

Elizabeth Ferry: From Brandeis University, welcome to Recall This Book, a podcast that looks backward to see into the future. Our idea is to assemble scholars and writers from different disciplines to make sense of contemporary issues, problems, and events. We try to do this by looking at books that shaped the world that we have inherited. Today our hosts are John Plotz, hello John—

John Plotz: Hello.

Elizabeth Ferry: Elizabeth Ferry, hello, and we're joined by Manduhai Buyandelger. She's the associate professor of anthropology at MIT. She's the author of *Tragic Spirits: Shamanism, Gender, and Memory in Contemporary Mongolia*, which was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2013, and winner of the Hsu book prize from the Society of East Asian Anthropology. Manduhai is currently researching women parliamentary candidates in Mongolia.

Elizabeth Ferry: Welcome, Manduhai, to our tiny soundproofed salon.

Manduhai Buyandelger: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Elizabeth Ferry: Today we're going to talk about a topic that's been coming up quite a bit in the US news recently: women and political power, and women politicians. We've been hearing quite a bit about Nancy Pelosi, AOC, and the range of possible female candidates for president who seemingly can only be compared with each other today—

John Plotz: Which you just did.

Elizabeth Ferry: Which I just did, right. We're going to--*Curses!*--we're going to take a broader swath beyond the US, though. We're going to go from Argentina to Mongolia to Zambia. And we're going to pick up some Hillary Clinton and Margaret Thatcher along the way.

Elizabeth Ferry: So with the exciting prospect of hearing about your work shortly, Manduhai, we thought we'd go in chronological order today, of powerful women in politics.

Elizabeth Ferry: What I would like to bring in today is a book by Tomás Eloy Martínez, who was an Argentinian writer who wrote a sort of part novel, part reportage, part surrealist confection called *Santa Evita*, which is about Eva Perón. The book is a combination of interviews with people, journalism about Perón, and also a kind of long, extended story of what happened or might have happened to her body after her death.

Elizabeth Ferry: It is, in fact, true that her body was thought to have disappeared and propped up in a bunch of different places. There's a lot of mystery surrounding it. Also that supposed relics of her body, pieces of hair and nails and things were sold, sometimes embedded in jewelry, and the book kind of riffs on this in some interesting ways.

John Plotz: And hey, Elizabeth, for those of us who are sort of amnesiac or not that good at history, can you remind me of Eva Perón's dates? Like when she was in power, and also birth and death and all that.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: So she was the wife of President Juan Perón, and she was the First Lady of Argentina from 1946 to when she died, which was in 1952. She was born in 1919, so she died quite young of cancer.

Elizabeth Ferry: A lot of her power, which was undeniably political, was very much located in her body and in her image. She was a kind of not-very-good actress who was from the provinces and thought of as not particularly attractive, and then was kind of made-over. Particularly, and probably people listening have an image of her with her almost Grace Kelly-ish blond, perfectly-coiffed hair—

John Plotz: We can do side-by-side photos for the website.

Elizabeth Ferry: We can do side-by-side photos, yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: So for instance, one of the parts of *Santa Evita* has a description from her hairdresser. And I have to say, I don't know how much of this is a fictionalized description, but it kind of gets at some of the issues. Her hairdresser is quoted in the book as saying, "I lightened her hair little by little. I used stronger and stronger dyes. I did her hair more and more simply because she was always in a hurry. I had a hard time convincing her, because she had worn it loose all her life. Before she knew it, Evita was already different. I made her," he repeated, "I made her. I made a goddess of the poor chick I first met near Mar del Plata. She didn't even realize it."

Elizabeth Ferry: So I think this kind of raises a question about what kinds of power women are allowed to have in politics or not.

John Plotz: Yeah.

John Plotz: Well since we know we're heading to Clinton, there's also the family connection to think through maybe.

