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Podcast Transcript

Version 1.1, 16 March 2019

Challenges and Responsibilities for the Public Scholar of Religion

Podcast with **Megan Goodwin** (25 March 2019).

Interviewed by **Andrew Henry.**

Transcribed by **Helen Bradstock**.

Audio and transcript available at:

http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/challenges-and-responsibilities-for-the-public-scholar-of-religion/

Andrew Henry (**AH**)*: Welcome Listeners. I'm recording from Boston, at Northeastern University. I'm with Dr Megan Goodwin. She's a scholar of gender, sexuality and race, and contemporary American minority religions at Northeastern University. She's a visiting lecturer at Northeastern University and the programme director of a new initiative called "Sacred Writes"*

Megan Goodwin (**MG**): W-r-i-t-e-s.

AH: *Right, OK. Tell us a little bit about this new initiative.*

MG: So Liz Bucar and I last year worked on a grant that Liz proposed to ACLS and Luce for Religion Journalism and International affairs. And working on this Reporting Religion project we started conversations around what would best help shift the conversation around religion, right. How would you make the most impact with the work that folks were already doing in the academy and make sure that that's not a conversation that's only happening within the academy? So we spent last year proposing a project that helps train scholars to translate their work for non-experts and to think about partnering with media outlets – who were already doing fairly smart reporting, often on religion but are just under-sourced. And even when they're not under sourced they're not trained as experts in religion. So, how do we make the most out of both media expertise and religion expertise, and make that the most useful for folks who are not experts in media or religion?

AH: *So you're looking to be the creative bridge between the academy and . . . not just the general public – however we define that – but, specifically, journalist and media outlets.*

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MG: So we can think of it, I think, broadly as a communication breakdown, right? (I got that Led Zeppelin thing happening in my head.) So we are in a political moment where religion is deeply shaping so many facets of public life. At the same time religion is not something that gets taught as a subject of scholarly enquiry, right. It's something personal, it's something you do at home, it is not something that we're taught how to think about. So the folks who have been taught how to think about it have developed that expertise, but aren't trained to do that translation work. And frankly, largely speaking, institutions haven't valued that work as scholarship. It's seen as, potentially, "community service" or an amusing side-hobby for tech nerds, but not something that's serious scholarship, that people who are really invested in being intellectuals would ever really invest in. So the way that we're thinking about the work that Sacred Writes does is both helping scholars shift public conversations around religion – helping non-experts understand why they need to know something about religion in order to understand the election process, or the conversation about healthcare – and at the same time, hopefully, teaching institutions how to value that work as legitimate scholarship, as opposed to something we do for funsies.

AH: *So you've brought up a lot of interesting ideas here. And I want to try to take them systematically. And the one that you mentioned was how the discipline of Religious Studies, the academic discipline, values engaging the public. You mentioned that it would count as community service but presumably, if you're going up for tenure, the monographs from a good university press would count much more than running a podcast like this, for example?*

MG: Right. And best-case scenario is that it's seen as public service or a civic good. Worst case scenario, it works against your tenure case. And I certainly know folks who have raised this as an issue for reasons they've been denied tenure: that participating in public-facing work suggests a lack of investment in scholarly gravitas. So what we're hoping, as part of the outcome of Sacred Writes, is using this incredible pool of expertise that we've gathered in our leadership team to take those areas of expertise, and frankly the weight of those scholarly identities, back to institutions and help them understand that this is serious scholarship. And cultivate best practices for scholars who are interested in doing this work, so that their work can be legible, again, to non-experts but also to their own institutions. My thinking on this is largely informed by the work that Hannah McGregor is doing currently. She hosts a podcast called " Secret Feminist Agenda" (audio unclear) but one of the things that's really remarkable about Secret Feminist Agenda is that it's currently being experimentally peer reviewed (**5:00**). So there is a peer reviewing institution that is crafting a mechanism by which this

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work that she's doing, which is so smart but also so accessible, can be valued by her tenure granting institution. And I'm hoping that possibly in conversation with her, but certainly in conversation with our leadership team, we can think about what peer reviewing a podcast or a YouTube series might look like, so that it can count toward tenure, promotion, scholarly gravitas, being a valued part of the institution and not just, again, best-case scenario, something that you do for fun or something that you do in your spare time as community service.

