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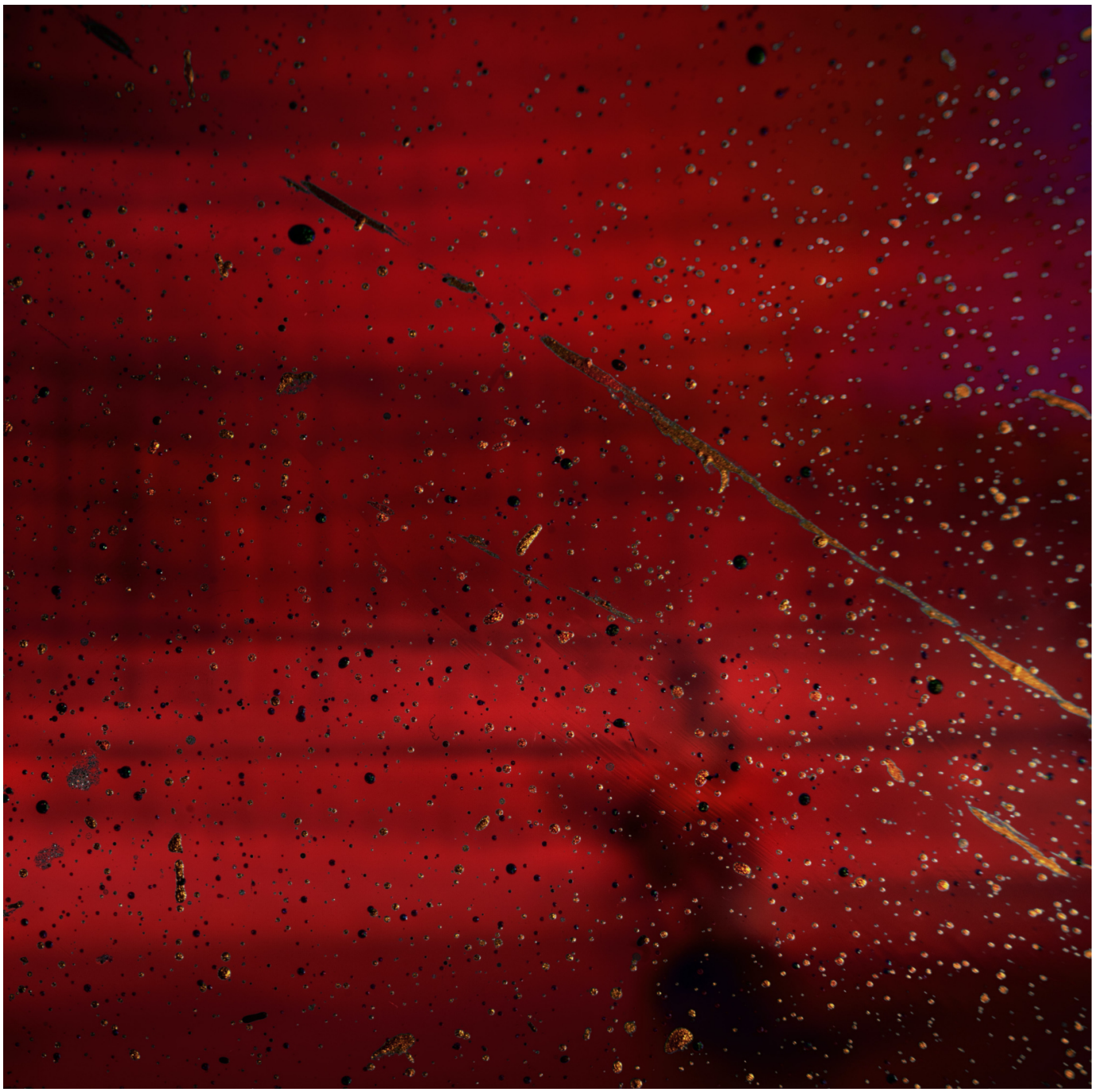

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Contents

1 ***Diversity in the Academy***
An Introduction from the Editor
~ Lindsey Jackson