Elizabeth Ferry: Uh huh (affirmative). Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: So one of the things that Evita is famous for is meeting Juan Perón, who became her husband, in a public setting and saying things which were quoted in a bunch of different ways, including, "Thank you for your life." So, I don't know how this might connect to questions of family and authoritarianism and power—

John Plotz: Oh, well that's an interesting connection. I was actually thinking about the opposite, which I was thinking about Thatcher as a self-made woman. So I don't know, again, thinking about where HRC exists, and this question of powerful women who are connected with powerful men before them. Because one of the things about Margaret Thatcher... I was not prepared to talk about this, but you know, her husband Dennis is famously a figure of fun in England in the 1980s because he's the first "First Man," basically. So there's comics that just show him basically sitting around doing the dishes or fishing. Those are the things I think that Dennis was seen to be doing.

Elizabeth Ferry: And with an apron on, I think, too, right?

John Plotz: Yeah. I think that's right, actually. So I'm just wondering about the glamor of power the way you're describing it, with Eva Perón, and successive waves of blondness. Because Thatcher's power is exactly antithetical to that. It is frumpiness personified. Kind of like Queen Victoria or Queen Elizabeth, she works by her plainness.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. Actually both Queen Elizabeths.

John Plotz: Yeah. Yeah, maybe. Well no, I think the first Queen Elizabeth was a little bit more glamorous.

John Plotz: But yeah, so the authoritarianism line that Elizabeth is referring to is... The book that I chose to talk about is an amazing book called *Iron Ladies* by Beatrix Campbell. The subtitle is *Why Women Vote Tory*, so it's a book that's primarily not about Thatcher so much as it is about the gender gap in British and European politics more generally in the period she's writing about, which is the '70s and '80s, and the way that the gender gap tended to favor conservative parties for female voters. That's the premise of the book, but then she talks about Thatcher as the apotheosis of this kind of iron-lady *mythos* in England.

John Plotz: So the book comes out in '87, at which point Thatcher has been Prime Minister already for eight years and is going on. So you can think of Thatcher and Reagan as being roughly comparable, strongly

conservative figures in a society that had always called itself a liberal society, but had social-democratic impulses, which both Reagan and Thatcher are fighting against.

Elizabeth Ferry: And they're both sort of epoch-defining.

John Plotz: They are epoch-defining. Absolutely.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah.

John Plotz: If you think about British popular culture out of the '80s, if you think about *My Beautiful Launderette* or *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, or any of those defining films, the story is always about Thatcher in some... love it or hate it. And in some ways, *My Beautiful Launderette* I think actually is implicitly pro-Thatcher, because it has a soft spot for entrepreneurial, small business diversity, which is what Thatcher represents.

John Plotz: But the other thing that Thatcher represents, and this does connect—

Elizabeth Ferry: Is the nation of shopkeepers, right?

John Plotz: Well, the nation of shopkeepers, right. Child of a shopkeeper, she's very proud of that, but also Beatrix Campbell has a wonderful line, which is that Thatcher reunited a party divided since 1945 on the basis of "the marriage of moral authoritarianism and economic liberalism." So I think there's so many things to be said about what Thatcherism does on the authoritarian side, as well as on the liberal side, but I think since we're talking about it in terms of the gender of leaders today, I guess one point worth making there is that the moral authoritarianism is articulated as coming out of a family-based authority. In other words, she always represents herself as incarnating the virtues of the family.

John Plotz: So I thought I would just quote probably Margaret Thatcher's most famous line. In England, this is what people will quote at you with Margaret Thatcher. I mean, besides, "This lady's not for turning." The famous speech she gave in 1987... sorry, it was an interview in 1987, she said, "They," meaning basically whining Labour Party members, "They are casting their problems at society, and you know there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families, and no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves, and then also to look after our neighbors."

