

INSTITUTE FOR RELIGION AND CRITICAL INQUIRY  
PREMODERN BELIEFS AND THEIR RECEPTION 2025 WORKSHOP II

**Faith and the material world:**

**Creative productions of natural philosophy and religion in medieval and early modern Europe**

2- 3 October 2025



François Desprez, *The Sea Bishop*, Paris: Richard Breton, 1562. Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-33.895A

This workshop seeks to investigate how a diverse range of individuals responded creatively to making meaning for faith and natural philosophy through artistic, topographical, architectural, embroidered, ceramic, and other material or unusual interventions.

**Format:** Hybrid: ACU Melbourne and online

**Zoom link:** Please email [Susan.Broomhall@acu.edu.au](mailto:Susan.Broomhall@acu.edu.au) to receive the Zoom link or to attend in person.

## Programme

### Day 1: Thursday 2 October

1.15-1.30 AEST	Welcome Susan Broomhall
1.30-3	<b>Session 1: <i>Medieval worlds</i></b> Chair: Diana Barnes
1.30-2	Constant Mews (Monash) <i>The book of nature and the greenness of the world: Paths of renewal in the twelfth century and beyond</i>
2-2.30	Michael Barbezat (ACU) <i>Ambiguous Material: The Emergence of the Figure of Melusine in High Medieval Clerical Storytelling</i>
2.30-3	Clare Davidson (ACU) <i>The science of love in late medieval England</i>
<b>3-3.30</b>	<b>Afternoon tea</b>
3.30-5	<b>Keynote 1</b> Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan (Sorbonne University) <i>Material cultures in the service of God: On the invention of 'devotional commodities' in 15th-century Italy</i> Chair: Elizabeth Reid (ACU)

### Day 2: Friday 3 October

9.15-9.30 AEST	Welcome
<b>9.30-11</b>	<b>Session 2: <i>Materialising Faith</i></b> Chair: Michael Reidy
9.30-10	Grace Waye-Harris (Adelaide) <i>Sartorial Devotion: Dress and Religion at Henry VIII's court</i>
10-10.30	Jessica Carey-Bunning (Adelaide) <i>Religious Ambiguity in the Faith Jewellery of the Six Wives of Henry VIII</i>
10.30-11	Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński (ACU) <i>Faith Woven in a Material World: Creative Design in Sigismund II Augustus's Jagiellon Tapestries</i>
<b>11-11.30</b>	<b>Morning tea</b>
11.30-12.30	Keynote 2 Denis Crouzet (Sorbonne University) <i>Nature at the Service of Religious Concord at the French Court (circa 1547-ca. 1572)</i> Chair: Susan Broomhall (ACU)
<b>12.30-1.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>1.30-3</b>	<b>Session 3: <i>Natural World Matter(s)</i></b> Chair: Kristie Flannery
1.30-2	Elizabeth Reid (ACU)

	<i>Scents and Sensuality – The (im)materiality of olfactory experience as an expression of natural philosophy in Renaissance Tuscany</i>
2-2.30	Sarah Bendall (ACU) <i>Whaling, Consumer Culture and Changing Understandings of the Natural World in Early Modern Europe</i>
2.30-3	Diana G. Barnes (UNE) <i>Religious Percolations: The Bubble in Early Modern Religious Discourse</i>
<b>3-3.30</b>	<b>Afternoon tea</b>
<b>3.30-5</b>	<b>Session 4: Religious Worlds</b> Chair: Susan Broomhall
3.30-4	Jenny Spinks (Uni Melb) <i>The seven-headed “horrible serpent” of 1530 and its global context</i>
4-4.30	Sylvie Brassard (ACU) <i>Reformed Faith in France Antarctique: Calvinism and Women in Jean de Léry’s Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil</i>
4.30-5 (10.30am in Dubai)	Matthew Sharpe (ACU) <i>To fly to providence and deity: on Francis Bacon and the question of his religion</i>
5pm	Conference close

## Abstracts

### THURSDAY 2 OCTOBER

#### 1.30-3 Session 1: *Medieval worlds*

**Constant Mews, *The book of nature and the greenness of the world: Paths of renewal in the twelfth century and beyond***

This paper explores two ways of understanding the natural world that emerged in the twelfth century. One is that of Hugh of St Victor, who in his early writing developed the idea of the world as a text through which one could encounter attributes of divinity, but came to focus more on sacrament as a way of participating in the divine. The other is that of Hildegard of Bingen, who may well have been familiar with Hugh's teaching, but who avoided discussion of nature as a concept, but rather reflected on the *viriditas* or greenness of the world as embodying divine life. Hildegard offered a way of thinking about the natural world perhaps more in tune with orally transmitted wisdom about the living world, whereas Hugh perceived nature through the lens of the Timaeus and Scripture as a written body of text. Both were offering paths of renewal, but in different directions. It would be Hugh's notion of the book of nature that would shape learned perspective on nature well into the early modern period, while Hildegard's teachings would come to be perceived as mystical, without appreciation of their connection to the practice of healing.

