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Podcast Transcript

Version 1.1, 6 July 2018

Ecospirituality, Gender and Nature

Podcast with **Susannah Crockford** (1 October 2018).

Interviewed by **Christopher Cotter.**

Transcribed by **Helen Bradstock**.

Audio and transcript available at:

http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/ecospirituality-gender-and nature/

Christopher Cotter (**C.C**.): *In some contexts, asking the question "what gender is nature?" might provoke a condescending response – "of course nature doesn't have a gender". Yet, despite this naturalistic – get it? – response, in an enormous array of contemporary and historic discourses we find nature being gendered . . . and, in many cases, this gender is female. Is, as Sherry Ortner once asked, Female to Nature as Male is to Culture? Where does this discourse come from? How does this gendering of nature intersect with contemporary forms of ecospirituality? And religion more generally? Why does it matter? And for whom? Joining me today to discuss these questions and more is Dr Susannah Crockford of Ghent University. So for a start, Susannah, to the Religious Studies Project, welcome!*

Susannah Crockford (**SC**): Thank you! Welcome.

CC: *We are recording in Bern, at the European Association for the Study of Religion Conference, where Susannah has been delivering a paper earlier on called "What Gender is nature? An Approach to New Age Ecospirituality in Theory and Practice." So I had the pleasure of being in the room. But before we get to today's conversation I'll just tell you that Dr Crockford's a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Literary Studies at Ghent University, which works on the NARMESH, or Narrating the Mesh project, investigating the contemporary narrative of the interrelations between humans and large gamut of non-human realities and its potential for staging, challenging and expanding the human imagination of the non-human. The research interests centre on the use of ethnography to explore narratives of spirituality, millenarianism and climate change. Her doctoral thesis was entitled "After the American Dream: Political Economy and Spirituality in Northern Arizona". And that was awarded in July 2017 by LSE, following which she spent 9 months as a research officer for INFORM*

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or the Information Network on New Religious Movements. And she has a number of forthcoming articles and chapters on topics relevant to today's interview coming out in Religion, State and Society, Correspondences, Novo Religio *and the* Dictionary of Contemporary Esotericism. *So, watch this space! I suppose some of them might have changed from forthcoming to published by the time this goes out, who knows?*

SC: Probably. Hopefully. You never know.

CC: *Yes. Academic publishing is a wonderful, wonderful world!*

SC: We love it. We love it. (Laughs).

CC: *So, we're going to get to your case study in Arizona soon, but first of all: gender, nature, ecospirituality – how do you get here?*

SC: How did I get here was very much through my fieldwork. Because these were the kind-of topics that came up when I was in Sedona and other places in Arizona. People talked about nature in a very gendered way. It was very striking to me just how much these discourses came up. So it was very much an empirical interest. I didn't really set out to study ecological issues, or ecospirituality. I mean, I thought nature would be relevant when I got to the field. But I wasn't so concerned with gender. But it's kind-of one of these topics that it was going to be in my thesis, and then I didn't have space. So I kind-of pushed it to one side. And then, for this conference, it kind-of came back. And I was like, "Oh yes! Now I can write my thing about gender and ecospirituality" and how New Age spirituality really kind-of inverts this gender binary, I think in a quite interesting, but also problematic, way. So that's how it came about.

CC: *Well how did you, more broadly, end up in Arizona?*

SC: That's a really good question. And, I mean, there are several ways that I can date it back to. But let's just say for the sake of simplicity I ended up in Arizona because I wanted to do a project on contemporary esotericism and I discovered Sedona, which is in Arizona, through a quite tragic case, actually of James Arthur Ray. He set himself up as this spiritual guru. And he ran a sweat lodge as part of a longer Rainbow Warrior workshop, where people paid $9000 to go and "unleash your spiritual warrior within". And it was held in Sedona. And then three people died in this sweat lodge. It was in 2009. And I was reading about that in the news, because I was doing a lot of work on Shamanism at the time. And I was like, "Oh, That's terrible." But then I was like, "Oh there's this place called

Sedona that's full of these New Age people and full of these things that they call vortexes. That would be a great place for an ethnographic study on contemporary esotericism!" So that, very briefly, is how I ended up in Arizona doing my fieldwork.