John Plotz: So I think the wrinkle that Thatcher brings is that, on the one hand, like Reagan, she incarnates a strong form of neoliberalism-- like a Republican, in American terms--adherence to the logic of the marketplace, the invisible hand of the free market. On the other hand, she really anchors in this notion of authority coming out of the family. And I think that the fact of her being a woman enables her to kind of present that.

Elizabeth Ferry: That was going to be my question, and then sort of wondering, do you see ways in which she's using that?

John Plotz: Oh, yeah. I mean, the pocketbook. As you said, the nation of shopkeepers. I think she absolutely uses that. One of the things that people called the Labour Party's vision of a robust social democratic institution-filled society was a nanny state, and Thatcher was basically like the anti-nanny by being this strong, sensible house-marm kind of figure. So I do think she's playing that, very much.

John Plotz: And Campbell has this wonderful chapter where she says, basically, Thatcher gets to be a man when it suits her to be a man, and a woman when it suits her to be a woman, and that's not a role that a male politician can so readily play. Do you know what I mean?

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. It's interesting, though, because it feels like that's one of those cases where being female in politics opens up a broader range of possibilities, whereas we see a lot of cases where it's a narrower range.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Manduhai Buyandelger: Absolutely.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. Which, I don't know if that was a good intro into your work, but we would love to hear about it, and then hear your thoughts.

Manduhai: So the book I wanted to talk today is by Hillary Clinton, *Hard Choices*, or at least the book that I want to start with.

Manduhai: It is an autobiography, which is different from the book that is written about her. She has a voice, a very strong voice. She has written several books. And this one I think is very unique, in the sense that she wrote this book in... it's published in 2014, and she chronicles her work as a secretary of the state.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right.

Manduhai Buyandelger: It's not about glamor. It's very little about the power that she feels and embodies and experiences as something like a public persona or something that she can delegate and she'll empower. It's very much about the work.

Elizabeth Ferry: Doing the job of—

Manduhai: Doing the job. And there is very little gender in it, or what does it mean to be a woman, a secretary of the state. It's just about the choices she made, the difficult situations that her staff or United States was in and she needed to figure out, very quickly on her feet, what to do.

Manduhai: Some of the situations are very bizarre and funny, such as during the time when Aung San Suu Kyi was arrested and... during the house arrest, an American Burmese man who became infatuated with Aung San Suu Kyi, broke into her house, so the American side had to deal with it. Things like that. And it's amazing how much innate wit and quick thinking--friendship, all kinds of official and unofficial powers and thinking--she needed to summon to make decisions and to get out of the situations.

Manduhai: So Hillary Clinton doesn't talk about what does it mean to be a woman, what is gender. It's more about the position of the United States within the world, and what she could do improve the situation, and things like that. This book needs to be read, or at least thought about, in the context of other books that she wrote and other publications that are written about her.

Manduhai: Her latest book, which is titled *What Happened*, it is about the election.

Elizabeth Ferry: The 2016 election.

Manduhai: It's very much about gender. What does it mean to be a woman, and to be talked [of] as a woman, and to be measured by all kinds of people, and—

Elizabeth Ferry: Well that's sort of the underlying argument of her... I haven't read the book, but from the reviews and things, and interviews, it sounds as though her answer to what happened is primarily misogyny.

Manduhai: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Manduhai: So she has multiple voices, and her book *Hard Choices* kind of speaks to my work about women in Mongolia who are parliamentary

candidates, and who talk about themselves in the sense, not as gendered beings per se, but as people who can do work. Not necessarily a gender at work, they're not necessarily shaping themselves or claiming to have more insight in running—

Elizabeth Ferry: Or moral authority, for instance.

Manduhai Buyandelger: Moral authority—or running the department of children and mothers or something like that. They claim to have equal status, and whether that's... they're doing strategically or whether that's just in general, the different kind of understanding of gender and feminism, that's a different question. But I'm glad to have this—

Elizabeth Ferry: So before you go on, I just want to, can you tell us a little bit more about the context of that work? Because I think it's so fascinating.

