

John Plotz: From the Goldfarb library of Brandeis University, welcome to Recall This Book, a podcast dedicated to making sense of contemporary problems by activating writing and thinking from the past. We believe you can only notice what is exceptional and unprecedented in the present if you take a hard look at what's gone before. You could say we look backward to see into the future.

John Plotz: Over the next half hour we'll explore a couple of works in depth, works on paper, and also artistic works which may also be on paper or on canvas, and we'll also conclude by pointing you towards further reading on the topic.

John Plotz: Recall This Book is hosted today by Elizabeth Ferry, an anthropologist now writing about gold in Columbia and Mexican mining, and in finance. Hello, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Ferry: Hello.

John Plotz: And by me, John Plotz, a professor of Victorian literature, currently writing a very non-Victorian history of science fiction and fantasy. Today we're joined (yay!) by our Brandeis colleague, the artist Tory Fair, who is a professor and a Waltham-based sculptor who's recently been looking back at some pioneering post-minimalist sculptors from the '70s.

John Plotz: Welcome, Tory.

Tory Fair: Glad to be here.

John Plotz: Awesome. Okay. So, introduction to minimalism. The Tate Gallery helpfully explains that minimalism or minimalist art can be seen as extending the abstract idea that art should have its own reality and not be an imitation of some other thing. Minimalist painter, Frank Stella, famously said about his paintings, "What you see is what you see," and I think though, Tory, you're going to educate me on this, when I think of minimalism, I think of those beautiful cubes of Donald Judd or those remarkable metal plates of Carl Andre with names like *Steel Zinc Plain*, they just lie on the ground inviting people to walk on them.

John Plotz: But I also think of the way that the term minimalism, which I discovered was originally coined by Richard Wollheim as an insult, has been taken up in walks of life ranging from home décor to contemplative practice. Might living a minimalism life mean having fewer pieces of furniture or fewer so-called friends, or maybe a freer life, or a purified soul? And then, in the other corner, finally, there's

literary minimalism which lacks a stable definition. So, some people will conscript Ernest Hemingway's de-adjectivalized prose, I guess, for minimalism, and other people will look to Samuel Beckett who has a more conceptual vision of what the minimal is.

John Plotz: But all of that, I think, is really just to say, Tory, can you start us off by talking about a favorite piece of minimalist art and what you learn by thinking about it.

Tory Fair: Yes, thank you. I wanted to talk about two different pieces and the first one is Agnes Martin. I saw a show of her paintings in the late '90s, and when I walked into the room and I was surrounded by her work, I had this sensation that I was levitating ever-so-slightly, but it really felt like, when I walked into the room, I became a little lighter. It was definitely... it was a little unexpected to have such a physical response.

Tory Fair: The paintings are made through a repetition of marks and when you go up closer you see that it's actually the artist's hand that is making this repetition of mark over and over, horizontally, very slightly. And another experience that I wanted to talk about was the experience of visiting Donald Judd's pieces in Marfa. He brought up his cubes.

Tory Fair: In one building, a group of meticulously made cube fabrications filled up the room. There was no trace of hand, and in some ways, the room was very cold because they were all made of metal and they were very reflective, but you're surrounded by the desert, and the work kind of confused what was inside and what was outside, as the cubes themselves were really very reflective. There was infinite desert with very measured form, so the pieces felt very expansive and it was hard to know where they began and where they ended. It was very confounding experience, very rational yet very irrational in some ways.

Tory Fair: So, I picked these two minimalists because, as you said, the work is self-referential made from straightforward materials, no image, no narrative. But in common I think was an opportunity for me as the viewer to experience something very determined. So, somehow, minimalism really confronts you to see what is there. No illusions, no tricks, no abstract expression, but rather direct experience.

John Plotz: So, Tory, that makes a lot of sense to me, but I also feel like you're describing two different things that I'd love to hear you kind of tease out how they relate to each other, because on the one hand you're talking about the directness of the piece as a piece, like, that you are in the presence of something. But on the other hand, you're talking about that notion of your own bodily response to it. In my mind, those are

two different things. One of them is the experience. I would be tempted to call it subjective, like from the literary perspective, and then the other is feeling the object outside yourself. But it sounds to me like you're connecting those two.

Tory Fair: Well, I guess, I'm an artist so I'm talking from the point of view that, as an artist, I choose the decisions I make. I choose how much hand do I let the viewers see. In Agnes Martin's case, she let a little bit of her hand in, and Donald Judd's piece, of course, he was trying to take away that kind of expression.

Tory Fair: So, I do think that one of the things I'm interested in about minimalism is that by reducing things and taking some of the hand out and determining things with materials that were a little more accessible, they actually opened up an experience for the viewer to come in and approach the piece on their own terms.

Elizabeth Ferry: So, I have a question. Maybe it's a provocative question, or not. What you're describing as the subjective or embodied experience, the encounter between art and the viewer or participant, the collaboration, seems like it could be a definition of all kinds of different art. But there is something... you're describing something specific about minimalism with respect to this. So, one possibility might be, is it that this kind of paring down and restraint allows you to be aware of that experience more? Would that be a difference between minimalism and some other... some painting that I look at and I want to cry or feel really happy or get a chill down my spine?

Tory Fair: Well, I think, one thing that distinguishes the minimalists is that they were trying to set up a situation where the viewer wasn't looking at the piece and seeing that it was a piece of artwork. Like they weren't admiring the artwork. It was more of a direct experience in terms of cutting down the anticipation of what art-work should be. Also, this is coming after the Abstract Expressionists, so that they were definitely moving away from the Romantic notion of the artist as author, as...