*Constant J. Mews is Emeritus Professor in the School of Philosophical, Historical & Indigenous Studies, Monash University. He has published widely on medieval intellectual and religious*

history, notably in relation to Peter Abelard and Heloise. He has recently studied, edited and translated, with Anti Ijäs, *Salome and the Kin of Jesus: The writings of Maurice of Kirkham and Herbert of Bosham* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2024) [Salome and the Kin of Jesus \(utpdistribution.com\)](https://utpdistribution.com).

**Michael Barbezat, *Ambiguous Material: The Emergence of the Figure of Melusine in High Medieval Clerical Storytelling***

This paper explores an early stage in the emergence of the renowned medieval literary figure Melusine. A shapeshifting, half-fairy, half-human woman, Melusine was the mythical ancestor of the Houses of Anjou and Lusignan. Her figure lives on today as the inspiration for the Starbucks logo. Her story is most famous in its late medieval forms, particularly following the model of Jean d'Arras (1393). This paper, instead, looks at her prehistory, focusing on the emergence of the key elements of her story in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century collections of wonderful tales. The authors of these tales, Walter Map (1130–1209/10) and Gervase of Tilbury (c.1150–1220) were learned clerics. They developed the figure of an ambiguous demi-human female ancestor, made up of unstable matter and bodily form, to explore issues of religious belief and emergent natural philosophy.

*Michael Barbezat is a historian of medieval religious, intellectual, and cultural history. He is the author of *Burning Bodies: Communities, Eschatology, and the Punishment of Heresy in the Middle Ages* (Cornell 2018) and numerous articles and chapters exploring histories of persecution, belief, doubt, sexuality, and gender. His current work explores contemporary receptions and adaptations of the European Middle Ages by queer communities. He is a research fellow at the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry at the Australian Catholic University.*

**Clare Davidson, *The science of love in late medieval England***

This paper examines knowledge about love as a principle of universal motion and the theories through which it was observed. I consider technical, philosophical, and literary sources that contain knowledge about causation and form, with attention to early vernacular uses of the term *science* and the significance of love in a wider Christian belief system. Engaging with the late medieval science of love expands its cultural and literary investigation as a practice or *craft* that generally refer to the modern concepts of romantic love and attraction associated with the biology of sex and evolutionary theory. Essentially, I show how theories and practices related to love, and analysis of its influence in the material world, can be contextualised within traditions of empirical learning and positivism, drawing attention to the under investigated culture of vernacular Christian physics in late medieval England. I suggest that attention to love in this context fruitfully expands understanding about the historical construction of authoritative knowledge, while also breaking down the binary between religion and secularism that shapes historical analysis of the European Middle Ages.

*Clare Davidson is a research fellow in medievalism in the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry. She is an interdisciplinary cultural and legal historian of late medieval and early modern*

*Europe who draws on theories of emotion, gender, literature, and law. Her research also analyses the critical reception of the past in the British Empire and how narratives about the past continue to impact modern Australian laws and related discourse.*

### 3.30-5 KEYNOTE 1

#### **Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan (Sorbonne Université), Material cultures in the service of God: on the invention of « devotional commodities » in 15th-century Italy**

Over the past few decades, numerous studies have sought to identify the emergence of a « culture of consumption » in the 15th century, particularly in the cities of Italy and the former Netherlands. My aim here is to highlight a series of paradoxes, or rather heuristic knots. The first of these is that few studies within this rich historiographical landscape have noted that this transformed material culture was not only synonymous with the introduction of new luxury and increased comfort in certain interiors, but also resulted in the multiplication of objects that facilitated exchanges with the sacred, what we might call « devotional commodities ». It is this reality, which is truly striking in the documentary and iconographic sources, that I wish to highlight : it is enough to show that we must reject a teleological view that sees this society as a precursor to our own. A study of the life cycle of these objects will then show that the mechanisms of lending and the second-hand market helped to spread these commodities. Contrary to the silence of much of the historiography, it must therefore be emphasized that « devotional commodities » played a powerful role in this new world of things that was taking hold among the urban elites but also, to a lesser extent, among part of the middle classes. The object becomes part of the system of relationships with the everyday world, but also with the cosmos and God. It changes interactions with the world, both here on earth and in the afterlife.

Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan is Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Sorbonne University. Specialist of Italian history, her research focuses on the history of the last centuries of the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. Her publications include : « *Sopra le acque salse* » : *Espaces urbains, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du Moyen Age*, 2 vol., Rome, 1992, *La mort lente de Torcello. Histoire d'une cité disparue*, Paris, 1995 (2017), *Venise : Une invention de la ville XIIIe-XVe siècle*, Seyssel, 1997, *Venise triomphante. Les horizons d'un mythe*, Paris, 1999 (2004), *Enfers et Paradis. L'Italie de Dante et de Giotto*, Paris, 2001, (2004) *Renaissances italiennes*, Paris, 2007 (2013) ; *Villes vivantes. Italie. XIIIe-XVe siècle*, Paris, 2009 ; *Le mystère des rois de Jérusalem. 1099-1187*, Paris, 2013, *Le Moyen Age de Venise. Des eaux salées au miracle de pierres*, Paris, 2015, *Décapitées. Trois femmes dans l'Italie de la Renaissance* (avec J.-Cl. Maire Vigueur), Paris, 2018, *Venise. VIe-XXIe siècle*, Paris, 2021, *Une autre histoire de la Renaissance. Paroles d'objets*, Paris, 2024. Most of her works have been translated into Italian. Some have been translated into Spanish and English.

## FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER

### 9.30-11 Session 2: *Materialising Faith*

#### **Grace Waye-Harris, *Sartorial Devotion: Dress and Religion at Henry VIII's court***

Dress was an essential feature of Henry VIII's court. Different textiles, colours, and styles of clothing carried symbolic meaning that allowed individuals to construct identities and engage in a range of courtly activities. Close examination of the semiotics of dress can therefore provide important insight to Tudor court culture, politics, and everyday life, as well as individual personalities, behaviours, and beliefs. This paper analyses dress and its inflections of religion, faith, and spirituality. Evidence indicates dress shaped, and was shaped by, Henry VIII's religious belief and experiences. From the divine power of his coronation apparel to his persistent use of crimson on liturgical days, Henry's piety was constantly promulgated through his clothing. Dress with religious connotations also played a significant role in courtly spectacle, diplomatic ceremony, and the maintenance of positive relations between Henry and his European counterparts. When attending Mass with Charles V in 1522, the king and the emperor wore matching white apparel. The colour white signified fidelity and faith. Henry and Charles' mirrored apparel reflected their brotherly fidelity and was a joint expression of their individual and combined commitment to the church and God. Religion permeated every aspect of life in the sixteenth century, and an examination of dress presents a significant line of enquiry for accessing faith and belief at the Tudor court. This paper reveals that dress was an important tool for visually communicating Christian devotion. The material expression of faith demonstrates that the religious resonances of dress were widely recognised and understood.

*Dr Grace Waye-Harris is a Research Fellow in the department of History at the University of Adelaide. Her research examines the functions of fashion in diplomacy during the reign of Henry VIII. Areas of interest include historical fashion and materiality, Renaissance diplomacy, medieval and early modern England, the Tudors, and Italian Renaissance art and culture.*

#### **Jessica Carey-Bunning, *Religious Ambiguity in the Faith Jewellery of the Six Wives of Henry VIII***

Jewellery played a significant role in the visual representation of religion and faith in the sixteenth century. Items such as crosses, rosaries, Jesuses, and biblical-themed settings were popular, especially amongst the elites at court. Queens consort employed religious jewellery as instruments of personal devotion and as outward displays of piety. The English Reformation saw the introduction of new laws and customs regarding religious jewellery. Within this context, historians have interpreted such objects as indicators of confessional identity. However, during the liminal period of Henry VIII's reign, these theological and visual categories were neither stable nor clearly delineated; jewellery with varied religious connotations was owned and employed across the theological spectrum. This paper investigates the religious ambiguity in the devotional jewellery of Henry VIII's wives. Through an analysis of jewellery inventories and portraits, it considers how the queens' ownership of devotional jewellery complicates our understanding of the faith and factions of these women. I argue that jewellery is an unreliable barometer for personal belief or

doctrinal allegiance. Rather, these objects must be examined within the broader context of the queen's jewels, performative queenship and piety, and the religious realities of Henry VIII's court.

