
**Intervista a Sarah M. Pike,
autrice di *For the Wild. Ritualità e coinvolgimento nell'eco-
attivismo radicale***

A cura di

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Ho avuto il privilegio di tradurre e curare il volume che Sarah M. Pike dedica all'eco-attivismo radicale statunitense, uscito con Meltemi Editore a marzo 2026. Il mio incontro con il lavoro di Pike è avvenuto proprio sulle pagine di questa rivista, quando nel 2020 Bruna Bianchi ne scrisse un'ampia recensione¹, definendolo uno studio condotto in profondità "in cui partecipazione emotiva, rigore storico ed etnografico si intrecciano in modo sapiente". Indagando le ragioni profonde, storiche e culturali, emozionali e spirituali, nonché dialogando direttamente con i protagonisti, Pike dà forma a un saggio di grande rilevanza per la riflessione contemporanea, che affronta aspetti inediti sulle origini, sul divenire e sul fare attivismo, ora disponibili anche al pubblico italiano.

Sarah M. Pike, che ha generosamente acconsentito alla presente intervista, ricopre la cattedra di Religioni Compare presso la California State University - Chico. La sua prima monografia, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves. Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (2001), rimane uno degli studi più importanti sul paganesimo moderno negli Stati Uniti, un tema che Pike ha analizzato nelle espressioni dei festival come "Burning Man" e approfondito nel suo libro *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America* (2004). Da allora ha svolto ricerche etnografiche sui mondi dell'attivismo radicale ambientalista e animalista, culminate appunto in *For the Wild. Ritual and Commitment in Radical Eco-Activism* (2017). In diversi papers ha esplorato la spiritualità e la ritualità dei movimenti di rewilding, legati al ripristino dell'autosufficienza e del rapporto con la natura attraverso l'apprendimento di antiche tecniche indigene di gestione ambientale. Il testo più recente della professoressa Pike è un volume curato insieme a Jone Salomonsen e Paul-François Tremlett, dal titolo *Ritual and Democracy. Protests, Publics and Performances* (2020).

* Attivista territoriale, architetta, permacultrice e ricercatrice indipendente. Si occupa delle tematiche implicate nelle trasformazioni antropiche dei territori e dei relativi impatti climatici ed ecosistemici, in un'ottica di giustizia socio-ambientale. La sua ricerca intreccia diversi campi disciplinari, inclusa la prospettiva di genere, lo studio dei sistemi complessi e approfondimenti sia antropologici che filosofici. È co-fondatrice dell'associazione Ecotono, con cui segue progetti e processi partecipativi di rigenerazione socio-ambientale in risposta alla crisi climatica. È curatrice della piattaforma Postactivism per la ricerca su nuove epistemologie e approcci all'Antropocene, in particolare di taglio postumanista, eco-politico e neomaterialista.

¹ La recensione è inclusa nel numero monografico *Ecopedagogia*, dedicato a Rachel Carson, "DEP. Deportate, esuli, profughe. Rivista telematica di studi sulla memoria femminile", 44, 2020, pp. 222-228.

*Your academic career has centered on the study of religion – particularly your pioneering research on contemporary Paganism² – and unconventional youth cultures. Where does this interest come from? How has it intersected with your experience as an activist and your focus on radical eco-activism, as seen in *For the Wild*?*

I became an atheist around age 12 because I could not understand why anyone would believe in a god. I was a budding positivist. However, as I grew older, I became more curious as to why others believed and I did not. That curiosity expanded over time. Having rejected monotheism, as a teenager and young adult, I was especially curious about alternative forms of spirituality. At the same time, I became involved with radical politics. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, as an undergraduate at university, I participated in anti-nuclear protests, including civil disobedience, anti-apartheid activism, and social justice issues in Nicaragua and El Salvador during Ronald Reagan's presidency and intervention in those countries. So my personal path led me to be critical of dominant religious and political paradigms in the U.S. and open to counter-cultural views of the world and alternative religious communities like contemporary Paganism. In my published work on Paganism, I discussed some cases of activism, but activism was not a major focus of my work until I began researching *For the Wild*.