Articles

5 ***Why is Satan Such a Sissy?***
An Exploration of the "Flaming Devil" Trope in Children's Animation
~ Zachary Doiron

26 ***Liberation Mythology:***
The Nature and Function of Colonial Myths in Ngũgĩ's Makarere Novels
~ Steven Herran

58 ***Spectralvania:***
Monsters, Transgression, and Religion in Netflix's Castlevania
~ Seth Pierce

85 ***Satan-Prométhée:***
Une lecture alternative du mal dans le satanisme contemporain
~ Mathieu Colin

In Conversation

115 ***Sarah Imhoff***
~ Lindsey Jackson

126 ***Hillary Kaell***
~ Laurel Andrew

146 ***Russell T. McCutcheon***
~ Lindsey Jackson

JRC | Religion & Culture

Contents

Book Reviews

167 ***Canadian Carnival Freaks and the Extraordinary Body, 1900-1970s***
~ Elliot Mason (Reviewer)

171 ***Sovereignty and the Sacred: Secularism and the Political Economy of Religion***
~ Ruqaiyah Zarook (Reviewer)

174 ***Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination: Case Studies of Creative Social Change***
~ Cynthia De Petrillo (Reviewer)

177 ***The Preacher's Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities***
~ Laurel Andrew (Reviewer)

Reflections on the Field

182 ***A Note on Religion as Symbolically Mediated Cosmoaffect***
~ Antonio R. Gualtieri

In Conversation

With Hillary Kaell
McGill University

Participants:
Hillary Kaell (McGill University)
Laurel Andrew (Concordia University)

Dr. Hillary Kaell of McGill University sat down with Laurel Andrew from the JRC to discuss her most recent monograph, *Christian Globalism at Home: Child Sponsorship in the United States* (Princeton University Press, 2020). Christian Globalism combines archival research, interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork to delve into the previously understudied experiences of Americans who sponsor children through Christian organizations. Kaell examines sponsors' perceived relationships with the children involved in the programs, with the physical places these children can come to represent, and with the sponsorship organizations themselves. Kaell identifies an important component of these relationships as the "immobile global," or the way sponsors understand and interact with the global world through sponsorship, without ever leaving the United States. In this interview, Kaell also discusses how this recent publication has allowed her to expand on themes from her previous monograph, *Walking Where Jesus Walked: American Christians and Holy Land Pilgrimage* (NYU Press, 2014), and provides helpful advice for graduate students navigating interdisciplinary fields.

LA: Your new book Christian Globalism at Home was very recently published, and has come out during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Has this changed how you will promote this book, perhaps compared to how you have promoted your previous works?

HK: With my first monograph, which came out of my PhD work, I was very new to this profession and I honestly was kind of naïve. I didn't really know how to promote a book, and I didn't do a lot of promotion. Certainly, there's different ways to go about things. Some people publish their first book shortly after finishing their PhD, which was my decision mainly because I had chosen to move to Montreal with my partner, and I wanted to be very sure that there would be no issues in terms of my getting tenure. Frankly, I also knew that I wanted to have a kid and I just wanted to get that book done. But a lot of people don't do it that way. They publish their first book more than eight, nine, even ten years out of their PhD—once they're more established in the profession. I think with those people, they maybe promote a first book a lot more than I did.

It's going to be immensely challenging to promote this book in the midst of a pandemic. It's immensely challenging to get people's focus on anything outside of the very urgent issues that people are grappling with in the context of the pandemic, and in the context of the United States (which is where my work is situated). The recent protests and Black Lives Matter movement—there's a good reason why those things should be on people's radar and should be crucial to how people are thinking and what they're doing. I suppose what I can hope as an author who's just written a book about something that is not directly on those topics, is that people will see—if they pick up the book and read it—that there is a fair number of places where the themes in the book overlap with questions that people should be asking

right now. Questions about power, about race—you really can't talk about child sponsorship without delving into those issues. The questions that interest me primarily in the book include how we think about the world as interconnected, or not. Think about the pandemic not only as an urgent physical virus—as it is—but also as an ideological or conceptual moment for all of us to think about how we picture the world as connected. How is it actually connected? How is it not? What kinds of media are being produced to make us think in certain ways about this thing called 'the globe,' 'the global pandemic?' Princeton Press, my publisher, asked me to write something about the book on their blog in mid-May when I hadn't pretty much left the house in a couple of months—we were really feeling the pandemic in our small world of our little house—so I wrote about reflecting on the book in the context of the kind of media that was coming out during the pandemic. [That] was really fruitful for me. I do hope that other people will see those connections. I guess the thing I'll have to do, is to try to help people with those connections as well.