AH: *So I want to focus in on this idea of why is public-facing scholarship – whether it's a podcast or a YouTube series – why is it looked down upon by some corners of the academy. Is it because there's a lack of nuance . . . like there's nuance being lost in that translation process from the scholarly to the public? So we, in the academy, are trained to be critical: trained to pull apart arguments. And I wonder if that plays into the scepticism of these public-facing outlets. Because you must necessarily go through this translation process to make academic research more accessible. And through that translation process nuance is lost, and therefore it invites more criticism and scrutiny from scholars.*

MG: So I think there are a couple of moving pieces here. The training criticism is, I think, a well-made point. But i also think there's frankly a counter-productive valuation of . . . trying to think of nice way to say this . . . . I think we often interpret nuance as

AH: *You could say it meanly, too!*

MG: OK. We don't value clear writing. And we don't value clear communication. And part of that is academic hazing. I think being the folks who had to read Hegel and Heidegger in order to read Derrida in order to make something of contemporary postmodern feminist thought, for example (I bring this up for no reason whatsoever; it certainly didn't impact my reading!) There's an expectation that your writing will reflect the complexity of your thought, right? And so I think we tend to elide complex thinking with complex writing. As someone who was trained in critical theory, as someone who attempts to write theory, it is so much harder to communicate abstract nuanced thinking in clear concise language. It is incredibly challenging. And possibly not something that everyone can do. I think there is a suspicion of folks who try to communicate with non-experts, despite the fact if for no other reason, this is where funding comes from, right? You never get funding for Religious Studies work from a Religious Studies specific-to-your-mini-discipline funding institution. You have to be able to say: this is the work that I'm doing and here is why you should care. It is, I think, a failing on our part that we can do that work in order to fund our own research, but we can't do that work to shift

the public conversation about why folks should care about religion. I also think, frankly, that there is – certainly not at Northeastern, but at some institutions – a devaluation of teaching over research. And not thinking about those two pieces as part of a whole scholarly identity. So when I'm thinking about public-facing work, I'm thinking about first and foremost it's a pedagogical challenge. How do I take these incredibly complicated ideas and get to the root of : here's why the public should care; here's why this should inform, frankly, how they're voting; how they're living in their communities; how they're thinking about . . . I've been watching a lot of "The Good Place" so forgive me . . . But how does this help us think about what we owe to each other as a society, right? If you work in an institution where not only is public-facing scholarship devalued but, frankly, pedagogy and teaching is devalued, how do you learn to see the value in translating your work to non-specialist audience? And, again, most of us are required to do that every week. You get in front of an audience of very highly paying non-experts and you explain to them why they should care (**10:00**). We in the academy talk a very good game, very often, about pedagogy or teaching and how much we value it, possibly in job interviews. I don't see that, frankly, translated into a whole lot of departmental politics. The folks that are most highly-valued at most institutions, small liberal arts colleges aside, are the folks that are turning out the most research. And frankly there's not a whole lot of departmental or institutional support for learning how to be good at teaching. And again small liberal arts colleges are an exception here. So again, I think the significance of the work that we're trying to do with Sacred Writes is potentially one we can think about as a pedagogical challenge. How do we teach these scholars to be teachers, not just of their students, but of the public? And how to we teach the institutions to recognise this? To be able to read this as legitimate scholarship? And I don't think that you have to sacrifice nuance. You have be patient. The pacing is different. And this is also I think a place where American Religion scholars maybe have a particular challenge. So some of my very closest friends in the academy are Islamicists and they get very grumpy at me because I can say things like, "the Civil War" and I can just expect everybody in the audience to know what I mean when I say the Civil War. I should be able to rely on them to know the time period, the basic political arguments there, as opposed to – I'm thinking very specifically of my friend Ilyse Morgenstein Fuerst who just wrote a book about *Religion, Rebels and Jihad* and how Muslims were coded specifically as inherently rebellious against the crown. The 1857 rebellion, I'm given to understand, was quite an important moment in Indian history. And the reason that I know that is because I read her book. Right? She can't just say, "the Rebellion". There is this necessary instruction of readers who are not experts in Islam or Indian history or Salvation history. Americanists don't have to do that. So I am thinking particularly of my own

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scholarship, I have had to learn from these experiences of folks who don't work on American Religion to say: what am I assuming when I go into these conversations? How can I help folks understand these incredibly intricate, multi-faceted historical moments without losing them, without not being able to explain why they should care? Right?