What did it mean for you to recognize that the spiritual/ritual perspective could be a key to understanding radical eco-activism? Why is it important to highlight this perspective, and how can it contribute to contemporary debate?

Some contemporary Pagans that I knew were environmental activists and I had read about the well-known ecofeminist and Pagan writer Starhawk's activism. As I mention in *For the Wild*, Pagans participated in, and conducted ritual around, anti-nuclear actions against the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, and the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which made nuclear weapons. These protests took place in California in the 1970s and early 1980s. Earlier scholarly research on Earth First! (EF!), such as Bron Taylor's 2009 book *Dark Green Religion*, highlighted the spiritual aspects of EF! As I read about eco-actions and animal rights actions in the news in the 2000s, there was no mention of spirituality or ritual. But the language with which activists talked about their commitments expressed the view of trees and non-human animals as sacred, even though many of these groups, such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) were explicitly anarchist.

As for ritual, it has been an interest of mine for a long time, paying attention to what people *do* as well as what they believe. Over the years, I've been particularly inspired by the work of ritual studies scholar Ronald Grimes, who wrote a couple of great essays on ritual and the environment years ago, as well as numerous books and articles about ritual in many different contexts. In his essay "Performance is

² Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2001; Ead., *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*, Columbia University Press, Berkeley 2004.

Currency in the Deep World's Gift Economy: An Incantatory Riff for a Global Medicine Show" (2002), Grimes argues that too much environmentalism focuses on formulating ethical principles. Rather, as Grimes suggests, following poet Gary Snyder, "performance" is the currency we should be using to address our current environmental crises. We should be trying to figure out what actions, might save the planet. Protests, for me, are this kind of performance. I use the term "performance" as Grimes does, not intending to trivialize these actions, but taking them seriously.

Rituals are sensual and material, so as ethnographers we can understand them on multiple levels, not only intellectually. Emotions are often more visible in ritualized actions than in other contexts, and I wanted to understand what emotions, like rage and compassion, tell us and how these emotions motivated activists. Sometimes emotions drove them to participate in actions, and sometimes the emotions that arose during actions enhanced their radical commitments, especially because they arose in the context of being with like-minded others, of being in community. Ritualized practices create relationships among humans as well as between humans and other beings. These relationships are key to the commitments that activists (and the rest of us!) form to trees and animals.

The extensive research that led to For the Wild encompasses many disciplines. In particular, how have feminist and ecofeminist epistemologies influenced your work?

In graduate school, at Indiana University, my minor was Women's Studies, and at the time (late 1980s-1990s) Women's Studies at I. U. was a very robust program with high profile senior scholars of second-wave feminism. Early in my graduate school career, some of the faculty and students in that program invited the Pagan leader and feminist activist Starhawk to campus and I found her talk about patriarchal structures and the suppression of goddess religion very compelling. It was the first time I encountered someone making connections between environmental issues, feminism, and religion. Before Starhawk's visit, I knew little about contemporary Paganism. She made me curious about how feminists were creating new religious and spiritual communities that were earth-centered, more egalitarian, and inclusive of different sexual orientations and gender identities. In the first research paper I wrote on contemporary Paganism, for a graduate anthropology class, I interviewed local female witches and Pagan priestesses. My background in Women's Studies shaped the nature of my questions and my interlocutors, in turn, shaped my questions about ecofeminism. I was interested in how practicing Pagans connected the oppression of women to the oppression of the earth, if at all. Many of them did, but by no means all. Those that did were very explicit about the ways that feminism was embodied in their practices.

In my women's studies courses, I encountered the work of feminist and gender studies scholar Judith Butler's work on the body, identity, and performance. The piece of hers that most influenced *For the Wild* is about how protesters' bodies occupy and appropriate public space during political protests, which she discusses in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015). In the book she argues for the need for gender politics to ally with social justice struggles, in this case Egyptian protests during the Arab Spring.

