms, correcting a traditional view which</p>		

places the origin of English Psalmody in the Reformation [R5]. Helen Appleton, meanwhile, has published on the use of the Psalter in Anglo-Saxon saints' lives and psalm reception in Old and Early Middle English literature, a subject on which she has also co-edited a journal special issue with Leneghan [R6]. Appleton's work has focused on psalm quotation, highlighting the relationship between psalms and memory, as well as the cultural importance of various psalter texts within medieval England.

The Psalms Network was set up in Feb 2017 by the three project leads, building upon their shared research interests and a series of events that they had already co-convened in this field. The Network's activities have been partly facilitated by The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH).

3. References to the research

- R1.** [Authored Book, available on request] Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries, Volume 1* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008). ISBN-10: 0631218556.
- R2.** [Authored Book, available on request] Susan Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). ISBN-10: 0199652414.
- R3.** [Edited Book, available on request] Susan Gillingham ed., *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms. Conflict and Convergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). ISBN-10 0199699542.
- R4.** [Authored Book, listed in REF2] Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries, Vol. 2: A Reception History Commentary on Psalms 1-72* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2018). DOI: [10.1002/9781118832196](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118832196).
- R5.** [Edited Book, available on request] Francis Leneghan and Tamara Atkin eds., *The Psalms and Medieval English Literature: From the Conversion to the Reformation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017). ISBN-10 1843844354.
- R6.** [Edited Journal special issue] Helen Appleton and Francis Leneghan eds., *The Psalms in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman England*, special edition of *English Studies* 98, 1 (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2017). DOI for Introduction: [10.1080/0013838X.2016.1230327](https://doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2016.1230327).

4. Details of the impact

Since its foundation, the coordinators of the Psalms Network have convened a series of approximately 40 seminars, talks, performances and lectures, all of which have been based on the theme of the reception of the Psalms in a range of historical and cultural contexts beyond academia, including music, poetry, art, and worship. These events [A] have enlisted a number of non-academic parties as speakers, and have reached out to extensive public audiences; together, these events had approximately 700 participants, more than 50% of whom came from outside academia. The impacts of these many events have been wide-ranging and felt in manifold ways. Musicians, poets, artists, and ministers who participated in the Network testify to its impact upon their understanding of psalms and influence on their own work, while in turn, the Network's influence on the practice of each of these participants has also reached a range of audiences as secondary beneficiaries.

Inspired musical compositions: Musicians are among those to testify to the impact of the Psalms Network on their own practice. For instance, Howard Goodall CBE, an EMMY, BRIT, and BAFTA award-winning composer of considerable prominence (his music was streamed 1,200,000 times on Spotify in 2019) states that "Gillingham's books and ... the wider pool of knowledge & perspective made possible by the network" influenced his own compositions of Psalm-settings. Goodall testifies that the Psalms Network served to clarify his appreciation of the Psalms as a "worldwide heritage with resonances far beyond the relatively limited chant-based Anglican approach" with which he had previously been most acquainted [B]. Goodall's compositions were performed at three concerts held in Oxford in May 2018 and January and July 2019; these events together had a combined audience of over 300 members of the public [B]. The second of these events, entitled 'Pelicans, Shepherds & Palaces', was a unique collaboration combining a choral performance with an academic talk. Moreover, Goodall claims that his dialogues with the Psalms Network enhanced his awareness of the Psalms' Jewish context, which in turn "informed my choice of psalm fragments in my large-scale

choral/orchestral *Invictus: A Passion*". This major 2018 composition was first performed in Texas and has "been premiered in a dozen countries around the world and had around 100 public performances, as well as having its CD released on the Coro label" [B].

Coming from a completely different musical genre, Andy Mackay, a founding member of the rock band Roxy Music, also reflects on the "invaluable help and advice" that he has received from the Psalms Network, enabling him to place the Psalms in a "broader cultural context" than the (Anglican) tradition of "Christian worship and devotion" with which he had been most familiar through his chorister background. Mackay claims that the Network exposed him to the extensive secondary literature on the history of interpretation of psalms, and inspired his musical exploration of psalmody; the Network also influenced his decision to focus on "performance and the more precise use of language and translation" in his musical practice [C]. This influence is seen in his recent album, *3Psalms* (2018), which has had over 2,000 sales or downloads (artist's estimate). This recording—combining Hebrew, Latin, and the English of the Book of Common Prayer—was broadcast live on BBC Radio 2 in Sept 2018, followed by a "full live premiere" attended by approximately 800 public audience members at the Southbank Centre in London in Nov 2018 [C]. Evidencing the close nature of Mackay's collaboration with the Psalms Network, Gillingham contributed a section to the concert programme [D].