At a more pragmatic level it will be tough. A lot of what we do when we're promoting books as academics, which maybe grad students are aware of, is that we do so in person. We do conferences, book talks, we go to other people's universities. For next year, I've had three talks that are not going to happen. Even if I just think about the fall, that's already three conferences I would have gone to that have been cancelled. So that's six different opportunities that I would have had to actually be present with people, discussing the book, getting their feedback, that I'm not going to be able to have happen. That's going to be a challenge. The good thing is that because it's my second book, I suppose I feel, to mix my religious metaphors, a little more Zen about the whole thing. I know it's a long game too, so even in a year or two, the book won't be quite as brand new, but hopefully

people will still be interested in discussing it with me, maybe for the first time, given that things are moving slowly during the pandemic.

LA: Christian Globalism examines pathways of globalism through sponsorship, with an eye toward power and the construction/maintenance of structures of inequality. Did you begin this project knowing that a history of Christian sponsorship would allow you to engage these themes, or did these themes emerge as you researched?

HK: To be honest, I didn't really know much about child sponsorship when I started. I'm sure in the back of my head I must have seen some of those commercials on television at some point, but it was sort of outside of my experience. I was certainly aware of, if not child sponsorship exactly, the classic image of the 'child in need.' I also knew that there had been some pioneering and really important work that had been done by anthropologists, media theorists, and feminists in the 1990s about those images of children. When scholars and pundits were writing about this in the 1990s, they were very concerned about power and inequality, and they were deeply critical of sponsorship and its media, which is probably not too surprising for anyone who has encountered sponsorship media before. In that sense, I certainly had power on my mind very early on. I mean, you can Google child sponsorship and these kinds of critiques will come up immediately.

The other thing though that I was aware of, even before starting this project—just by doing a bit of quick Googling—was that that kind of work about inequality and power in these images had a shortcoming, at least to my mind. There was very little discussion of the actual reception of these images. So, it was really a critique

based on scholars' interpretations of these images. Very few people, if any, really went and asked sponsors what they actually thought about all of these images, or hung out with them while they were interacting with these images—that really wasn't a thing that people were super interested in. In a way, that's another form of power, when the critic gets to call all the shots and doesn't ask people who are participating in these systems what it feels like to be a part of the system itself. I knew that I wanted to work with sponsors rather than only doing an analysis of organizational publicity materials. Once I started that research (talking to people, hanging out with people), then I realized a number of other things, too. First was that the organizations that I was studying in the contemporary period had changed significantly in terms of the media they were producing in the 1980s and 1990s. If you look at the media that an organization like World Vision is producing in the 80s, it has made a massive change to how it portrays children in its media today. That 'child in need' African child that we're picturing, who is probably a child in Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia—there's a few hotspots where children are being photographed for these campaigns—that has changed significantly in the media. The other thing that I realized is some of the organizations had never even followed the model described in academic literature. For example, the Catholic organization I looked at, Unbound—its media never really looked like that, even in the 1980s.

Another thing I realized was that all that critical literature in the 1980s and 1990s largely assumed that the power dynamics that they were witnessing in these organizations arose out of the 1970s. And that makes a lot of sense, since these scholars or pundits weren't thinking about the Christian component. They were thinking really from an economic development perspective: when did these kinds of NGOs arise as NGOS (and, that's really the 60s and 70s), and then what do they look like by the

80s and 90s? They're thinking about it as kind of adjacent to studies of development work rather than adjacent to studies of the cultural impact of Christianity. Once I started looking at it in the latter perspective, as a Christian activity, then I could start to trace these power dynamics back a lot further. Not just seeing them as a facet of NGO work in the 1970s or even in the 1950s and 1960s, but rather I could start tracing these patterns of power back into the nineteenth century to missionary work and even before. That was something I didn't realize I would find when I first started the project; I thought it was going to be a project about the 1970s to the present.