Your ethnographic work has the value of being conducted in the field through participatory research. How did you approach the activist communities and individual activists involved in your research project? How did they respond to your proposal and to the focus you wanted to give to this work? How did you structure your dialogue with them?

My research for the book began with letter writing, rather than participant-observation, as I tested the waters. I was worried about the anonymity and safety of activists involved with illegal actions, so I started with those already serving prison sentences. Why would young people risk their lives and liberty for trees and animals? I wanted to understand and to talk about their commitments in ways that challenged the dominant media narrative of the time (early-mid 2000s), about “eco-terrorists.” Such demonizing and scapegoating is always suspicious – what complexities did it hide? Most of the imprisoned activists I wrote to wrote me back and were extremely thoughtful in responding to my questions about what motivated them. Of course, they had time on their hands to write and to think about the trajectories that resulted in their persecution and prosecution. The stories they shared with me fundamentally shaped the direction of my research.

When I started doing fieldwork, I wrote to the organizers of events and let them know I was coming. No one ever told me not to come, but one organizing committee asked me to only talk about my own experience, not about other participants. This constraint ended up being fruitful, as it made me turn my focus inward. In general, almost everyone was very helpful and willing to speak to me. I anonymized identities and used their chosen forest names with permission unless they wanted to be referred to differently – I always asked their preference. For anyone quoted in the published manuscript, I asked permission for each quote, often several years after the interview had taken place. Almost everyone gave their permission, with the exception of two activists. One of them asked me not to include any of their quotes: their life had changed and they did not want to be associated with comments they had made years before. Another activist asked me not to use some of her quotes, while others she allowed me to keep. These two people had changed their minds on some issues – their lives had moved in different directions. I was frustrated because they were really great quotes! But I respected the fact that our lives are dynamic and as we get older, we don’t always see things as our younger selves did.

The theme of childhood's relationship with nature, both experienced and remembered, emerges forcefully in your essay. You yourself recall the figure of Rachel Carson and her encouragement to cultivate in children a sense of wonder for the natural world. Did you expect to find such a strong influence of childhood experiences and memories of love and wonder in the genesis of activist identity?

I thought it might be the case, because my earlier research with contemporary Pagans also revealed childhood as an important touchstone in narratives about becoming a Pagan. So I was looking for the role of childhood in adult identity and commitments, or at least the role of childhood in narratives of self-development that activists related to me. Still, I have been somewhat surprised at how the story of having a close relationship with a place in nature, a tree, or a particular animal resonated with so many readers of my book who remembered their own childhood experiences through these activists’ accounts. Because remembering is contextual and shaped by the present, rather than being a replay of what actually happened, childhood is remembered in particular ways within activist communities. I had

already been interested in childhood experiences, but activists' descriptions of how childhood experiences led to their commitments to animals and trees, to their willingness to risk their lives and freedom for these others, helped me understand how important love and empathy were in motivating them to put their bodies on the line.

As you point out in one section of the book, children are increasingly “enclosure”, separated from empathic contact with nature. This is both a physical and emotional deprivation that affects the entire emotional spectrum: wonder, awe, and love, but also anger, grief, and mourning – emotions often sugarcoated by adults. How important is it for a child to also experience these “dark” emotions in their relationships with otherness?

The loss of free play in nature, the loss of a full spectrum of experiences outdoors, whether urban or rural, is a huge issue in the U.S., as in many other places where children increasingly spend many hours every day in front of screens. Without real connections to the plants, animals, and landscapes that make up our world, it is hard to care about what happens to them. Experiences of wonder may happen in front of screens, but they do not fully involve the senses as experiences of wonder in nature do. As for anger, grief, and mourning, I frequently discuss these darker emotions with my students when I teach courses on religion and ecology. They find some of my course content (statistics on species extinctions, writings on roadkill) hard to take and so we discuss the grief that comes up, that at the very least witnessing what is happening is important, even when we don't feel equipped, for whatever reason, to do something about it. Many of us have lost so much — forests, species, connection to the places in which we live. On some level we recognize this loss, but we don't speak of it and so grief and anger fester. I suspect these suppressed emotions are a cause, among others of course, of depression and loneliness. Voicing and experiencing these feelings of loss, rather than ignoring seems healthier emotionally. Philosopher Glenn Albrecht called this kind of ecological grief “solastagia”, and other writers such as Jennifer Atkinson have also begun to talk about “climate anxiety,” “eco-guilt,” and “eco-grief.” Mourning rituals, such as funerals for lost species, are an interesting ritual response to these feelings, as, of course, are other kinds of protests described in my book.