Manduhai: So I am an anthropologist, and doing ethnography, and writing ethnography about women parliamentary candidates in Mongolia. Mongolia was socialist until 1990. It was Soviet-style socialism. Women had a quota in high positions, including in the national parliament, and they had 30% representation in over 400 people national assembly. That was kind of forgotten [inaudible] during the end of socialism, and by—

Elizabeth Ferry: Was that typical of other Soviet-style republics? To have a gender-based quota?

Manduhai: Yes. It was typical. Some places were able to maintain that because of the strong feminist movement, but most places kind of... it just melted away.

Manduhai: But then the fight to reconstitute that quota was very hard, and prior to 2008 elections, women won, women got approval from the parliament to have 30% candidate quota for the parliamentary elections for women—

Elizabeth Ferry: Okay, so not necessarily elected, but candidates. Yeah.

Manduhai: No, but they lost. And they had to work again for the next 2012 election to reconstitute it.

Manduhai: But what I'm trying to say is that when 2008 candidate quota was abolished without any explanation by the parliament, it coincided with the time when electoral campaigns became highly commercialized and became very expensive. During that time, most

women were challengers, were outsiders, the candidates, and they also didn't have as much money as some of the incumbents or some of the other men. So what has happened is that women had to rely on *who they are* as people, as gendered beings, their education, their background, everything like that.

Manduhai Buyandelger: So that's what I write about, and that's why Hillary Clinton's book is so important. Because many of these Mongolian women were capitalizing on their skills and what they could do.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. Right.

John Plotz: What is the highest post that a woman has had in the Mongolian government?

Manduhai: President of the country in [crosstalk]

John Plotz: Oh! Is that a ceremonial post or a real post?

Manduhai: Back then, it's a real post.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Manduhai: I forgot the years, but it was the widow of the first president who—

John Plotz: Ah, family connection. Uh huh (affirmative).

Manduhai: Sükhbaataryn's wife. But that was long ago, and it's a very small period, and even though it is actual position back then, probably the power was limited.

John Plotz: Yeah.

John Plotz: And the more recent post, 1990?

Manduhai: More recent, speaker of the house. Oyuun.

John Plotz: So that's a powerful role then?

Manduhai: Yes, it is. It is. Speaker of the house.

Manduhai: But women's positions have always been challenged. So 2008 election, women gained only 3% or 5% or something like that, so it's ongoing process.

John Plotz: Well can I ask if it was there about Speaker Oyuun, is that her name?

Manduhai Buyandelger: Yeah.

John Plotz: How was she depicted in public? Did she get some of the grief that American female candidates get? Is she accused of being... I don't know, what?

Manduhai: So Oyuun is a special case. She was elected to the Parliament, she gained the parliamentary seat because of an unusual tragedy. Her brother, who was the leader of the democratic movement, and who later became a candidate for the prime ministry, was assassinated in 2006.

John Plotz: Oh, so shades of the Gandhi family then.

Manduhai: Yeah.

Manduhai: And she was one of very few women to be in the parliament for a long time. By the time she became a speaker, I think she gained this reputation of being this model of the morally intact representative of the parliament. Partly because of her brother, but also mainly because of her public image.

Manduhai: She also has critics who says that she doesn't do much. But then if there are women who try to do a lot, they get into trouble because there are different people who talk differently about what things that people do..

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. What that looks like. Yeah.

John Plotz: Yeah. I mean, the morally pure figurehead, that's a traditionally female role. We can think about a lot of historical politics in which being moral and kind of above the fray is coded as female.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. And that's definitely true for Evita.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Manduhai: Yeah. Right.

John Plotz: This is all making me actually think more about how impressive Thatcher is in this context, because of the ways in which she actually goes against some of those norms of being brought in through family ways, or coming in as a figurehead. She came in as a scrapper. And I

hate her politics, but it's very admirable, in terms of how she found her place.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah, she's incredibly savvy.