LA: Why did you decide to write a book about Christian child sponsorship?

HK: It definitely evolved out of my previous work, that's really clear to me. Part of it was that I'd encountered sponsorship a few times, especially among the Catholic pilgrims, and it intrigued me how they spoke about it. I just jotted it down in my field notes, and then, in the context of the pilgrimage project [*Walking Where Jesus Walked*], pretty much put it to the back of my mind and forgot about it. It came to my mind again as I was casting about for another project. I think that intuition is really important for all of us as scholars. If there's something that you can't get out of your head, that's probably because there is something there that interests you enough to actually follow it through for a number of years. I decided to take that intuition and run with it. I knew that there were certain themes in the first book that I wanted to talk about more, especially questions about attachments to far-away places, and the role of what academics in my field will sometimes call parachurch organizations (not churches themselves but other kinds of institutions). In the pilgrimage project, I was really interested in tour companies as economic units that are

not parts of churches but are operating alongside churches. Also, I was interested in the interactions between money and religious experience. Those were the three themes from the first project that I still felt had a lot of heft for me. I felt like I was done with pilgrimage, but I wanted those themes to follow through to another project. Sponsorship seemed to offer a way to do that; it seemed to respond to all of those themes in certain kinds of ways.

The context of money was very interesting to me. In pilgrimage, it's this one-shot payment: you pay for the trip and then you go. Oftentimes you don't even exchange a lot of money during the trip because it's all prepaid for you. In fact, monetary exchange is really obscure to a certain degree within the context of pilgrimage. Then there are these few moments where people are buying souvenirs, where money is front and centre, and you might argue, it's a kind of ritualized experience. In sponsorship, on the other hand, it's not a one-shot payment and then you forget about the money—you're actually giving these monthly payments. The idea is that it's supposed to always be on your mind, you are in a continual state of monetary giving. I thought that that might mean the Christians who participate wrestle with the money aspect more, and I think that's true. Money, materialism, consumerism, all these ideas were really important for sponsors. That was one reason that I really wanted to look at sponsorship.

As far as attachments to far-away places, sponsorship seemed to offer new purchase on that theme because in pilgrimage people do, of course, ultimately go to the site. The thing that had interested me in that project was: how do you picture a site (e.g.: the Holy Land)? How do you enact that site in performances at your church (e.g.: nativity plays)? But then, you instantiate it by going to that place. To push that theme further: what about people

who picture a place, or picture this construction of places (the 'global church' for example) but never actually go there? They don't instantiate it. As I became aware in the pilgrimage project, not traveling abroad is actually the norm for most people most of the time. It dawned on me working with the pilgrims going to the Holy Land that for most of them this was the first, and often only, trip they were going to take abroad. The sponsorship project allowed me to look at people that don't even get that opportunity to go to the place that they're picturing, the place that they're sponsoring a child. Maybe they don't want to go. I'm often interested in the seemingly boring stuff of everyday life, so that aspect, the not going anywhere, is truly fascinating to me.

LA: An interesting concept you present within this book is what you have labeled the "immobile global," which can seem like a paradoxical idea at first glance. Did you coin this term? Would you mind unpacking this idea and explaining what it conveys?