CC: *I could ask you now to introduce us to Sedona, but maybe I should say first of all – because ecospirituality's going to be coming up probably throughout the introduction . . . . So I know this is a very broad question but, in terms of the next twenty minutes, what are we meaning by ecospirituality? And then we'll hear more about it.*

SC: Yes, so I'm going to define it in a really simple way – which obviously some people might find simplistic – but: finding nature is, in some form, divinised, or finding divinity in nature. And doing that outside of the framework of some organised religion. So I think the difference between ecospirituality and say, like the Pope's Encyclical on Climate Change, for example. Like you can be concerned for the environment as a mainstream Christian, but I don't think that's ecospirituality. Because God, specifically, is not *in* nature for them. For people who are in some way engaged in ecospirituality the divine is *in* nature. It's pantheistic. And it comes up in lots of different forms. Paganism is obviously a really prominent one, Wicca, and it's obviously very prominent in New Age spiritualties that see nature as part of the energy of the universe, but in a very kind-of high vibrational form. So the energy of nature is one that has a very kind-of high spiritual level. So there's a very clear association between nature and spirituality and, as we'll get onto, women and femininity.

CC: *And so it's not environmentalism, and things like that?*

SC: No. And that's actually one of the main points I was making, today: that just because you find spirituality in nature, you think that nature has something to do with your understanding of God, doesn't mean that you will actually engage in actions that might be considered environmentally friendly, or ecologically engaged, or in fact have anything to do with mitigating largescale ecological problems like pollution and climate change. These are separate things.

CC: *Yes. And to the audio editors, we're going to start banging the table!*

SC: Sorry, I need to gesticulate!

CC: *It's alright. Hit me, instead of the table.*

Both: (Laugh).

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CC: *Right. So let's set the scene then. So, Sedona – a small town in Arizona. What makes it so interesting? You mentioned the vortexes earlier and things . . .*

SC: Yes. So Sedona is a fascinating town. It is in Northern Arizona, which is higher up than Southern Arizona. So it's not low desert with the big Saguaro cactuses which come to most people's minds when they think about Arizona. It's up in the mountains, it gets cold in the winter. They even have snow sometimes, but it's also still, quite hot. Sedona has a river – which is quite rare in Arizona. So it has a fresh water source. So it has the incredible kind-of red rock canyons and the river running through it. There's trees growing everywhere. So it's very different from the rest of Arizona. And it's this sense of landscape that is both striking and substantially different from that around it which I think makes it stand up in human perception as something that this is different enough that "I will perceive it, in some way, maybe, sublime – or even something to do with the divine." Because a lot of people who live there think that Sedona is a sacred space, whether or not they're engaged in New Age spirituality. People I spoke to there who were Christians said, you know, "This is a place where God has kind-of bestowed something special on the human race." Because it is a very beautiful place. So it's a town of about 17000 people. It is within the Red Rock Canyon. It has one main highway and then another bit splits off to a slightly southern community that's called the Village of Oak Creek. But they're all basically Sedona, they're all pretty much one place. Even though municipally they're two different places. And Sedona is a tourist resort. It has a lot of kind-of hotels and it has a lot of spas and timeshares, and people go there to enjoy nature, to go on holiday. A lot of people who own property there, own it as a second home. There's even some kind-of super-rich people there, like John McCain who's a Republican Senator, Sharon Stone apparently owned a house up the hill from where I first rented a room, in uptown. So there's these three main locations in Sedona. Uptown has a lot of the stores and a lot of the very wealthy houses. You've got West Sedona where there's a lot of the services, like the Post Office and the school. And it's where a lot of my informants lived, because it's a lot cheaper. And then you've got the village of Oak Creek which where a lot of retirees live. Because it's a good place. There's this phenomena in America of Snowbirds – of people who, once they retire, go and live somewhere sunny for the winter. And then, for the hot months – which are very, very hot – they go back up north to Michigan or Canada or wherever they're from. So there's a lot of Snowbirds in Sedona. So, as a town, it's quite . . . I don't know, it's quite typical of small town America in lots of ways. You know, there's the older people who own all the property and the young people work all the jobs, but don't really have any resources. And then you've also got these things called vortexes. So there's two ways of talking about the vortexes. Either you can say that there's four, around town, which