*Jessica Carey-Bunning is a PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. Her main area of interest is Tudor queenship, and the subject of her thesis is the jewels of Queen Mary I of England.*

**Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński, *Faith Woven in a Material World: Creative Design in Sigismund II Augustus's Jagiellon Tapestries***

When the devout yet intellectually cosmopolitan Sigismund II Augustus inherited the Polish throne in 1548, he confronted intensifying Protestant reform movement while remaining a loyal son of the Roman Church. One year earlier, he had ordered an ambitious *Genesis* tapestry cycle from the Brussels workshops of Jan and Willem de Kempeneer, with cartoons by Michiel Coxcie. This paper contends that the series reveals not only the king's refined taste for the most avant-garde Flemish artistry but also his determination to articulate a distinctively Catholic vision for a multi-confessional realm. Focusing on the tapestries depicting *Paradise Bliss* and *The Flood*, I show how Sigismund harnessed natural-philosophical symbolism (eagles, peridexion trees, apocalyptic waters) to weave a theology of creation, fall, and redemption that affirmed Catholic sacramental cosmology while acknowledging Reformation critiques of ecclesiastical power. The tapestries project a ruler who sees himself as a latter-day Adam and Noah, called to steer his diverse polity through doctrinal storms by patience, prudence, and faith. At the same time, the luxurious materials, Italianate grotesques, and unmistakable Polish and Lithuanian heraldic emblems broadcast the Jagiellon monarch's cultured discernment and his commitment to Rome without relinquishing dialogue with humanist and Protestant interlocutors. By foregrounding textile patronage as a medium of confessional politics, the paper reframes early modern Polish Catholicism as visually sophisticated and strategically adaptive, rather than merely defensive, in the face of religious upheaval.

*Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (UK), Australian Catholic University, Canberra. His work traces political, religious, and cultural developments in Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present, analysing the circulation of ideas, identity formation, dynastic politics, and power, with particular attention to queenship. He has edited *The Jagiellon Dynasty, 1386–1596: Politics, Culture, Diplomacy* (Brepols, 2025). He is now preparing three further volumes: a collection on the cultural and political agency of royal women in Jagiellon Europe, a study of Queen Bona Sforza and consort power in the context of cultural transfer, and a new critical edition of Bishop Vincentius of Kraków's twelfth-century *Chronicle of the Poles* (Harvard).*

**11.30-12.30 KEYNOTE 2**

**Denis Crouzet, *Nature at the Service of Religious Concord at the French Court (circa 1547-ca. 1572)***

Henri II was crowned on July 25, 1547, at the age of 28, in Reims. Among the gifts received on this occasion was one sent by Charles V: a wild child from the Canaries, with hair all over his body and face, called Petrus Gonzalvus. On the one hand, the emperor wanted to show the son of his adversary Francis I that his empire was an empire of *mirabilia naturae* that no political power could hope to equal, and on the other, to mockingly remind him that during his captivity in the castle of Pedrazza, the new King of France had himself become “ensauvagé”. Remarkably, Henri II and Catherine de Médicis initiated a process of desymbolization of the imperial gift: the child received an education that would make him a doctor of law, and he acceded to the functions closest to the monarch: he was the one who opened the door of the sovereign's bedroom when he woke up, and who was his reader... The savage was, as it were, desensitized, in a desacralization of the Spanish empire, which thus lost its claim to providential sacrality. At the beginning of 1572, thanks to Catherine de Médicis, Petrus Gonzalvus was married to the daughter of a Parisian bourgeois. He had seven children, several of whom inherited their father's hairiness. One wonders whether this union should not be seen as a projection of Catherine de Médicis' policy of concord, staging in the heart of Paris the possibility of a life together of the same and the other, of the so-called “Saulvaige” and a Parisian Catholic woman. Thus, in the run-up to St. Bartholomew's Day, there was a union intended to make it known that a shared life between those who fought each other religiously was possible, and that it was part of God's plan.