You emphasize the process of becoming-activist, which I call ontogenesis, as a coevolutionary process of identity that involves relationships with the nonhuman, beginning with the bodily and cognitive porosity typical of childhood. But this porosity often manifests itself in adult life, as you also discuss in a recent article³, when individuals participate in events/situations that stimulate these transitions. Regarding the permeability of individual and interspecies boundaries, and the assemblages of identities, how have the posthumanist and agential realist perspectives – explored by scholars such as Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Anna Tsing, and Stacy Alaimo – informed your research?

Most of these scholars have had an important impact on my research, writing, and teaching. Donna Haraway was the first of them I encountered (*When Species Meet* and other works) and she profoundly shifted my thinking on what it means to be human in a world of other species. Later, I discovered others who have promoted the new ontologies (Barad, Bennett, Tsing, etc.). Although I had not already formulated

³ Sarah M. Pike, *Leaving Traces. Transformative Events and the Porosity of Humans and Environment*, “Journal of Festive Studies”, Vol. 5, 2023, pp. 91-109: <https://doi.org/10.33823/jfs.2023.5.1.115>.

my thoughts, their points seemed so obvious when I first read them – I mean of course we are not bounded entities separate from the rest of the living world! But we conduct our lives as if we are. And of course these others have agency. These scholars remind us of our interconnectedness with other beings. Many other cultures assume these connections as taken-for-granted, and include “vibrant matter” in the living world (see David Haberman’s *Loving Stones* for a beautifully rendered account of relationships with stones). Since I taught about Indigenous cultures in my classes for many years, these more recent notions of interspecies relationships did not seem especially revolutionary, but they offered a theoretical framework that was very helpful.

Beyond the memory of childhood experiences, another crucial moment that emerges from the activists' biographies is adolescence and early adulthood, when empathy and ethical tension take the form of dissent against a society deemed unjust and destructive; when grief and anger for the loss of places and otherness find expression in direct action. While childhood empathy is paternalistically viewed as naïve, youthful dissent is criticized and opposed by mainstream culture. How do you explain this lack of interest in deeply exploring these evolutionary passages, in which identity, spirituality, and worldviews take shape?

Teenagers and young adults are scapegoated and demonized or dismissed as naïve and idealistic. As a culture we often trivialize the insights of young people because of their changeable nature and their age. Their identities are often in flux and unstable, which allows for a kind of freedom to choose new paths in their lives, both in terms of ethical commitments and spiritual worlds. Perhaps the lack of interest, demonization, trivialization or other ways of marginalizing youth are because older adults have lost the freedom to choose. We are locked into careers, families, and other commitments that make it much harder to imagine different selves, other ways of being in the world. Many activists I spoke with or wrote to remembered their adolescence and young adulthood as a time when their identities were not yet set and they were searching for meaning. What could be more interesting than to explore what this meant to their lives taking shape?

The values and belief systems that emerge from your research are extremely diverse, often syncretisms or some forms of atheism/agnosticism integrated with some element of non-institutional spirituality. What they have in common is the symbolic center of the natural world and nonhuman animals, towards which a reverential attitude is required. Is it correct, in your opinion, to define it as an immanentist and transcendentalist vision, albeit with all the necessary nuances?