HK: I suppose I coined it, but honestly, I wasn't thinking about it as inventing a word. I just thought it was sort of a nice way to title an article that I was publishing in American Anthropologist, which will come out in December. Initially, I floated it to be a title for the book itself, which the press nixed. I didn't think of myself as coining a term that other people should use, but I think the concept itself does go back to people who imagine these attachments to place without actually going to those places. Being "global," then, is an important part of their sense of self. For most of the people I worked with, it was an important part of how they understand themselves as Christians: relating to a creator that they view as equally present everywhere around the world. That concept was very familiar to me because I studied Christians, but I thought of that concept over and over in my head until I made it feel strange. The idea that you are intimately connected to a creator that you picture as globally active right now in the present, everywhere all at once—that's actually a phenomenally complicated concept—and a very strange concept if you just start thinking it over and over to yourself. It's also vitally important to Christianity. If anything, and maybe I'm biased since I just wrote a book about global connection, but I would say it's the most vital concept in Christianity. Without that concept, you do not have this single creator, this creator God, that is ultimately able to see everything, able to be everywhere, able to act everywhere, and of course who is omnipotent—who has power everywhere as well. This global conception is vital to their sense of self, their sense of Christianity, and like I said, a vital link to Christianity itself.

At the same time, sponsors are immobile, since they leave the U.S. rarely, if at all. By "immobile" I don't mean to say that these are people who live these small lives or anything like that. I am specifically interested in that context of these imagined and instantiated attachments that I was talking about before. In other words, what is very statistically clear is that they are not traveling to visit the place where the sponsored child lives. Overall, very few sponsors do that. That's where I am talking about immobility, this idea that through your God you are connected and through your child who you are sponsoring, you are connected to this place, you are picturing this place, you are sending money to this place but you are not actually going to that particular place. I always ask sponsorship organizations how many sponsors go to the sites where the children live. At most, organizations said maybe 1%, but most organizations told me only a fraction of 1%.

I'm a little bit wary of the word immobile just in the sense that, as I said, I don't want to give the impression

that I'm insinuating that someone is living a small life or even a less adventurous or important life. You don't have to go abroad to have an adventurous and important life. But again, I'm underlining this central problematic in the book, which makes sponsorship such an interesting case study: this creation of attachments without physical instantiation. The concept of the immobile global is really a way to reorient the literature on globalization away from people who travel. We have a lot of literature about Christians who travel, who go on short term missions or who are long term missionaries, who are diplomats, or whatever the case may be. I wanted to try to get that focus on globalization away from those rather exceptional people and onto the kind of everyday people who most of us are.

LA: Language is a very significant component of this book. You include "A Brief Note About Language" explaining your use of terminology, you include a glossary of terms unpacking complex ideas, and throughout the book you are open about your hesitations on using certain kinds of language. Why was language such a concern for you in this book and why did you decide to make these hesitations visible for the reader?

HK: I think of myself, in comparison to say linguistic anthropologists, as someone who doesn't think about language nearly enough. I do think that in this particular case, my concern about language did arise directly from my interlocutors (the people I was working with), and that includes contemporary and historical interlocutors. They themselves were so concerned, and are so concerned, about language. In an attempt to suture together Christian communities who were physically far away from each other, they often depended on really marked forms of language. For example, in the book mainly I talk about hymns and prayers: saying the same

words, and even trying to say the same words at the same time is a major way that Christians have tried to connect to each other. This was something that I, as a scholar, couldn't ignore. It was really obvious in what people were telling me. First, people in a historical context, and then after that, people who I was meeting and talking to. Also, sponsorship itself is a global project that promises connection through letter writing—and has from its start a couple hundred years ago—so, through the use of language as well. This continually raises questions for the people involved about mistranslations. They are very conscious of the possibility of a mistranslation of a child's words into English, or a mistranslation of their own words of encouragement back to that child. They are aware that there is a mediator as soon as you are translating anything, and that the spirit of the words might be lost in translation. The spirit of the words is very important if you're dealing with Christian encouragement, globally speaking. There's an element of power in the sense that translations don't just happen. Translations happen because of the mediator (the mediator is the organization). When you're writing something to a child, the organization then takes whatever you're writing and translates it for the child and vice versa. Sponsors, on their end, are always sort of wondering whether the organization is being faithful to what they wrote, or not. And frankly, once you start delving into the archival record you see that organizations are doing all sorts of things with translations in order to make sure that what the children are writing or saying fits with certain kinds of normative messages or ideas that the organization wants to promote. I write a fair amount about that in chapter 4, how organizations deal with translations.