Elizabeth Ferry: Let me just ask you if this is one of the reasons why you're intrigued by the book *Hard Choices*. It sounds as though what you're saying about Mongolian female parliamentary candidates is that they're, on the one hand, kind of not really supposed to talk about the fact that they're women, and there's this language of, "It's all about the job," and, "I'm the best one for the job—" the morality--

Elizabeth Ferry: But at the same time, and I know this partly from your work, and this also, in a sense, it puts together what Hillary is talking about in *Hard Choices* and in the later book, they're having to fashion themselves constantly, and work on themselves as women, right?

Manduhai: Yes. No, absolutely, and—

John Plotz: We should put up some of the photos from your recent article, Manduhai, how people self-present...

Elizabeth Ferry: And maybe you can give some examples about that.

Manduhai Buyand: Oh, absolutely.

Manduhai Buyand: So Margaret Thatcher is an example of self-polishing. The styling for older women, and—

Elizabeth Ferry: So she's a model for them?

Manduhai: She was, for older women. In the early 1990s, people knew much about Thatcher, and tried to dress like her, and the suit was very fashionable..

Elizabeth Ferry: And the helmet hair.

Manduhai: The helmet hair, the kind of jewelry that she wore, and the scarves she wore that people try to emulate...

Elizabeth Ferry: That's interesting.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Manduhai Buyandelger: The newer women, 2000 plus, parliamentary candidates, are amazing in the sense that they treat their bodies as pliable, endless resource. They change their voices. They take lessons from opera singers, and they utilize latest technologies of anti-aging and beautification. But the trick—

Elizabeth Ferry: And a lot of work with color, too, right?

Manduhai: Absolutely. And the trick is to be good-looking without being sexy. To be liked without inviting too much. And that's very hard, and they do it really well, through clothing, through everything—

John Plotz: That's totally fascinating. The voice question is fascinating also.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah, so if you could describe, what is the ideal voice that they're aiming for, in terms of pitch or accent, or—?

John Plotz: And then we'll all try to do it.

Manduhai: So one of my informants, a former... who was a candidate for a long time, and then an MP, member of parliament, [inaudible 00:23:45] who is a celebrity writer as well, writes novels, one of the first people to actually translate her novels and get her novels onto Amazon for English and French speakers... she took some advising from both international as well as domestic advisors of how to create the electable persona.

Manduhai: Her voice is a little too high-pitched. It's a little shrill. So she needed to make it—

John Plotz: Oh, shrill! That's one of *those words!* "Shrill."

Elizabeth Ferry: Right, yes. "Shrill and strident."

Manduhai: Yeah, exactly, and it's very hard to listen. It's hard to listen to her for a prolonged period of time. So she took classes for two years with a singer to thicken her voice.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah, enrich it, make it more—

Manduhai: Enrich it and make it lower in tone. And that—

John Plotz: Just take testosterone.

Manduhai Buyandelger: And that was amazing, because I was very puzzled when I was sitting in her office and, with me she would just talk what seemed to be a very feminine voice—

John Plotz: So she code switched?

Manduhai: Yes! She did. So she would have higher-pitched voice with me, and then her assistant came to ask questions, and she delegated the task to the assistant, and the assistant was a young woman, and she practiced her “electable voice”!

Elizabeth Ferry: And she said, "I'm practicing my voice," or she just did it?

Manduhai: No, she just did it. She just, "Do this." I mean, I can't imitate it. It was, "Do this and that, and this needs to be done this way." She gave instructions in a different voice, and then she turned within a second and talked to me about other things in what seemed to be a higher-pitched voice and I couldn't understand why she was doing until she explained this to me and I was like, "Of course."

John Plotz: Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: Okay.

Manduhai: Of course! It makes sense!

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah.