Influenced the work of poets: The impact of the Psalms Network has also been felt in poetry. Edward Clarke, a poet who has attended almost all of the Network's lecture series and talks, testifies to the "beneficial" effect of these events on his own works, including his published collections *Eighteen Psalms* (Periplum Poetry, 2018) and *A Book of Psalms* (Paraclete Press, 2020). As Clarke observes: "many of the [Psalms Network] talks provided me with inspiration—or little oblique cues—for my poems and helped me to gain a much deeper appreciation of the Psalms themselves". In particular, the poet reflects on how a talk by Gillingham on Psalm 8 "provided much impetus for my project as a whole—helping me to discern the Psalms as the soil in which much great art is rooted" [E.i]. Clarke himself contributed a session to the lecture series (May 2018), which was attended by an audience of approximately 80. This was recorded and subsequently partly incorporated into a BBC Radio 4 documentary, *Clarke's Psalter* (9 Sept 2018, and repeated 15 Sept 2018), which had approximately 800,000 listeners over two broadcasts [E.i, E.ii]. Clarke remarked upon his interactions with Gillingham and the Psalms Network in an article for the *Oxford Mail* (13 Sept 2018) [E.iii], and also notes his "many fruitful discussions with Francis Leneghan and Helen Appleton about their work on early medieval English psalm translation" [E.i]. Clarke's book launch was due to be hosted by the Network in April 2020 with accompanying musical performances by Network members, but ultimately was broadcast digitally via Zoom due to the pandemic.

Influenced artists: Showing influence in another sector, another beneficiary is the artist and poet Roger Wagner. Wagner has collaborated extensively with the Psalms Network, and reflects on how his regular attendance at Network events has given him "a variety of new insights into the psalms". Wagner also explains how discussions held via the Network inspired him to "approach a publisher with a selection of [his] illustrated psalm translations", eventually leading to the publication of his illustrated translation of the Psalter, *The Book of Praises* (published by Canterbury Press in Nov 2020), in which he integrates calligraphy with illustration of the text and highlights the different presentations of poetry in the Hebrew and English scripts [F]. This collection shows how the Psalms Network has enabled individuals with shared creative interests to interact with and influence each other.

Shaped understandings and practice within communities of worship: A variety of figures working in liturgical and pastoral settings also testify that the Psalms Network has shaped their practice in significant ways. For instance, the interfaith dimension of the Psalms Network's influence is exemplified by the Jewish composer and musician, Alexander Massey. Massey has attended almost all the Network's events and contributed to two himself: a lecture recital exploring his work as a creator of Jewish sacred music (Feb 2018), and a 'Concert of Psalmody' for the Society for Old Testament Study [SOTS] in July 2019, attended by approximately 120 academics and interested members of the public, for which he was invited to produce three psalms settings [I]. Reflecting on how the Network has shaped his understanding of the Psalms' reception history, Massey observes: "I have deepened my understanding of: the differences between Christian and Jewish interpretations and methods, as well as [their] intersections; the latitude that people have taken over time and space in how they make the

psalms part of their lives ... ; [as well as] the diversity and creativity of artistic and academic responses” [G]. In terms of the impact on worship, Massey describes how the SOTS concert invitation provided him with an opportunity to advance his “ongoing project to contribute new music to core Jewish liturgy”. In particular, it inspired him to create psalms settings for use within the *Shabbat* (Psalms 92 and 96) and *Yom Kippur* (Psalm 103) services, recordings of which were later posted on his website [G]. The latter piece, as Massey testifies, “has since become part of the Jewish community’s evolving liturgical repertoire”. As Massey puts it, the Psalms Network provides “a lovely example of how Biblical scholarship, music, Christianity and Judaism can evolve in harmony”, as well as providing a “community” where diverse people can “share questions and ideas, and learn” [G].

Separately, the testimonial of a parish priest illustrates the Network’s impact in the local Oxfordshire community. He explains how he endeavoured to bring “the latest scholarship on the Psalms to the direct attention of worshippers at the parish level”, and “applied the insights [he] had gained from Gillingham... by presenting a course on the whole Psalter in the Church Hall at Farrington over the four summers of 2015-2018”. These classes rendered in particular two crucial ideas derived from the Network—the essential coherence of the Psalter, and the value of a reception-historical approach—accessible to “an average audience of about thirty people”, including “Roman Catholics, Baptists and Quakers, as well as Anglicans” and others [H].

Other figures illustrate the European reach of the Psalms Network’s activities. A biblical scholar and musicologist who is Director of Music at Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral in Brussels, spoke to the Network about his work on reconstructing the original melodies of the Psalms based on the markings in the Hebrew text (Feb 2017), receiving an enthusiastic review in the *Oxford Times* (23 March 2017). His reconstructed version of Psalm 91 was performed to interested members of the public at the SOTS ‘Concert of Psalmody’ (mentioned above), while another one of his ‘temple melodies’ (Psalm 121) drawn from this association was sung at a Sunday morning service at Brussels Cathedral on 8 March 2020 [I].