*Denis Crouzet is Emeritus Professor of Modern History at Sorbonne University since the 1 September 2021, where he has taught since 1989 and headed the Centre Roland Mousnier joint research unit for a dozen years. His work focuses on the sixteenth century, revolving around the history of peace and war, political action and religious “imaginaires”, both exclusivist and irenic, and eschatology. His main publications include monographs on Jean Calvin, Michel de l'Hospital, Christophe Colomb, Charles Quint, Jules Michelet: Les Guerriers de Dieu - La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610), 2005 ; La nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy. Un rêve perdu de la Renaissance, 1998 ; Le ‘ haut cœur ’ de Catherine de Médicis, 2005 ; Dieu dans ses royaumes. Une histoire des guerres de Religion, 2008 ; Nostradamus. Une médecine des âmes à la Renaissance, 2011, Les enfants bourreaux au temps des guerres de Religion, 2019. He has also published with Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan an unpublished work by Lucien Febvre, Nous sommes des sangs mêlés, Albin Michel. His most recent book is Paris criminal. 1572, 2024.*

### **1.30-3 Session 3: *Natural World Matter(s)***

**Elizabeth Reid, *Scents and Sensuality – The (im)materiality of olfactory experience as an expression of natural philosophy in Renaissance Tuscany***

Tuscan scholars, physicians, and moralists of the long fifteenth-century promoted the intentional utilisation of olfactory experience to improve physical health, to stimulate emotions and, thereby,



to aid both conception and devotion. This paper will show that material culture from pomanders, incense burners, scented rosaries, and evocative paintings attest to people's use of scent for such purposes. Contemporary ideas of both natural philosophy (medicine and botany) and Christian morality were heavily gendered. Therefore, this paper will further tease out the gendered treatment of the sense of smell evident in these material objects, and in written accounts of permeable bodies engaged in the immaterial experience of sensing and exuding odour.

*Elizabeth Reid is a gender and early modern historian specializing in the gendered social implications of allegory. Her first book Naturalising Social Hierarchies in Cesare Ripa's Iconologia: Personified Perceptions of Gender, Class, and Race is forthcoming in Brepols' IKON series. She has lectured, edited, and conducted research in the fields of the History of Emotions, Early Modern History, Gender History, Sociology, Australian History, Musicology, and Pedagogy.*

**Sarah Bendall, *Whaling, Consumer Culture and Changing Understandings of the Natural World in Early Modern Europe***

By the end of the seventeenth century, Europeans wore a variety of fashionable garments made from whalebone sourced from the Arctic, sprayed on perfumes infused with ambergris from Africa or the Caribbean, and used medicines and cosmetics made with spermaceti from North America. This paper argues that scientific and popular understandings of whales went hand-in-hand with seventeenth-century fashionable consumer culture. While the whale still occupied various contradictory cultural, commercial and scientific spaces in European thought, this century saw a period of transformation where common understandings of whales shifted. These animals went from being monsters to curiosities of the natural world that could be commodified and used in a wide variety of consumer goods, goods that were increasingly used in the everyday lives of Europeans. By focusing on the use of whale products in early modern England, this paper highlights the role that the consumption of fashion and other goods played in fostering wider understandings of the natural philosophy, in both positive and negative ways, during the seventeenth century.

*Sarah A. Bendall is Senior Lecturer at the Australian Catholic University. Her research examines the production, trade and consumption of global commodities and fashionable consumer goods, particularly during the long 17th century. She is author of Shaping Femininity (Bloomsbury, 2021), and co-editor of Embodied Experiences of Making in Early Modern Europe (Amsterdam University Press, 2024). She is a co-investigator on the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's Making Historical Dress Network. Her next monograph, The Women Who Clothed the Stuart Queens: Gender and Work in the Royal Wardrobe and the Fashion Marketplace, is forthcoming with Bloomsbury.*

**Diana G. Barnes, *Religious Percolations: The Bubble in Early Modern Religious Discourse***

This paper will investigate how the trope of the bubble is deployed in early modern religious writing published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It will identify key ideas associated with the bubble in sermons, prayers, meditations, and lay religious writing produced

during a period of great religious change and contestation. Christianity underwent major shifts under the pressure of the reformation. Then it will turn to the close analysis of *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (1604), a book of meditations Elizabeth Grymeston prepared for her son Bernye Grymeston. It will investigate why bubbles came to mind when Grymeston faced her imminent death and considered her spiritual legacy.