There are so many individual variations of belief systems in the communities I worked with (Paganism, Buddhism, Vedantic Hinduism, even Christianity, though I only met a few Christians), as well as atheism or agnosticism. I would not want to define “it” in any particular way. Both immanence and transcendence characterize some activists’ beliefs, though immanence was more common. Yes, the natural world and nonhuman animals were the symbolic center for many activists I met. For some of them, these others were more important than humans. Reverence and care towards nonhuman beings were emphasized, as well as our kinship with them. While animals and trees were sacralized, humans were not always treated with the same care. Misanthropy was not uncommon in these communities because of anger over the damage humans have done to the nonhuman world. I have a lot of sympathy for those activists who imagine a world without humans (usually making an exception for Indigenous communities). It is hard to teach courses on human-nonhuman animal

relationships, as I do, without blaming humans for the suffering enacted on other living beings. Of course, humans are caught in structures that facilitate treating other living beings as objects – these are systemic issues as well as personal choices.

In one passage, you say: "While some activists see the body of the Earth as Gaia or trees as gods and goddesses, most emphasize the sacredness of the relationships we forge with other creatures and the resulting sacred duties and responsibilities we have toward them." If it is the relationship that is sacred, can we say that the activists' ritual modalities – as ways of being in relationship – find their raison d'être in the push to sacralize otherness?

That's an interesting way to put it. To some extent, yes, activists sacralize otherness. Often, the connection with others, not otherness, is sacralized. In some cases, the emphasis is on identification with nonhuman beings: trees and animals feel pain, *like us*. On the other hand, for some activists, misanthropy means that what is not human may become more sacred, especially the beings humans have harmed. In this case, otherness is emphasized and sacralized.

You identify ritual aspects of eco-activism through patterns that recall rites of passage, conversion, or initiation, collective rites such as mourning, and what you call "rites of protest." In all these cases, there is a transformation of individuals and group dynamics, but also of the space in which these ritual actions occur. What role does spatiality play in these contexts? Can we speak of the co-agency of spaces?

Absolutely. Ritual spaces are a particular interest of mine and analysis of them runs through my published work. In the case of forest activism such as tree-sits, weather, trees, and forest creatures act on activists. Spaces may elicit particular emotions because of their beauty, or because they come to feel like "home," but also, in some cases after logging or other forms of extraction, because of their devastation. Topophilia, the love of places, is certainly important in motivating activists. But so is the opposite, grief over a desecrated space. I describe stories shared with me of grief over the loss of beloved places in my book. These stories were among the most moving and compelling to me, and triggered my own grief over the destruction we humans have wrought on this planet and its creatures. In both their presence and their absence (a clearcut forest), places act on us. When protest actions are done at or near a site of damage, such as a logging clearcut or as the Alberta Tar Sands, an unmolested forest is a powerful antidote to the image of a space of desecration.

In your fieldwork, you've observed many other aspects and dynamics within radical eco-activist movements: the practice of community building, the effort to negotiate and mediate diverse tensions, the search for intersectionality with gender, queer, and transgender issues, and with ethnic and colonial ones. What potential do you see lying within these large-scale eco-social experiments?

These movements can show us possible ways forward because they have the courage to experiment with new ways of being in the world. Although activist communities sometimes get bogged down in making sure every voice is heard and in processing tensions and disagreements, there is courage in calling out what we often ignore (transphobia, white privilege, etc.). They all agree that what we are doing now (corporate capitalism, separation from nature, injustice to other humans) is not working, but they have many different views on what should change and how to effect social transformation. Activist gatherings and communities have often been at the forefront of social change in terms of drawing our attention to important social issues such as white privilege. Since I was often older than many participants in

activist spaces, I found other participants unrealistically idealistic, which was both frustrating and refreshing. I had to examine my own accommodation to oppressive systems, such as those in the academy. We easily forget what it means to be idealistic once we have settled in a career or life that becomes routine.

When activists from across the country or region come together for a gathering or a big action there is a lot of cross-fertilization. It was at activist gatherings in the U.S. that I first heard the concept of decolonization, which is central to work I'm doing now. As utopian spaces that allow for a multitude of voices, that promote ferment and experimentation, activist communities are essential for working out our future.