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are all these kind-of very prominent red rock formations. There are lots of other red rock formations and they have all kinds of names. There's one called Snoopy, because it looks a bit like Snoopy lying on his back. I never quite saw it myself, but you know people told me it looked like Snoopy anyway. And there's Cathedral Rock which apparently used to be called Court Rock. And there's another rock called Courthouse rock. And they got mixed up, and then suddenly Cathedral Rock became Cathedral Rock instead. So this is kind-of like historicity to the naming of the rocks. But they're also given this kind-of eternal, almost like Eliadian essence of the divine, where people say, "No. They have this special energy. The Native Americans knew about this special energy, that's why it was sacred to the local tribe s that lived here." And the reason that people now say there are vortexes there is because this energy emanates from the earth - you know, it's a real part of the landscape and that's why we're drawn there. So people do move there to go and have spiritual experiences. You know, people go on vacations and you know, there's a lot of services there that cater for this market as well. You can get your aura photograph taken, you can go on a vortex tour. You can have a Shaman take you round to power spots and do rituals with you. So there is a market to it. But there's also people who genuinely engage with these practices and move there because they feel like it's a part of their spiritual path. They move there. They would tell me that they were called to Sedona that "the energy drew them in". And then if they had to leave it was "the energy that spat them out". And some people would say it was quite a common discourse in Sedona, that the energy could get so intense it could literally drive you crazy. There was a story of a woman who said that she had to leave because "the Red Rocks were screaming at her". So, you know. There's this idea that this is a very special place, it's a very sacred place. But it's also incredibly intense, and it can be very difficult to live there, both materially and spiritually – if that's how you kind-of experience your world.

CC: *So that's an excellent scene-setting for the milieu, and the spiritual milieu in Sedona. But let's focus in on the role of nature in this context, and these practices – and then also on gender. I imagine that you can probably talk about those at the same time.*

SC: Yes. So nature is really prominent. I mean it would be prominent even with people who didn't in any way engage with New Age spirituality. And something I should probably say here is that no-one actually called themselves a "New Ager" in Sedona. There was a shop called Centre for the New Age which has psychic where you can go and pay for readings. But if you ask people, "Are you a New Ager?" they would say, "No." They call it spirituality and they're quite comfortable with that. They don't really care about all out disciplinary arguments about what's spirituality, and what's religion, and what's what. They just say, "Yes, I'm spiritual." Or "Yes, I'm interested in spirituality." But they