AH: *Yes. And this pedagogical challenge raises issues of religious literacy at this point. Where you can mention the Civil War in an American context and assume that there's a baseline knowledge there. But having taught undergraduates, that's often dangerous that there's baseline knowledge there.*

MG: True. Yes!

AH: *So, how does that introduce a further challenge to this work of public engagement? That you want to bring in nuance, you want to bring in complexity, but sometimes you just don't even know the difference between . . . your audience doesn't even know the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism.*

MG: Yes. So, you know what? Honestly, I think you have to earn nuance. If the American public doesn't know the difference between Catholics and Protestants and the scholarship of religion in the United States is – let's be generous – call it a hundred and fifty years old, what have we been doing for a hundred and fifty years that the public doesn't know the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant? That's on us. And I understand that the make-up of the United States has complicated public education about religion for some very important reasons. At the same time, and I'm thinking very specifically of . . . . I'm a product of a public school, right? I did my doctorate at UNC. So the first conversation we had every single semester was, "How does the work that we're doing when we teach serve Carolina, and serve the voters?" Right? These are folks who are going to be citizens or participate in the public sphere in some way. So how are we helping them do that? I think, I hope that public scholarship done well can first build baseline knowledge about how religion is functioning in the United States; how religion continues to function around the world; how that is wrapped up in things like power and colonialism and imperialism. And then, hopefully, we can get to a nuanced conversation of like, "You're really not understanding healthcare if you don't know something about the Conference of Catholic Bishops. You just don't." But first, yeah, you need to know what a Catholic is. So good, earn that and then you can have a conversation in public about why you need to know about the Catholic bishops' interference around reproductive justice.

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AH: *OK. We're going to think more broadly here, then. How would you rate the academic discipline of Religious Studies?* (**15:00**) *Like how successful is it at public engagement, in the past, let's say, five or six years? And we're both Religious Studies scholars here, so it's hard for us to see exactly how other disciplines are doing it. But I have at least enough friends in History departments that seem to be doing a pretty good job. There's dozens upon dozens of solid academic history podcasts, for example. How would you rate the discipline of Religious Studies in this endeavour? Because the reason why I ask is that there might be many people out there listening to this who say, "Hey, we're doing this already!" Like we're both on Twitter. There's a ton of Religious Studies scholars on Twitter. So to respond to those people that might say, "Hey, this is already happening! There's already committees at the American Academy of Religion doing this hard work."*

MG: I think you're right. I think History has been a really impressive force in trying to shape public conversations around nuance and historical nuance. I was particularly impressed with the conversation around medieval race and racism. That Twitter conversation blew up and resulted in a number of really smart pieces. And engaged thousands of people from all over the world. That was really impressive. The places where I see this being done really well, if I'm thinking Twitter I'm thinking the scholars who take the time to really translate their incredibly nuanced thinking to two hundred and forty characters, now, right? So, top of my list: Judith Weisenfeld – obviously; Anthea Butler – obviously; Nyasha Junior – obviously. It isn't, I don't think, an accident that these are all black women, who are incredibly nuanced thinkers but also participate in this really rigorous – but, again, usually very accessible – public conversation. Ed Curtis through the *Journal of Africana Religions* (JAR) is another really good example of folks that have taken the time to engage with non-experts and explain, for example, why using the word "cult" in a headline – while click-baity, while eye-grabbing – compromises the integrity of the folks participating in a group. It doesn't think about the racist imperialist history of categorising religion, particularly religions that involve largely black people as cults, when white religions, civilised religions, get to count as *actual* religions and *not* cults. Other places where this has been really good: the African American Studies podcast, AAS 21, at Princeton, I think has been really impressive – but again, my favourite episode of that was Judith Weisenfeld's episode with Eddie Gloude; the (audio unclear) Project – I think it's in a transition period right now. But one of the things that was really exciting about that project was that it paired open access, rigorous scholarship with more contemporary kind-of pop culture analysis. So there was something there for everyone. And, again, the commitment to open access I think is deeply, deeply important, if we're going to think about public-facing work as a civic good. But also, shout out to "The Immanent Frame"

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– not that blogging is particularly innovative anymore – but they have been leading the conversation for, what, a decade, in trying to . . . not necessarily address the public at large, but at least the field of Religious Studies at large, and help Religious Studies scholars broadly understand some of these really complicated nuanced issues, in the context of Religious Studies. And this is not to say that the JAR doesn't do that as well. But the JAR really rewards dense, nuanced writing in a way that just doesn't work in a blog format, right? So when I'm thinking about teaching, for example, contemporary sexual scandals – which is where a lot of my own work lives, and something that informs my religion and sexuality class – one of the first places I go is to The Immanent Frame to review all of the stuff on the clergy sex abuse scandal. This is scholarship that was . . . information, right? That conference happened, what, five years ago at Yale? And you've got some of the brightest scholars who work on religion and sexuality thinking out loud about what to do with this material. And coming at it from all different angles. So those would be my big hits.