*Diana G. Barnes' field of research is early modern literature with emphases on gender and the literary representation of nature and community. Her book Epistolary Community in Print, 1580-1664 was published with Ashgate in 2013. She has book chapters and journal articles on topics including letters, poetry, drama, the passions and women's engagement with stoic philosophy. Current she is completing a book on the representation of bubbles in early modern writing.*

### **3.30-5 Session 4: Religious Worlds**

#### **Jenny Spinks, *The seven-headed "horrible serpent" of 1530 and its global context***

In 1530 an embalmed serpent or hydra with two legs and seven crowned heads was recorded in Venice. Its origins were Turkish, via Africa, sources claimed, and it travelled across Europe to enter the collection of François I, king of France. Valued at 6,000 ducats, the creature's body could no longer be located when French author Pierre Boaistuau discussed it in his 1560 printed wonder book, the *Histoires prodigieuses*. In describing the serpent he took inspiration from a report in a 1557 wonder book by Basel author Konrad Lycosthenes, one of a cluster of authors and artists who recorded the mysterious beast. Lycosthenes, who established meaning through chronological patterns, recorded that it had occurred in the same year as other extraordinary events including deaths following terrible floods and the case of a child who cried within its mother's womb. Boaistuau, on the other hand, set the seven-headed creature within an extended discussion about the properties of serpents in contemporary and classical texts. While both addressed the creature's remarkable qualities, neither directly made the obvious connection to the seven-headed beast of the Apocalypse from the final book of the New Testament, although – as Paula Findlen has suggested – this surely partially underpinned its fame. This paper pays particular attention to the serpent's global dimensions, including its Turkish origins. It particularly aims to look at the creature within the context of India, examining Boaistuau's discussion of the venomous qualities of Indian serpents, and his interpretation of their religious meanings – set alongside his deep interest in the so-called 'devil in Calicut', a statue of an Indian god reported in the opening pages of his wonder book. This paper aims to address the significance of the 1530 serpent for knowledge production and also for contested religious identities in the century of European global expansion and reformation.

*Jenny Spinks is Hansen Associate Professor in History at the University of Melbourne. Her publications include Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany (2009), and the recent edited collection Albrecht Dürer's Material World (with Edward H. Wouk, 2023), as well as articles on German and French print culture, including the history of wonders, in venues including Past & Present, the Journal of Early Modern History, and Renaissance Studies.*

**Sylvie Brassard, *Reformed Faith in France Antarctique: Calvinism and Women in Jean de Léry's Histoire d'un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil***

Jean de Léry visited Fort Coligny on an island in the Bay of Rio de Janeiro in 1557-1558, with the intent of settling a new French reformed colony in South America. During his stay, he clashed with the Catholic settlers, which brought him to leave the colony and visit several Tupinamba First Nation villages in the region. His experience in America profoundly shook his faith, as he struggled to give scriptural meaning to the reality of an unfamiliar and wild continent populated with cultures unknown to him. As a result, de Léry published an account of his travel twenty years later, after a life involved in Religious Wars. In *Histoire d'un Voyage Faict en la Terre du Brésil*, de Léry tries to confirm his faith in the face of a new and strange world but also gives Calvinist moral directions, as it offers him an opportunity to give his opinion on several topics. A gender reading of de Léry's book opens a window on how Calvinism perceived women, both European and South American First Nations, and how the pastor's views, despite being personally close to Calvin, may have diverged from official Calvinist theology in some aspects. This analysis is part of a wider discussion on gender in 16<sup>th</sup>-century reformed religion, and offers a new angle for reading Jean de Léry. While his writings have often been analysed in light of religious studies, how the androcentric reformed exegesis translated in the early understanding of South America in the face of double alterity (womanhood and indigenous) represents a unique and unexplored avenue.

*Sylvie Brassard completed a Master degree on 16<sup>th</sup> century French notary acts at the Université Laval in Québec, Canada. She worked as a school activity coordinator for the Société Historique de la Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan French Historical Society). Australian resident since 2017, Sylvie has freshly completed her PhD about the recognition of women's work in the history of French anthropology (1928-1970) at the University of Western Australia in Perth. Her main interests are French history, maritime history and women's history.*

**Professor Matthew Sharpe, *To fly to providence and deity: on Francis Bacon and the question of his religion***

Francis Bacon, as a founder of the modern scientific project(s) has been claimed to be a hidden atheist by some critics. Yet Bacon wrote a collection of Sacred Meditations, and claims that if a little philosophy inclines a person to atheism, "depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion; for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may some times rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate, and linked together, it must needs fly to providence and Deity." Others have explored Bacon's heterodox form of Anglican Christianity, including in his framing of the project of the Great Instauration. Certainly, Bacon's texts are studded with as many biblical as classical references, from both Old and New Testaments; especially Solomon, respectively, and Paul. Yet, there are also components of Bacon's writings, notably in his interpretations of the Greek myths and the New Atlantis, which suggest an interest in hermeticism, which have been less explored. This paper will explore the question of Bacon's religion in engagement with recent scholarship on this question.

*Matthew Sharpe is a professor in the National School of Philosophy, ACU.*