As far as language, the project itself made me more aware of it and I think for that reason it ended up playing more of a role in the project. It also played more of a role

in deciding to make my own hesitations evident in the text itself. It made me choose to make them evident to people because I realized that academic work itself is a project of taking what people say or taking what we read in an archive and then making decisions about what you are going to highlight and how you're going to translate that for your readers. Sponsors were very rightly pointing out that there were mechanisms of translation at work that make it hard for people to understand how their words are getting used or how decisions are being made. I decided that I would try at least to bring some of that to the fore in my own writing, to make it clear that although ultimately it is my voice on every page of the book, I could do a little bit of the unmasking of those kinds of processes of translations as they work in an academic setting.

We should be doing a lot more self-reflexive unmasking of how we, in different fields, understand certain kinds of themes, or promote certain kinds of themes in certain kinds of ways. I have, in the back of my head, a few other small projects that could come out of this and help me keep thinking of ways to continue that process of trying to make more evident how scholarship is done. I said I was sort of naïve in my first project when it came out in terms of promotions—I think that's true but I also think that I'm a lot more confident with the second project in the sense that I don't feel like I need to emphasize, in quite the same way, my own self as an expert. I think I always approach my subject matter from a position of quite a lot of humility, but it's kind of fun to be able to just let all that humility out in the open and allow other people to think alongside me in that way. I think I would've been a bit more timid about doing that right after my first project was published when I was just a few years out of my PhD.

LA: Christian Globalism *uses a wide range of scholarship throughout—not only do you draw on anthropology, history, sociology, and religion, but you also engage political, feminist, and eco-theorists, philosophers, and activists. Thinkers like Jasbir Puar, Jane Bennett, Susan Sontag and Timothy Morton come to mind. What were some of the benefits of incorporating such an interdisciplinary approach to your topic? What were the challenges?*

HK: I've always taken an interdisciplinary approach in my studies, from undergrad straight through my PhD in American studies. It just seemed obvious to me that there would be multiple and equally important ways to approach any given topic. When I first start writing I always begin by looking up the topic widely, rather than only looking in the journals that I happen to read most. In fact, I read a lot more widely starting this project—including deep into economic theory and stuff like that—that in the end didn't have a place in this project. But I like the idea that there's all these other conversations happening around these themes and topics amongst our colleagues in other departments, and I like the idea that we might be able to learn from each other. I often just start with a lot of key word searches in a lot of different places. The names you mentioned: Bennett, Sontag, Puar, Morton, those are some of the better known scholars I cite. People probably won't be surprised to see that scholars like that appear in the book's pages, but hopefully citing people like that does offer some basis for cross-disciplinary discussion. Thinking about this as a cross-disciplinary discussion is, I think, helpful. If we both read someone like Sontag let's say, then we can find some common ground even if you're not explicitly interested in Christians, or in capitalism, or in humanitarian work, which are some of the things that I'm more explicitly interested in, in this book. That's really a major benefit I think about citing this wide variety of

well-cited and beloved scholars, who are cited across a variety of disciplines.

The challenge lies in potentially spreading yourself too thin, which probably shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, in not deeply engaging any of the work you cite, or not deeply engaging it enough, perhaps. I think the other challenge lies potentially, for any kind of interdisciplinary work, in not being claimed by any specific audience. I certainly feel that, in purely pragmatic terms, it can make it more difficult to land jobs, to have your work reviewed in journals, to apply for book prizes—all of those things tend still to be rather disciplinarily focused. I'm mentioning this because this is a journal that is geared towards graduate students, and I think for me as a graduate student being trained in the interdisciplinary field of American studies, that was not evident to me. There are pragmatic concerns related to being interdisciplinary. I don't think that's any reason not to reach really widely, I obviously think that's a great move and I do it all the time. But I do think it's something that grad students should be conscious of in interdisciplinary programs (including religious studies).

LA: Your book includes two interludes, and although each is written differently, they are both explorations in narrative style. The first interlude takes place in the nineteenth century, and you use extant letters and archival research to help you imagine yourself in the position of both a child being sponsored, who you have called "Donyen," and her sponsor, Belinda. The second interlude, taking place more recently in the 2000s, is a story constructed based on interviews and digital conversations between Rizal and his sponsor Carol. What was your experience changing gears to write in this kind of prose?