AH: *Great.*

MG: Although the way that is was phrased in the email was "whether or not religion is a special issue" which did a very Antaeus thing in my head. So like Antaeus would definitely say that it was a special issue. It is an issue of specialness. (That's a dumb American Religions joke. I'm not even sorry.) But yes, I think it is a special issue in American context for two reasons. The first is that religion is – politics nerd, here – but religion, and the protection of specific kinds of religion, is enshrined in our founding documents (**20:00**). So we, as a people, have collectively agreed that religion does a thing that many other kinds of human culture do not. But the other piece is that frankly everybody thinks they're an expert in religion, based largely on their personal experiences. I have thoughts about why this is. I think it has a lot to do with Protestantism and individual relationships with God, and individual experiences being valid. But it does lead to things like – I'm never getting over this: a reporter from a public radio asked me, a couple of years back, to comment on . . . I think it was a PRRI survey that had identified Maine as one of the least religious states in the country. And she asked me why that is. And I said, "Well, Maine is also one of the whitest states in the country." And (I explained) why whiteness, and identifying as a religion or "spiritual but not religious", might be connected. And she said, "No, I don't think that's it." So, yeah. So I think the identification of personal experience as synonymous with expertise in religion does make this a particular challenge for Religious Studies scholars.

AH: *Well, we mentioned earlier this idea of pedagogical challenges in this field of public engagement.*

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And I think you hit the nail on the head with one, which is people already assume they know what religion is. So what is our role? Like, "Who are you to come in and tell me what religion is?" So let's reflect more on that. I think this is an interesting thread.

MG: Well, I mean . . . I think that it is both "special because religion", and then part of a larger conversation about a systematic devaluation of expertise in the public sphere for . . . call it fifty, sixty years. But yeah, religion is this very particular challenge because everyone feels authorised to speak on it. So as Religious Studies scholars, again, we have to earn the nuance. So let's start with "What you think about religion does not exhaust all of religion." So let's start by thinking about multiplicity before we even get to complexity. What you know, even about Christianity, is not all there is to know about Christianity. So can we offer windows into: "Religion is more complicated than you think"; "Religion is always more than you think that it is"? And then, conservatively, I don't know, maybe ten years from now, maybe we could get to, "Here's why it's important that we not emphasise religion equals faith or religion equals belief. Here's how we, as a community, not just as a small chunk of experts, can think about what work it does to value religions that emphasise belief over religions that emphasise practice. And then, fifty years from now, we can worry about that US Catholic Conference of Bishops, I guess. It is . . . . One of the particular challenges, I think, of doing public scholarship is this question of time, right? The reason, frankly, that I was moved to pursue public-facing scholarship was that I taught a class called, "Election: Race religion and politics" in 2016. And the entire class is about providing historical context for the election that was happening that year. It's a long game, right? And then the election made we wonder if we had that kind of time. So I got deeply invested in having conversations with folks who don't work on religion about how religion helped shape what led up to the election and certainly what came after. It made me feel a real sense of urgency – a need to intervene. And I think I want to believe that public-facing scholarship can be that kind of critical positive intervention, at the same time as – you raised the level of religious literacy – just awareness of the scope of religious difference. The bar is so, so low. We have so much work to do that it can feel like we're never getting anywhere. We're never going to raise the bar to the point where we can really talk about lived complexity. But since the alternative is doing nothing I say, let's intervene and hope for the best. This is better than just letting us all go down with the ship. Let's shift the conversation as much as we can shift the conversation. If the Religious Studies Overton Window is simply "Hey! Religion is more than I thought it was!" I'm going to call that a win (**25:00**).