Compared to 2017, when For the Wild was released, we seem to have regressed (see Donald Trump's return to the US presidency), but at a faster and more ferocious ratio, in terms of environmental devastation, extractivism, repression of dissent, and social disintegration. How has your perspective developed over the years? What developments have you observed in US eco-activism, in relation to the topics you address in your book?

While this regression is terribly disturbing globally, the Trump administration in the U.S. has been particularly destructive, given the place of the U.S. as a global superpower: the aggressive dismantling of environmental protections and programs to reduce our fossil fuel emissions, wholehearted support for the fossil fuel industry and its environmentally and socially devastating extractive practices, and, of course, all the many social justice issues raised by repressive current U.S. government policies (ICE, dismantling of DEI programs, and on and on). While eco-activism continues, my sense is that it is more subdued and more dispersed. The stakes are high, the fear of unjust and violent treatment is real. Many eco-activists are putting time and energy towards fighting the many awful developments that are taking place under the Trump administration. Instead of climate crisis protests, I am seeing more "No More Kings" protests, directly aimed at the Trump administration. What is hopeful for me are changes happening in many parts of the U.S., but especially in my part of the country (northern California). One important development is the ascendancy of Indigenous power. Slow to spread and long overdue, these are nevertheless significant changes: increasing numbers of young Native scholars and leaders in the academy and elsewhere, "Land Back" actually happening as tribes re-acquire their ancestral lands, the resurgence of cultural fire and other ITEK (Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge) initiatives, tribally-led species restoration projects (condors, bison, salmon), and the removal of dams from rivers, accomplished through partnerships between tribes and environmental groups.

Still on the current situation, we see the growing use of a distorted religious paradigm (see the narrative of white Christian nationalism) in far-right proposals around the world. The feeling, at least in Italy, is that socio-environmental activism has neglected to address the spiritual dimension as part of a situated cosmopolitics, leaving untended a terrain for other forces to insinuate themselves. What are your thoughts on this? How important is it to integrate this dimension within movements committed to change?

Environmental activism in the U.S. has a history of (limited) engagement with spirituality, especially in the form of contemporary Paganism, or "spiritual but not religious identities." Nevertheless, like other social movements activism has

sometimes neglected the spiritual dimension of human experience. In *For the Wild* I outline a bit of the history of this engagement, though not in depth, since the focus of the book is ethnographic rather than historical. I discuss Pagans' involvement in anti-nuclear activism in the 1970s and suggest some ways in which Paganism may have influenced more recent activist communities, though spirituality is often trivialized as "woo" in these communities and not taken seriously. Questions of meaning, of what matters most to people, are really questions about religion and spirituality, broadly defined. They orient us to the world around us and to the future we want to create; if we fail to acknowledge what matters most, what is sacred to us, then we miss an essential dimension of human life.

In my introduction to the Italian edition, I thought it was important to mention two elements that are missing in Europe, both physically and in collective memory: wilderness and indigenous cultures, two elements that seem fundamental in shaping the cultural milieu from which US eco-activism emerges. How have these two "presences" played a role in your experience and your research? How have decolonial perspectives and indigenous epistemologies influenced your work?

The concept of the wild is problematic, especially in the U.S. historical context in which Europeans justified a campaign of land grabs predicated on the idea that the continent was an untamed "wilderness" and that the continent's Indigenous inhabitants were doing "nothing" with the land. Fortunately, increasing understanding of the extent of land management by Indigenous cultures has punctured that lie. Oral history, culturally inherited practices, archaeology, and anthropology have all helped deepen knowledge about the extensive land-tending practices that took place for millennia before colonization and were responsible for the beauty and "wildness" that so enchanted and sometimes terrified Europeans. Indigenous perspectives that I have learned from working with local tribes have profoundly influenced my understanding of the landscape – I see a forest or meadow completely differently than I would have before working with them. I see the history of colonization in the plant communities and the shape of a forest. In addition to local Indigenous teachers, the work of Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer and Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Powys Whyte has been particularly influential on my understanding of settler colonialism and the environment, as well as various meanings of decolonization.