would never really call themselves New Agers – unless they were trying to sell a certain product and it helped them as a label. So the people who were engaged in some way in spirituality very often identified nature as a very prominent source of what they would consider kind-of spiritual practice. But also kind-of just the energy of the place. So for some people being spiritual literally just entailed going for hikes amongst the rocks, maybe meditating a bit, but just being close to the earth. And simply moving to Sedona was seen as way of getting closer to nature. Because it was this place of like astounding natural beauty. It was kind-of seen as embodying nature in a very visceral way. And you've also got other locations close by like the Grand Canyon, the San Francisco Peaks, which is a larger series of mountains that were also considered sacred and kind-of also embodied this idea of big nature in a similar way. So, when it comes to gender, the experience of nature as sacred was very often feminised in the way they spoke about it. So, you know, obviously mother Earth is quite a common one. But in Sedona they would also talk about the Father Sky. So there's this idea of gender emerging there already. So you've got Mother Earth on the one hand that complements father sky. They would talk about the divine feminine and the complement is the divine masculine. Now these are energies. And the shift that was once called the New Age – but now they talk about it much in terms like the ascension, they call it the shift, they call it the new paradigm – this is when the old male energies kind-of wither away and die and are supplanted with the dominance of the divine feminine. So the change that is called New Age spirituality, that change is a shift from something that's coded as male to something that's coded as female. And there are all kinds of associations with this gender binary. So male is aggressive, competitive, you know: men start wars, men destroy the planet, they have an extractive relationship to nature. Whereas the female principle is cooperative: it's very in tune with emotions and it's very connected to nature and celebrating the earth and being part of the earth. And so, something that came up in the panel today was . . . . This is a very old association between women and nature, but the way that association is framed is not always the same in all times and all places. So I thought one thing interesting that came up this morning was the feminine being associated with death, which made total sense to me. But that's not there in the context in Sedona. Women are about life, they are about producing life. The feminine is the mother, is the nurturer, is the care giver. You know, this is the divine feminine principle. So it's this very kind-of starkly-coded gender binary. And it doesn't really change anything from what are the kind-of general gender associations in America more generally. It just inverts it and says that the feminine is better than the masculine. And you know, basically, it's not even that women should be in charge – it's just that everyone should embrace the feminine within them, and that that complementarity is part of the way that we will progress spiritually and socially. But it doesn't really lend itself to any sense of action. And this is where we come back to

this idea that ecospirituality is not the same as environmentalism. My informants weren't in any way engaged in environmental politics. They didn't really do anything that could be seen as particularly environmentally friendly. And in fact in the whole kind-of cosmology of the shift, or the ascension, it's happening anyway. And the way it happens is like everyone working on their spiritual practice. It doesn't happen by you going on protests or you switching to an electric car, or whatever. It happens by you sitting at home and meditating. Now from another perspective, you could see how that doesn't help the environment at all. In fact, it breeds a certain passivity to social action. And means that people are going along with the same kind-of actions that are harming the planet. For example: driving cars, which release a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, carbon monoxide and all the other greenhouse gases. So there's no sense of social action or social change. It's all very inward. And everyone going on their spiritual path together cumulatively creates the change. It's like the 100th monkey idea. Do you know what that is?

CC: *Go for it.*

SC: Well it's like this credited idea from Bio-Anth – biological anthropology –

CC: *Yes*.

SC: – that if, like, a certain number of monkeys – say 100 – learn a specific skill it will spread out through the rest of the monkeys by, like, collective consciousness. So that's very dominant, at least amongst my informants in Sedona, that in fact it was detrimental to go out and do political action. I had this one informant who used to be very involved in NGOs, and going to other countries and trying to do development work. And then she said that all her protest work and all of her social action work had actually been making things worse, because she was so focussed on the negativity of these situations and instead she should stay in America and work on her spiritual path. And, you know, she did various kind-of workshops, and she was very much engaged in "embracing this divine feminine" herself. But that seems to basically involve going on these exclusive retreats to places like the Caribbean Islands, like the Bahamas, or like places in Aspen, Colorado, and getting women who had very high-paying jobs to go on them, so that they could go and "explore their divine feminine", "work on their consciousness", and "evolution", and "inner-conscious entrepreneur". And by doing that, she would help create way more positive action than she ever did working in NGOs. And, you know, so you can kind-of shift the perspective and go, "How is it helping by you kind-of creating all these places where everyone flies into these luxury resorts, has a lovely holiday, goes home, continues doing capitalism every day?" So . . .