AH: *Let's pivot the conversation to the idea of the public intellectual. I hate this term. I prefer the term*

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public scholar, because at least that points to our scholarship and not to our intellect. But doing this work – especially here in the twenty-first century – is difficult. It opens you up to a lot of criticism, not only from your colleagues but from the hordes of trolls, whether they're on YouTube or Twitter. And you're competing against public intellectuals in this space that are not scholars of religion and feel very comfortable to talk about it . . .

MG: (Coughs) Richard Dawkins!

AH: *Right. What comes to mind would be Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, the meteoric rise of Jordan B.Peterson who has entire lectures on the Bible on YouTube that get millions of views.*

MG: And "Bless his heart", as we say in the South.

AH: *Then we also have Reza Aslan who's problematic in his own ways. So we have this issue of public intellectuals, then we have to raise up our colleagues who are willing to be in this space to take those places of public scholars. So instead of turning to Richard Dawkins or Jordan B Peterson they go to someone that is trained in Religious Studies and who is skilled at doing this work of translation, of keeping complexity and nuance, and still be able to engage the public as it were. But this offers so many challenges. So I'd be curious to hear your thoughts on this concept of the public scholar. And how this job is not cut out for everybody.*

MG: Yes. So I think there are two issues that you raised there. And they're both really important. I want to start with the vulnerability issue. It is not a safe thing to do this work. And it is doubly, triply unsafe to do it as a person of colour, as a queer person, as a woman. Because the internet is not for us, right? We are reminded of that every time we speak in public: that we should settle down and maybe smile more. There is an incredible vulnerability to doing any sort of public intellectual scholarship work. There is an incredible vulnerability to being, for example, a black woman scholar standing up and saying, "I know a thing and you should know it too." That is . . . it should not have to be an act of courage, but it is an act of almost unimaginable courage to stand in front of the internet, in all its horrid glory, and say, "I know more about this than you do. Let me help you." Which actually brings me to my second point pretty neatly. You mentioned public intellectuals versus public scholars. And I think the dichotomy I'd rather set up is public intellectuals versus public scholarship. Public intellectuals is about - you know what, I'm going to say it - it's about a cult of personality. (I see you Jordan B. Peterson, I see you.) It is about building up your personal brand, it is about showing

everybody that you're the smartest – usually – straight, white boy in the room. I don't think public scholarship necessarily needs to be about individual scholars. I think it is important for us to recognise the contribution of specific figures, particularly folks who are taking bigger risks, to say what needs to be said. But public scholarship, hopefully, is just raising the calibre of public knowledge, raising the quality of public conversation, promoting the public understanding of religion. And that doesn't need to be about one individual scholar. That needs to be about all of us doing better, because we'll know better. And in order to do that work we need institutional support. This is a conversation that Alice Hunt and I had last month, two months ago. So the American Academy of Religion (AAR) is very publicly supporting the promotion of public understanding of religion. And as you can imagine, I'm deeply invested in that. At the same time I worry about developing mechanisms for supporting scholars that we've invited, if not required, to be vulnerable in this way. If we are going to say that one of our two core goals as an academic learned institution is promoting the public understanding of religion – is engaging the public so that they can know better – how are we going to support people when they get death threats? Because they *will* get death threats. Particularly if they are people of colour. Particularly if they are women. Particularly if they are queer. Right? My concern is that we are ready to call for the public understanding of religion. We are not prepared to support the folks that are doing that promotion. And I don't know what that looks like. And I know that the issue has been raised within the AAR, at least by me, because I've had this conversation both with David Gushee and with Alice Hunt (**30:00**). But it's complicated, right? How do we promote institutional support for this? And that I think, I hope, is another piece of the best practices that Sacred Writes is hoping to help develop.

AH: *So, talking about institutional support leads me to the next angle of the criticism. If you are putting yourself out there to talk about religion in public, you can get an untold amount of hate from random trolls on Twitter, especially if you're a woman, person of colour or queer person. But you can also receive criticism from your own discipline, your institution – we talked about this earlier. And I feel like this is particularly felt if you are a part of the academic precariat . . .*

MG: I love that!

AH: *Whether you're an adjunct, visiting faculty member, or a graduate student like myself, there's a risk to do this. I frequently think about how, with my YouTube channel I could say something stupid accidentally on one video and torpedo my career. So how do we support the more contingent faculty side of the public engagement world of our discipline? Because I see a lot of public engagement happening from these scholars who don't have full time positions, who don't have tenure to protect*

them.