In addition, Gillingham herself has been involved in numerous events at places of worship, including Exeter Cathedral and Liverpool and Oxford Dioceses, presenting the research of the Psalms Network to public audiences of a total of up to approximately 2,000 ordinary worshippers, clergy and lay ministers. The Bishop of Exeter observes how Gillingham “is gifted in being able to communicate to a wide audience”, especially the clergy and lay ministers of the Diocese, conveying “her scholarship in accessible and imaginative ways that excite interest and engagement” [J.i]. Gillingham’s fellow Canon Theologian at Exeter explains how [Gillingham’s] “careful presentation of reception-history has led congregations to reflect on the way reception (linguistic, musical and in visual art) affects one’s reading and prayerful response to a psalm”, as well as upon the differences between Jewish and Christian responses to the Psalms, the integrity of the Psalter as a whole, and its theological richness. She notes further that Gillingham has “encouraged members of the congregation to connect up their life of worship with other aspects of their life, such as their appreciation of poetry, art or music” [J.ii]. Furthermore, reflecting on Gillingham’s parish-level contributions in Oxford, the vicar of St Barnabas Jericho expresses how Gillingham’s “knowledge and passion for the psalms has impacted hugely on the spiritual life of the Parish”, where she has encouraged “people to reflect on the psalms for their spiritual living in the real world” [J.iii]. Additionally, the Bishop of Oxford notes that Gillingham offered a series of lectures on renewing catechesis at study days in 2018, having “a significant effect on the life of the Diocese” and receiving “extremely positive feedback” [J.iv].

Gillingham has been especially active during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. On 29 June, she led an online ‘Psalmathon’ (a continuous, 8-hour reading of all 150 psalms by approximately 30 narrators) for Exeter Diocese. The event had approximately 80 direct attendees and a similar number of later viewings on YouTube; it “brought the psalms to life” and “receive[d] compliments” from many attendees [K.i], while a participating artist published a full commentary of the event online [K.ii]. Gillingham also led an online Study Day on the Psalms for approximately 185 clergy of Liverpool Diocese on 22 Sept 2020, and has contributed to other online events in recent months, including 2 talks to ‘Daily Reflections’, a series of YouTube talks posted by St Barnabas Jericho as part of a parish response to the pandemic. Together these 2 talks have been viewed over 300 times, “mean[ing] that... her teaching has reached a far wider audience than simply the parish” [J.iii]. Equally, the Bishop of Oxford acknowledges that Gillingham’s *Psalms Through the Centuries* [R1, R4] has been his “first port of call” in his

preparations for a series of 8 weekly podcasts on Psalms 1-8 for the Diocese, to resource ministers during the COVID crisis [J.iv]. These last examples highlight how the influence of the Psalms Network continues to be felt even at a time when opportunities for work with non-academic partners are more restricted than usual.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Programme of seminars and events hosted by the Psalms Network, 2017-19.

[B] Questionnaire completed by composer Howard Goodall (20 March 2020), testifying to impact of the Psalms Network on his compositions, accompanied by event page for 'Pelicans, Shepherds & Palaces' concert, 31 Jan 2019 (URL provided).

[C] Statement from musician Andy Mackay (9 April 2020), describing the influence of the Psalms Network upon his compositions, accompanied by email discussing *3Psalms* (24 Dec 2020).

[D] Article in *Church Times*, 'Rock Psalms to be heard on South Bank' (21 Nov 2018), describing Mackay's concert and referencing his work with Gillingham on p.2 (URL provided).

[E] Evidence relating to poet Edward Clarke, demonstrating the influence of the Psalms Network on his creative process:

- i. Questionnaire completed by Clarke (7 March 2020), testifying to his involvement with the Psalms Network, accompanied by email correspondence describing his Radio 4 broadcast (23 Dec 2020).
- ii. Online programme information for *Clarke's Psalter*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 9 and 15 Sep 2018 (URL provided).
- iii. Edward Clarke, 'New Songs of Praise: Oxford writer Edward Clarke pens new book of psalms', *Oxford Mail* (13 Sep 2018) (URL provided).

[F] Questionnaire completed by poet and artist Roger Wagner (4 April 2020), testifying to the impact of the Psalms Network.

[G] Questionnaire completed by composer Alexander Massey (4 April 2020), explaining his work with the Psalms Network, accompanied by list of Psalm settings appearing on his website (URL provided).

[H] Report by an Oxfordshire parish priest (April 2020), detailing interactions with the Psalms Network.

[I] Questionnaire completed by the Director of Music, Holy Trinity Pro-Cathedral, Brussels (5 March 2020), confirming his involvement with the Psalms Network, accompanied by concert programme for Society for Old Testament Study 'Concert of Psalmody' in which he participated, 24 July 2019.

[J] Selected letters from clerical leaders:

- i. Letter from the Bishop of Exeter (26 April 2020), confirming Gillingham's contributions to Exeter Diocese.
- ii. Letter from Canon Theologian, Exeter Cathedral (18 May 2020), describing Gillingham's contributions to the Diocese.
- iii. Letter from the Vicar of St Barnabas Jericho, Oxford (May 2020), accompanied by weblinks to 'Daily Reflections' talks on YouTube recorded by Gillingham (URLs provided).
- iv. Statement from the Bishop of Oxford (28 April 2020), testifying to the influence of Gillingham's work within Oxford Diocese.

[K] Evidence relating to 'Psalmathon' event at Exeter Cathedral, 29 June 2020:

- i. YouTube video of 'Psalmathon' event (URL provided), accompanied by emails of praise for Gillingham's contribution (June-July 2020).
- ii. Online account of 'Psalmathon' event by a freelance artist (2 July 2020) (URL provided).