John Plotz: So I just listened to that podcast about Elizabeth Holmes... I think I'm getting her name right, this imposter from Theranos who bilked people out of billions of dollars, and one of the things people are obsessed with is that she changed her voice so that in college, she had her own “female voice,” and then she darkened and deepened it. When you listen to her, she never broke role. That's the amazing thing about her is that she kept..

John Plotz: So I just, there was something about the way it was used as the ‘gotcha’ in the podcast that did feel a little weird to me, and having this conversation is sort of helpful because it's like, shrill and strident are the undesirable characters of the voice, and then dark and authoritative is the desired character.

Elizabeth Ferry: But also maybe that—

John Plotz: But if you're a woman who has a dark and deep voice, then you're putting something on, or—

Elizabeth Ferry: Right, and also that the voice, it might be one thing to change your color of lipstick or your clothing, but somehow the voice is the locus of authenticity or something.

John Plotz: Exactly, because it exists somewhere in-between the body and the external world.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. Right.

Elizabeth Ferry: So working on that is... And I mean, you see that, now you think about things having to do with class, the idea of people who take lessons to reduce their class-based accent...

John Plotz: Yeah. But there's so many different types of passing. And then, so you get in this character, and it's definitely true in the trans community that the question of voice recognition is a huge issue. Being heard on the phone is a dangerous space if you're a certain kind of trans person, because you might be identified as having your birth-associated voice and...

John Plotz: But Manduhai, your formulation of being, I think the phrase you used was "good-looking but not sexy," is that right?

Manduhai Buyandelger: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

John Plotz: So not attractive, but appealing or something? Or—

Manduhai: Right. Good-looking enough, but not necessarily inviting too much.

John Plotz: No come-hither, right.

Manduhai: At least not in overt way, because this is important. For these parliamentary candidates, it's very important to look dignified, and yet very attractive.

John Plotz: Totally.

Manduhai: And not to be filed as trophy wives or "Misses" or beauty pageant, but then look not any less than that.

John Plotz: Totally.

John Plotz: So I think in the American tradition, great people to think about would be Barbara Mikulski, who was just short and never made an effort to be glamorous at all. But she kind of came onto the scene, I don't know if she was married, so I won't call her a housewife, but she came on as a middle-aged activist. That's how she appeared on the scene. And then Claire McCaskill, who was the wife of a senator, and then had to establish her own independent identity, which I think was very... I'm going to call it "dowdy," Thatcher-esque.... But that other category you're talking about, where you're actually willing to be good-looking and appealing to people, but without being coded as sexy—

Elizabeth Ferry: Well I think that's a sort of Ann Richards category, right? So elegant.

John Plotz: Totally. But the person I was thinking about was, I wanted to ask you about childbirth in office, because I was thinking about Jacinda Ardern from New Zealand. Do you guys know her? The Labour prime minister from New Zealand? It was a young woman, and had her first baby right after being elected, basically. Yeah, she's an environmentalist. She paid for her own travel. She paid for her partner and her baby when she traveled, because she didn't think it was right to just... yeah. There's so many things to love about her.

Elizabeth Ferry: Newsflash.

John Plotz: But I mean, she clearly navigated that question of being like, "Yeah, I have a female body, I'm pregnant, I'm about to have a baby," but it wasn't... So she was interested in looking good. She talked about how she wanted to wear nice shirts, but not sexy....

Elizabeth Ferry: Well I'm also thinking about some of the stuff that's coming out around Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her... She dresses too nicely, they seem too "fancy" for someone who's supposedly from a modest background. But at the same time, I was reading one thing that said if you're a woman in politics in the United States, you're either a *battleax* or a *pretty nitwit*, and she's sort of—

John Plotz: Right, and she's neither of those, so it—

Elizabeth Ferry: Right, but she's always tipping into the pretty nitwit category.

John Plotz: Basically, people are irritated because they can't class her.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. Right.