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CC: *So you've done a good job of painting the relationship or lack of relationship, potentially, between environmentalism and ecospirituality, and sort of carving out what we're meaning there. And we've spoken about the entanglements of gender and constructions of nature. But how are the two, I guess, entangled? These two: the ecospirituality on the one hand and this gendering of nature. Are there example you can maybe give of that entanglement of the two?*

SC: So, how is ecospirituality entangled in gender? Well, I think it's very much in this idea associating nature with the feminine – and that both of those things are given a positive valence regardless of what those actions actually are. So I could get very frustrated, in fact, in the field, with people talking about things that are nature and natural as thought that means it's good for human health. So to take as an example: my informants generally liked to get water from the spring in Sedona because it came directly from the earth – and therefore it was good for them, right? But then it actually transpired that that stream had a very high level of naturally occurring anthrax, which is not good for human health. Now that's entirely natural, in the sense that humans didn't put it there. It was a part of the composition of the soil and the water in the area.

(Edited audio)

CC: *Susannah has a correction to make to what she just said!*

SC: Yes, so what I meant to say, instead of anthrax, was in fact arsenic. Arsenic is naturally occurring in water, not anthrax.

CC: *Back to the interview!*

(End of edit)

SC: Also, with the way this divine feminine principle got expressed in practice. So in my paper today, I talked about the work of an artist who . . . she did this whole series of paintings of the goddess. And it was all different kind-of instantiations of what she called the goddess energy. And it was all like faces of women growing out of trees, for example. And there's this wonderful one called Blue Corn Woman, which she attached to a re-evaluation of Hopi myth that had something to do them surviving Atlantis because they listened to earth and knew when to go underground. And therefore they survived the cataclysm that destroyed Atlantis. So she had a whole series of paintings in this way. And, in person, she would always talk about the Goddess and how that was how she kind-of tried to live her life – it was in celebration of this divine feminine principle. And then this led to this very kind-of

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difficult lifestyle that she had, where she didn't really want to go out and work because "emotionally, that didn't suit her". She wanted to do art, because that's how she "expressed her soul". But that meant she basically relied on men, who were variously infatuated with her, to support her financially. And she also had a fairly considerable drinking problem. And she drove her car while drunk. She had a blood alcohol level of like 0.3, now the legal limit is like 0.8 or 008, or something, so she was well over the legal limit. And she drove it into a fire station and wrecked the front of a fire station. And afterwards she was arrested, you know . . . the process . . . . Let out . . . she blamed the fact that she had experienced childhood trauma. And it wasn't that she was drunk, it was that she was having a "dissociative state" at the time, caused by her childhood trauma. So she, then, refused to come to court many times. She kept firing her lawyer. And this was . . . all she had to serve was a 90 day prison sentence and go on her way. And it took her three years to come to terms and just do that. So, why is this related to the divine feminine and nature? So it was this association between her emotions and her emotional state – the idea of herself as a woman and the idea of what is natural and what is natural for her – led to this lifestyle that is on one hand quite passive, and on the other hand not accepting any sense of social responsibility for her own action. Because she wasn't responsible because she'd experienced this trauma. Therefore her emotions were such that she just had to express them. And I felt that that was actually quite problematic. Because, on the one hand you've got ecospirituality that's seen as. . . in a way it's seen as inevitable – you don't have to do anything – so that breeds passivity on the social level. And then on a personal level it leads to a lack of accountability in your personal actions – or it can. Because you over-value your own emotions to the extent that the consequences of your emotional states are not dealt with. At least, I felt that in that case. Obviously I knew other people who, in different ways, were interested in kind-of the divine feminine aspects of spirituality. And they did quite productive things. So I don't want to try and claim that everyone was like this. I'm saying that this is like . . . . The worst excesses of this kind-of association could lead to this kind-of situation. I knew someone else, for example, who felt that the divine feminine principle was how she should express her spirituality and she held Goddess wisdom workshops, and they were very fun, and that was fine. (Laughs) But again, I felt like there was this very simplistic association between femininity, nature and the sense of goodness. Like . . . that it was somehow inherent, and that you would just somehow know, as a woman, by being natural, the right thing to do. And I don't think that that was always the case.