MG: Yes. I think that's an incredibly important question that I don't have a strong answer to, aside from hoping that the mechanism of Sacred Writes is, at least in part, teaching institutions to value this work. I think there's a strong correspondence here with media personalities as well, right? Very often in order to land a position in any new sort of media outlet of impact, you have to have already cultivated something of a brand. Often that brand has been deliberately provocative. That's how you get followers. That's how you get noticed. And then, once you are elevated to this noteworthy publication, very often the women, queer people, people of colour are lambasted publicly for having said horrible provocative things like, "white people are white". Horrible! For those who do not spend their entire lives on Twitter, there was a specific Asian woman science journalist who had a very provocative Twitter presence, landed a very plumb gig at an important publication, and then had to publicly apologise for having told white people that they were white. So this is something that I think about a lot. At the same time and this is not, I think, universally applicable advice. While I was teaching about the election I was in a visiting position and it just broke me. It broke me. It broke me in concert with the job market which I have spent more time than I'd prefer exploring. And I got to a stage where the sense of urgency that I felt around being publicly engaged around religious education – or education about religion, I should say – that urgency out-weighed my caution. And I am deeply aware of the ways in which that has increased my own precarity. And at the same time it has facilitated so many intellectually rich, personally fulfilling conversations around this issue and created all these support networks in the academy that I would not have had access to, had I not engaged, say, Twitter in this way. So I can't recommend it. I am, for all that I am in this position of precarity, I am at an R1 institution, having been funded by a very large grant, having been sponsored, frankly, by some really impressive senior women scholars in Islam. And I am married and unlikely to wind up on the street, eating cat food. I was in a position where I could do that. I don't know that that's available to everyone. And I worry that the voices that are really taking risks, that have really innovative approaches to shaping this conversation, are the ones who are most at risk and who are potentially the most likely to suffer for having tried to do this incredibly important work. I don't know that that's a fulfilling answer, but that's where I'm at with it.

AH: *No, I think that that's a good answer*.

MG: So just in terms of: how do we do this work? Where do we start? If we're thinking about what makes an engaging piece of public-facing scholarship I think we need to start by thinking about the

audience, which is not something that scholars are trained to do, right? Sure, we think about audience in that we're engaging a community of our peers who have similar levels of training (**35:00**). But if we're not only ever talking to Religious Studies experts we need to think about who we want to talk to, and, what do we want to get across? And we have to be willing to do that in non-specialist language, which again is deeply challenging. But I mean, some of this is really simple, right? The thing that makes a good piece of scholarship is the same thing that makes any good media. Can you tell a clear, concise story and explain why the viewer or the listener or the reader should care? So being able to think about . . . alright: I am deeply invested in conversations about religious freedom and how they tend to privilege specific forms of Christianity, right? (Shout out to Beth Shakman Hurd.) How do I take all of that incredibly dense, nuanced, smart literature and bring that out to an audience that's going to think, "Well, religious freedom sounds good. Let's do that." So thinking about: OK, am I going to do this as a blog post? Do I do this as a YouTube channel? What's an infographic, and how do I put that together? (Something that Sacred Writes are still working on, but we're interested, please stay tuned.) Thinking about where your energy is. How you can best communicate that idea in the clearest, most concise, most engaging way possible, is going to make a good piece of public scholarship. Again, I'm coming back to Hannah McGregor because I'm a huge fan. But one of the things that she's said about her podcasting work is that despite the fact that she's bringing her scholarly expertise in publishing to all of this work, she keeps having a hard time thinking of it as scholarly because it's fun, because she's enjoying it! And I wonder what it might look like to bring that kind of enjoyment, that kind of energy, that kind of fun, frankly, to doing this, often really serious, really hard work. I am somebody who works on sex abuse and violence in minority religions. And my case studies involve mothers holding onto beams and weeping because their children have been taken away. And the deployment of armoured personnel carriers against American citizens on American soil. So if I can do that by making jokes about Vanilla Isis and Captain Moroni, you know what? That's the way to both explain to the public that they need to care about this, but also stay sane while you're doing it. Because I think otherwise I think that the onslaught, and the scope of the problem, is just overwhelming.

AH: *Well, thank you so much Dr Goodwin. I think this was a great conversation on the implications of public scholarship here in the twenty-first century, especially for Religious Studies scholars, as we try to bring more academic scholarship to more people.*

MG: Thanks for having me.

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AH: *No problem.*

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