Manduhai Buyandelger: So that's a big issue, I think, in politics. In Mongolia, when the quota question came up again and again, another question followed, which is what constitutes an electable woman? The *de facto* person in the parliament is male, so what kind of women we want to see, that became an issue. So people try to classify it exactly like that. Is this *pretty*? Is this *grandmotherly*? So women whom I work with who want to represent, they have to navigate. Some, of course, just go without paying too much attention, and those people remind me very much of this, Hillary Clinton's book about, they talk about what they're going to do. Not all of them, but many—

John Plotz: But of course, to be a politician... I'm so sorry to interrupt. But to be a politician is to think about how you appear in public.

Manduhai: You can't avoid it.

John Plotz: You can't avoid it. I mean, maybe if you were a wonk technocrat, that's fine, that's what you are. But if you're a politician, I mean, JFK and Nixon both had looks. There was something they were going for.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right, and increasingly, there's an entire industry around the cultivation of political candidates, right?

John Plotz: Totally.

John Plotz: But the thing that you're talking about, Manduhai, I think that's so revealing. The word I've heard used in political discussions is "what lane are you running in?" So, in other words, what is the specific thing you offer, which could mean a set of policies, or it could mean an appearance.

John Plotz: For example, with Elizabeth—

Elizabeth Ferry: It's like a brand.

John Plotz: Like a brand. But with Elizabeth Warren, what I heard people saying about her post-Clinton is, "Oh, well she can't win, because look at what Clinton did in that lane." And it seems so insane to me, because Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Warren occupy totally different lanes, policy-wise. So, the only thing you could mean by that is that they're like women of a certain age who project a certain kind of confidence.

Elizabeth Ferry: They're like middle-aged, or late-middle-aged white ladies.

Manduhai Buyandelger: A similar charisma.

John Plotz: Warren's problem is Bernie Sanders. That's a big problem. But the idea that her problem would be that Hillary Clinton lost, that's so maddening.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes. Yes. Indeed.

John Plotz: I'm going to go back to Kennedy again. He was a Catholic running in a country where Catholic had never been elected president before, so what he had to do was a little bit shift the image of what an electable person was.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right.

John Plotz: Again, he was very concerned with how he looked, and that was part of it.

Elizabeth Ferry: Well, and he had to shed the Al Smith, I guess, right? Which was still in people's memories.

John Plotz: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, totally. Right. So there's legacy you have to shed. But in terms of the candidates you're looking at, do you see people figuring, "Okay, here's the existing role, and this is what I have to do," or do you see people imaging themselves in... Is there the possibility of proving to people that there could be a different lane, a different look?

Manduhai: You know, John, it's so dynamic. And the ways in which women are allowed even to compete in the different political party platforms is more or less negotiated and orchestrated what these women are going to represent, who they're going to defend. Are they going to cover for some difficult situation for other men? Not with their bodies, but to kind of soften the difficult media situation, or difficult corruption cases, or something—

Elizabeth Ferry: Or a particular policy.

Manduhai Buyandelger: Right.

John Plotz: So they're like moral cleansers.

Manduhai: Yeah! Yeah. Some of them, and some of them just have very important appeal. Some of them are just to help others to get up. They assign different roles.

Manduhai: So what is important, what I learned from elections in general, is that there is no black and white winners and losers. It's such a multi-step, long-term process that even losers behind the curtain have a chance to reshuffle their positions. So some candidates know that this time, they may not win, but there will be another chance. But in order to do that, they have to rehearse their craft.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. And also, there must be sort of, as there is in all kinds of places, "You have my back this time, and then I'll have your back some other time."

Manduhai: Yes! That's why it's so negotiated, and when women might come with their ideas of what they're going to do, and then they have to work around what their parties or their situation might dictate, and maneuver around and change a little bit. Which could be good, and could be very undermining as well.

Elizabeth Ferry: Let's turn to our section of the episode on Recallable Books. That's where we ask all of us to think of things that might be exciting for people to look at further, or that might take your thinking on these questions in different directions. So maybe I'll start with you, John?