Before colonization, Native people in most parts of what is now the United States were wildland managers who carefully tended the landscape. Their relationship with the land around them was intentional and included practices that shaped the landscape towards specific ends: food, basketry, and medicine. In California, fire (intentional, seasonal burning) was their most important stewardship tool. Native communities treated fire as an ally to increase biodiversity, improve basket materials, control pests and diseases, enhance the growth of grasses and bulbs, germinate seeds, encourage mushroom growth, and reduce the chances of high-intensity fires.

So the land was not an empty wilderness and uncared for by any means, even though many Europeans conveniently saw it that way. Disease had already begun its work when Europeans started to settle the landscape. First contact with explorers and fur traders, to name two examples, had earlier spread disease among Indigenous populations, so that in many cases Native populations had already been devastated. For instance, when European explorers first arrived on the west coast of the North

America in the 1600s, an estimated 310,000 people lived in what is now California. By the 1850s, Indigenous populations in California had dwindled to a shocking 30,000. Most eco-activists I worked with were aware of this history, which often fueled their misanthropy, aimed at their ancestors, and further committed them to decolonization and to supporting Indigenous communities. My work has explored the ways in which Pagan communities and activist communities debate decolonization and cultural appropriation, often turning a critical lens on their own communities.

I know you are working on ecological restoration and rewilding projects with some Native Californian communities. How did you get involved with these practices? What meaning do you give to rewilding – which is another important topic in your book?

I became involved with restoration work after a catastrophic wildfire, the 2018 Camp Fire, took place just ten miles away from my home. Due to this megafire, 150,000 acres of land burned, 14,000 homes were destroyed, 85 people were killed, 52,000 displaced, an estimated 1 million trees died, thousands of companion animals died, and untold numbers of wild animals. Although I never intended to write about the fire, I became involved a few months after the fire with planning a memorial ritual and art installation on my campus. Many faculty, staff and students had lost their homes and loved ones, or knew someone who had. In planning the memorial, I had the opportunity to speak with many fire victims who had lost everything, whose beloved animals had died in the fire, whose beloved landscapes were nothing but ashes. Their experiences touched me deeply and made me want to learn more about how the disaster had come about. I also wanted to get my hands in the soil and help heal and restore devastated landscapes. So I began volunteering at an Indigenous-led native plant restoration project. Through that experience I learned more about the ecological impact of colonization. I already knew quite a lot about the cultural genocide that had been perpetrated on Native communities, and that it was especially brutal, state-sponsored violence in California. However, I was unaware of the ecocide that was deeply connected to the massacre and removal of indigenous people from their ancestral lands and the invasion of these lands by settlers with their non-native plants and animals. These twinned events transformed eco-systems and contributed to many of the problems that have led to California's catastrophic wildfires in the past decades. Restoring Indigenous stewardship of the land is one way to reverse this damage.

Finally, and thanking you for taking the time to answer this interview, I'd love to hear about any other projects you have underway or planned for the future.

Thank you Rebecca, for so many thoughtful questions. I am grateful for your close reading of my work and for your drawing attention to many of the central issues in the book in insightful and interesting ways. Your questions helped me see some of these issues a bit differently too, for which I am grateful.

I am currently working on an ethnography about restoration work as ritualized practice in post-wildfire landscapes. The book will be divided into sections on earth, air, water, and fire, with a focus on collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. For instance, I have written the chapter on earth, which is about an Indigenous-led native plant garden restoration project. In this chapter I look

at how removing invasives and sowing and nurturing native seeds are ritualized ways of repairing the land as well as reparations (for non-Indigenous participants) for the ills of colonialism. These practices inscribe tribal identity on the landscape and continue millennias-old relationships between local tribes and native plants and animals. I'm currently working on the fire chapter, which focuses on how cultural fire practitioners have shaped the larger prescribed fire movement in northern California and how the spread of their cultural knowledge and land-tending with fire is working to decolonize the landscape, as well as reduce the risk of catastrophic fires.