CC*: Excellent. So we're getting on in time, and I know I've got two more questions that I want to ask you before we get to the "what's next on the agenda, for your research". One is – you've just been*

speaking there a bit to this: what are the practical, social, political, real world – for want of a better term – effects of this gendering of nature, in your research experience? Why does it matter?

SC: OK. Why does it matter? I think it matters because we are in a time, in our society, when actually we really need to pay a great deal of attention to the environment and to ecology, not for the sake of the planet or of the environment in some disconnected way – because they will actually keep on going. What's happening in terms of climate change is the erosion of the habitability of the planet for humans. You know, we're destroying our own ecosystem, and we will be the ones that suffer for that eventually. And I think any of these discourses that kind-of separate off nature and the environment as something separate from humans are causing harm. And I think this particular kind-of ecospirituality in terms of the New Age, or whatever you want to a call it, is quite detrimental in terms of ecology, because it doesn't put any kind-of real world action to the forefront. I think meditating is great, but I also think you need to accompany it with some form of action that will make your goals happen instead of just sitting back and thinking that it will happen inevitably. It's like: prayer is great, but you should also get out there and do something about the social goals you want to achieve that go along with your religious ethics. So what I see a bit too much in this particular form is the "nature will just take care of these things." That somehow Mother Nature is this caring powerful being and that that means it's all going to be ok for humans. And that's not the case. If we continue destroying our ecosystems humans will not continue living. You know, society will not continue. The planet will find a way to go on, because it's the planet. So that's why, in real world terms, I think it matters. I think I'm being a bit more evaluative and normative than I would ever be if I wrote any of this down, right now!

CC: *That's ok, you know*.

SC: Is that ok? Because I really feel like that this is the defining important issue of our time. And if you're not paying attention to it, if you're not doing something useful about it, whatever that may be – even if it is just your individual actions – then actually, you're not helping. You're making things worse.

CC: *And just to riff on that normativity a little bit, I can imagine that actually, yes, part of this discourse enables people . . . like, people might feel that they* are *doing something.*

SC: Yes. No, they absolutely think they're doing . . . . They think they are the *only ones* that are doing something. Because they're meditating and expecting the shift any moment through enhancing themselves spiritually. Which . . . from a Religious Studies perspective it's fascinating! I could sit and

describe the cosmology all day. But if we're going to talk about real world effects and real problems, that's not helping.

CC: *Exactly. We should also just acknowledge that we've been speaking in terms of gender binaries here, but that is predominantly what's going on in the discourse. It is . . . we're talking in binaries.*

SC: Yes, so I very much . . . . Perhaps we should flag that up? I'm not saying, "I believe that these gender binaries are natural." I'm saying that in this context my informants naturalised these gender binaries: "There is male and there is female". They don't really think about any other formation of gender. And that's the way they see it. I'm not saying that normatively that's correct.

CC*: Exactly. So this is the Religious Studies Project. We've been floating around the topic of religion and spirituality here. But could we . . . . We probably could have described a lot of the stuff that was going on without needing to invoke those terms. So I'm just wondering what the role, what role these terms are playing, or if there's maybe other dynamics that could explain away this gendering of nature.*