John Plotz: Oh, sure. Yeah.

John Plotz: So I'm going to stick with the Thatcher theme for the evening, and I'm going to recommend Hilary Mantel's story called "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher," which is in a book called *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher*. I cannot do justice to this story in a brief period. It is a fantasy or a fictionalized account of an assassination attempt on Thatcher, and it carries this intensity of hatred, the way that the left and the right are so divided around Thatcher in England during the time of what I want to call her *reign*, but it also involved Irishness and the way that Irishness stands for violence, in the English context.

John Plotz: There's just a lot of stereotyping. Mantel is kind of playing with the way that we make easy assumptions about how somebody is because they're Irish, how somebody is because they're a woman, how somebody is because they're British, and hence, theoretically, not capable of killing one another. But the idea is maybe we are. So it's a fantastic story. That's my recommendation.

Elizabeth Ferry: Good. Thank you.

Elizabeth Ferry: So speaking of stereotypes, I'm going to be stereotypically anthropological and bring in an ethnography called *Iron, Gender, and*

Power: Rituals of Transformation in African Societies by Eugenia Herbert. This is a kind of a survey or a comparison of a number of different, particularly Central and West African contexts where the ritualization of iron work as a male activity and a politically powerful activity, but one that kind of makes use of ideas and images of childbirth, so that the forge is very clearly metaphorically this image of a woman's body, of a vagina, of birth. But women are not—

John Plotz: Just like in *Great Expectations*. Sorry.

Manduhai Buyandelger: And pain, and labor.

Elizabeth Ferry: And pain, and... yes, yes. Emergence, and all these things.

Manduhai: Fire.

Elizabeth Ferry: Generation, yeah, and power. But it's only reserved for men. So at one point, Herbert says something like, "Female power is recognized, but it's appropriated or assimilated."

John Plotz: That's a nice line.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. I don't think everything's like that. I certainly don't think everything in societies that she's describing or other societies is like that, but I think this notion of what is the idea of female power, what are women supposed to stand for, what kind of work do they have to do in politics, what kind of work are they not supposed to do, and how their power and their bodies might be connected or separated, I think, is a fertile line of inquiry.

Manduhai: Amazing. I can't wait to read both of these books.

Manduhai Buyandelger: So I do recommend, even though it's huge book, *Hard Choices* by Hillary Clinton, just to really think about women's work as work and not just like all the other things that women do in order to get to the power, but the work when they are powerful.

Manduhai: And because this book is autobiographical and it might be too close and Hillary Clinton might be too familiar, et cetera, et cetera, I would like to recommend an exotic book and a small book, and a more popular kind of book, by Jack Weatherford, who is an anthropology professor at Macalester College, *Mongol Queens*. How did the queens contribute to the empires in Eurasia back in 13th Century and 14th Century to rule some of the biggest empires back then?

John Plotz: Interesting. Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: That's wonderful.

Elizabeth Ferry: Okay, well thank you so much, Manduhai, for joining us.

John Plotz: Yes, thank you, Manduhai.

Manduhai: Thank you so much for having me.

John Plotz: Yeah, this is great.

Elizabeth Ferry: Great conversation.

Manduhai: It was awesome.

Elizabeth Ferry: Recall This Book is the brainchild of John Plotz and Elizabeth Ferry. It is affiliated with Public Books, and is recorded and edited in the media lab of the Brandeis library by Plotz, Ferry, and a cadre of colleagues here in the Boston area and beyond.

Elizabeth Ferry: Our music comes from a song by Eric Chasalow and Barbara Cassidy, *Fly Away*. Sound editing is by Claire Ogden, and production assistance, including website design and social media, is done by Matthew Schratz. Mark Dellelo oversees and advises on all technological matters, and we appreciate the support of University Librarian Matthew Sheehy and Dean Dorothy Hodgson.

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