HK: I've never included something like these interludes in anything I've actually published, so I felt like I had to be a little bit courageous to make that leap to include them. But, I actually write in this kind of prose a lot. It's often a way that I'll get started with a chapter, or if I feel really blocked it'll be a way that I'll try to kick-start a day of writing when I'm sitting at my computer and just nothing seems to really grab me or I don't feel like I can get into writing prose. What I do then—and grad students, feel free to try this method!—is that I'll sit down and I'll write a free-form kind of narrative. Maybe I'll start by reading a little bit of my field notes and then I'll just try to write this narrative that uses ideas from my field or research notes, or just an idea that's been kicking around in my head but I haven't put on paper. I'll write a little story, with people who don't even exist. I'll just write it as a narrative because I'm just much more interested—and I mean that's really why I do what I do—I'm much more interested in people, and people's narratives. I'll usually write about a page of this narrative, but then I can read back through my own stream of consciousness, and that will help me identify something that's sparking my interest. It'll help me identify the thing that, as I've put it before, is kicking around in my head that I haven't written down yet. Or, the theme that I maybe didn't consciously think of, but that's coming out in this narrative. Or, what's just the feeling of this narrative? Is this a narrative that feels sad? Is it a narrative that feels like it's all about the prophetic future? Maybe that's the mode that I want to write in in this chapter, or that is going to help get me excited to sit down and write. Once I've written that page, and I've identified for myself the themes that are motivating me, I erase it. I've never actually kept any of these little writing experiments that I do—I always just use them as a tool for myself.

The big leap for me then, in this book, was to take that kind of model and build on it to actually include it in the

book. In fact, I wrote about eight of those interludes. It took me a few months, just writing interludes in different time periods. The reason that it took me so long to write all those interludes, is that for every single one, I was doing tons of historical background research. So, these were a little bit different than the narratives that I just write for myself in the sense that they're all based on a lot of background work that had already been done. Each one of them started with a set of letters, whether it was an email set of letters or an archival set of letters, and then there was lots of secondary source research to fill in the gaps and blanks, especially for historical periods and places with which I wasn't familiar.

Even though I was hesitating about whether to include them or not, I was inspired quite a lot by Saidiya Hartman's idea of "critical fabulation." She talks about how she uses archival materials along with critical theory and fictional narrative as a method to plumb the gaps and the silences of history. She's specifically interested in the gaps that are created when enslaved people are not able to contribute written documents that are then being kept in archives. I don't think that I cite her, but the fact that she has courageously mixed these kinds of methods together in this "critical fabulation," allowed me to feel adequately inspired to include the interludes in the book. And as I note in the book, sponsorship itself is constitutive of gaps and silences. That's what happens, you can't have sponsorship without gaps and silences—it's purporting to create a relationship between two people who live very far away from each other in completely different cultural worlds who never meet. It is a kind of globalism fundamentally built on gaps and silences. But, most notably, the children who are sponsored basically never left narrative records that weren't redacted heavily by the adults around them. The interludes seem like a way to call attention to the gaps. And I'm hoping that they're going to provide, for grad students especially, some fodder for discussion. Maybe the interludes will even get grad students talking about creative ways to approach sources, or again, gaps in sources.

LA: As you've mentioned, the voices of the sponsored children themselves are often missing from the archival records. With Donyen, for example (the sponsored child featured in the first interlude), what was your experience trying to put yourself in her position, and trying to think about what she would be thinking about?