SC: Yes, so I think I'm probably going to say something that will annoy lots of people who do Religious Studies. But I think that if we're going to talk about spirituality, for me it's a very specific thing which is this form of spirituality that was once called New Age. And it has a specific cosmology. And if you go out there amongst people who actually engage in these practices you can see it coming through. And I always say the basic tenet of it is that everything is energy and all energy vibrates at a specific frequency. So I think that spirituality, so defined, is kind-of one of the big religious shifts that we're currently going through. Spirituality isn't just something that happens in Sedona. It's not something that just happens in America. It's a global phenomenon. One of the things that happens to me a lot as I talk about my work – especially to other anthropologists, which is my background – they'll say, "Oh yes! People I know in Palestine are really into that, because it gets them over sectarian conflict." "People in Indonesia that I work with are really interested in that right now, as a form of healing." And it is spread around the globe. And it is offering people a way of doing religion that is not part of their typical traditional organised religion. And for some people that's just like a breath of fresh air. For some people that's, quite literally, a life-saver – that they don't have to engage in these old sectarian conflicts anymore; that they can create a new way forward without becoming secular. Because a lot of people don't actually want that. They want to still engage with some kind-of meta-empirical reality – whatever you want to use as a term for it. So I think that spirituality is a form of religion, and it's one of the growing forms of religion. And if you want to pay attention to the trends in

religion now, as it's actually lived and experienced on a daily basis, then you should really pay attention to spirituality – especially because it doesn't really show up on stats and censuses, because there's not really a box to tick for it. And also, people who are into spirituality really don't like definitions. They wouldn't really call themselves spiritual in that sense, but if you talk to them about what they do, and if you ask them if they're interested in spirituality they will "Yes", and suddenly they will come up with all of these fascinating things that they do. So I think it's something that has to be studied empirically through qualitative research. And I think it's something that is probably a lot more prevalent than we realise. Because it doesn't really show up on these top-down measurements that a lot of scholarship can rely on – not all of it, obviously.

CC: *(Laughs). So we have a whirlwind here. And, of course, we'll point listeners to these forthcoming works. And you're working on this NARMESH project, just now?*

SC: NARMESH, yes.

CC: *And so, you're probably going to say it's what's next for you. But do want to say a little bit about your work there, and also, perhaps, anything you would like to see happening in this field of gender, spirituality, nature?*

SC: Ok. So NARMESH is one of these ERC projects which . . . I'm kind-of discovering that they all have these kind-of acronyms for what they're called. It's from "narrating the mesh" which is from eco-theorist Timothy Morton's work. So, the mesh is his idea for how everything is interconnected. And our project is looking at narratives of the interconnection of humans and non-humans and climate. So the rest of the people on the project are looking at narratives in literary fiction – which is why I'm in the Literary Studies department – and I'm looking at personal narratives. So what I've been doing is taking interviews and doing some short bits of fieldwork amongst groups of people who are differently positioned in the wider climate change discourse. So that's climate scientists, radical environmentalists or kind-of eco-philosophers and, also, people who do not accept that climate change is happening – or if it is, they do not accept the human role in climate change. So, what we might call deniers or climate change sceptics. So that's my current work. I'm kind-of in the middle of doing the fieldwork for that over in Sweden, two weeks ago, amongst people who basically see the world as ending and that we're living through this kind-of destruction of the world. And "how do we kind-of create a new culture?" So that's what I've been doing most recently. In terms of gender, nature and eco spirituality, I think it's a really fascinating field and it's one that I think you can kind-of bring together a lot of diverse studies from antiquity, right through to contemporary work, to look at this kind-of question. You know: how

is nature gendered? What do we mean by goddess spirituality? And I think it is something that's quite neglected. I think it's something that, for a long time, got relegated to that kind-of "women's studies" area of Religious Studies, and a lot of people don't see it as particularly interesting or relevant. So I think it's one of those things, if people start looking at it and studying it, it will come up more and more as a really relevant and important part of everyday religious practice for a very widely placed diversity of people, in different traditions, and different historical periods and times.

CC: *And I'm sure that there's a lot more that we could get into just there now – but we have run out of time, Listeners. That was an excellent interview Susannah Crockford, and we're looking forward to all the interest that you will have piqued, and to hearing more from this developing project that you've got. NARMESH?*

SC: NARMESH, great. Thank you so much.

CC: *It does sound like a little farewell, doesn't it? Narmesh!*

SC: Narmesh!

Both: (Laugh).

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