HK: My experience is always partial, of course. As a person who works in anthropology and history, I know that my understanding is always partial. We're always situated within our own worlds, whether those be our own temporal world, time and place, or our own cultural world. So, I was already aware of the fact that trying to step into Donyen's shoes was going to be obviously partial. But, I did try to do what I read some novelists do, who write fictionalized accounts of historical figures. I read a lot of secondary sources written by historians, who had done a lot of research to write about what it would be like for tribes in that region, what life would've perhaps been like at those mission stations as well, including those particular Methodists mission stations in Liberia. I was lucky because I knew that the girl—who the missionaries call Belinda, but I call Donyen—I knew exactly which mission station she was at, I knew exactly which year she had been there. There is also a fair amount of literature where missionaries are describing—again through the lens of the missionaries—but where they're describing in their letters (including personal letters that the missionaries are writing to people back home, letters that are not for public consumption) what the children have said to them, or they're writing about events that are going on. Basically, to try to put myself in

her shoes, I tried to read as much as I could by historians who wrote about the culture of the Indigenous tribes that I think are probably hers, based on the place she was from and the time that she lived. I was also reading missionary reports from the period about those particular mission stations, and more specifically the children in those particular mission stations.

LA: Did researching this book bring up any new challenges or surprises as you were conducting interviews, researching, and writing?

HK: There are always challenges and surprises, otherwise, each project would really seem the same as the last, and then we would all probably lose interest pretty quickly! Maybe I can just mention a couple related to methodology, which might be useful for grad students to consider. The first challenge was related to what I was doing: I like the term "roving ethnography," which is a term from another anthropologist named Eleana Kim. It means that you are often on the move, so you are jumping in between a lot of different sites. In my case, I was dealing with multiple archives, but also with four different organizational headquarters that were not all in the same place (Colorado, Missouri, Virginia, and California). I was conducting interviews and volunteering in multiple other locations as well—in other states, too. That kind of research is intensive, and it can be really tiring. Every time you go into a new location, a new volunteer site for example, you have to meet new people and get to know them as quickly as you can in order to try to get a feel for what their experience is like.

Another challenge, which is not unrelated, is that I was pregnant and nursing a child during about two years of that research—about a year of being pregnant and then a year of nursing. I don't bring that up in the book itself,

but I think it's really important to state, particularly in a forum that would reach graduate students. I think sometimes we don't talk about such things, and when we don't talk about [them] it creates a major burden especially on young female grad students and faculty to act as if it's always business as usual, even when it's anything but business as usual. For example, I had to choose certain field sites accordingly. One of my field sites is upstate New York—there's really no reason to choose upstate New York as a field site within which to interview Unbound sponsors, other than the fact that I was so pregnant at that point that I wasn't allowed on an airplane. I needed to figure out a place where I could drive across the border (within under four hours because I was also really uncomfortable), in order to continue to research even once I was really pregnant, and once I had this little tiny baby in tow as well. The other thing I should mention is that my partner had to come with me when I was breastfeeding, to help with child care. I couldn't do it on my own. So that's also a real burden on my whole family, frankly, to be able to support me in that research but also to choose sites where we could drive together as a family and where we were able to get home quickly if there was any need, medically or otherwise. When you're driving around with a two-month-old, you want to be able to get home if you need to. All this to say, that's a major methodological challenge of any kind of ethnography—research while pregnant, we could call it. But I also think it's a particular challenge in this roving style of ethnography that I was doing in this project, which is exhausting for anyone, by the way!

At an intellectual level, I think that having a child while writing the book made me more aware of certain dynamics. For example, I included a section in chapter 4 about the dinner table as a central site of Christian globalism, as families discussed the children they sponsored together. I don't know if it would've stood out

to me in quite the same way before my daughter was born—how much time I was spending around dinner tables with people while they read these letters to their kids, or while they kind of lectured their kids on how to be a more moral person, and while they talked to me a lot as a person who now could be identified as a new mother who was going to have to be thinking about these issues too. I had a lot of sponsors bringing up these issues with me and probably, frankly, bringing them up at the dinner table while I was with them because they were viewing me in a new light now that I was showing up with a baby. Maybe I would've understood the dinner table to be a central site of research regardless, but I might not have, I'm not sure about that. I know that other anthropologists, especially female anthropologists, have written about how being a parent has changed the way that their interlocutors conceive of them and interact with them, but I had never gone through that before. I think for me it was a bit of a surprise, but really kind of a welcome one, especially given the parameters of this particular project that lent itself very well to opening up a whole line of other kinds of questions about how these sponsorships were being used vis-à-vis pedagogy of one's own children.