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. But they're not the only ones who are doing that.

Tory Fair: Absolutely.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. I mean, I think this idea of sort of making the... I think of the notion of connecting the dots or the idea of a story or a work of art where much of it is below the surface, right? That's sometimes a metaphor that people use for minimalism, calls up this idea or it makes me think about the idea that the viewer, in this case, is being

asked to do more of the work. They are sort of being asked to meet the work of art halfway, or more than halfway.

Tory Fair: Well, I think that would be a bad piece of art.

John Plotz: Hunh!

Elizabeth Ferry: Really?

Tory Fair: I think that-

John Plotz: That's so interesting that you would say that.

Tory Fair: Yeah. Yeah. Why?

John Plotz: Wow.

Tory Fair: Well, I think that's-

John Plotz: That's like on the cooking shows when they say, "Oh, well, when you look at that dessert, it allows the diner to decide--and I mean that in a bad way." You're basically saying when we decide, that's a failure of the artwork.

Tory Fair: Well, maybe, I should say, I think that the artist has to determine exactly what they want to do to provide an experience. Those Donald Judd pieces, say the plywood pieces, they're made out of plywood, but they're beveled and put together in such extreme care that it's not about...

Elizabeth Ferry: Well, I don't mean that the artist isn't doing any work. I mean, maybe our definitions of work are different, right? So, when I'm saying it, I'm not meaning, "Oh, my five-year-old could do that, just lay some planks on the floor." But... so, we mentioned Hemingway before. Ernest Hemingway won a \$10 bet by producing the shortest possible story. "For sale, baby shoes. Never worn."

Elizabeth Ferry: Now, that's a story that depends on the reader connecting the dots, filling in the parts that are not said. It doesn't mean that Hemingway isn't working to make that story. I think that story's actually pretty--and I don't even really like Hemingway--but in this case, I think that story is extreme. There's a lot of work that goes into it, but the reader has to do a lot of work, too.

John Plotz: But I think I agree with Tory, on that story. We could maybe take another pass at this, but on that, Tory, tell me if I understand you

correctly. Basically, of course, the reader has to do a lot of work there, in terms of this story of that, you know...

Tory Fair: Like, why? Right?

John Plotz: Yeah. Right.

Elizabeth Ferry: At the most simple level

John Plotz: Right. But, the work is already all encoded in those six words. Like, in other words, where we're going with that. It's not that we can do anything we want with it. It's that-

Elizabeth Ferry: No.

John Plotz: It's available to us but it's only available to us with one... there's only one pathway through it, which means that-

Elizabeth Ferry: Well, that might be a bad story. I mean-

John Plotz: No! But Tory is-

Elizabeth Ferry: I mean, there could be a work in which there were several paths...

John Plotz: No, but I think Tory is saying that that's actually the desired outcome, because the work puts you on a path where you're going to put your feet.

Elizabeth Ferry: Sure.

John Plotz: The artist knows where you're going to put your feet in that story.

Tory Fair: Although, I think that there's a moment, as an artist, where you determine your piece and you put it out into the world, and then it becomes open for how people want to interact with it.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right.

Tory Fair: Now, you have to control your work so that people interact with it in a way that you find expansive and acceptable. So I think the Minimalists wanted to bring you back to the work, back to the piece, back to the materials, so that it wasn't about a specific personal narrative, but it could actually inspire something personal in the viewer.

John Plotz: So, Tory, I have a-

Elizabeth Ferry: So, why is that different from saying... asking more from the viewer?

Tory Fair: Well, I think that when you're going from something that's very personal to then something that's universal, I think that you're talking about the inverse, and I'm talking about the determined... the artist determines that movement.

John Plotz: Historically, Tory, is that... those Richard Serra sculptures, like the ones that fill up the plazas? Do you know the ones I'm talking about?

Tory Fair: *Tilted Arc*?

John Plotz: Yes. Tilted Arc. Thank you. Is that minimalism?

Tory Fair: Yes.

John Plotz: But that's very coercive.

Tory Fair: Definitely. That piece, you're bringing up a piece that's very divisive.

John Plotz: Yeah. Can you talk about it a little bit?

Elizabeth Ferry: You're opposing coercive, coercion, with what I was describing as the viewer doing more work, right? You're saying those are two opposed things?

John Plotz: Yeah. Exactly.

Elizabeth Ferry: But I don't agree.

John Plotz: Okay.

Elizabeth Ferry: I think that you could coerce the viewer into doing work. Right? You could coerce the viewer into being a participant. Being, as you say, a collaborator, in the experience.

Tory Fair: But I think the important thing is, is that as an artist, as the writer, as the author, that you are giving the ingredients so that the viewer always returns to what is in front of them.

John Plotz: And this goes back to my instinct of the notion of cooking shows. I'm always amazed when they say, "The whole point is to have the diner just do this one thing with the plate." You know, not *make a choice* about where they're going to rotate it. They're just going to, like, take the plate and they're going to eat the way you wanted them to eat. So

that's my idiot's way into understanding what you artists are doing when you're making real art. Real non-edible art.

John Plotz: Your point is something like, the work that you do as an artist ensures that when I come to face this thing, there's only a few ways that I can approach it.

Tory Fair: Or, that I don't dictate those ways, but I do dictate what I do in the artwork. So that it becomes even more clear what you, as a viewer, are bringing to it.

Elizabeth Ferry: And that's clearer in minimalism than it might be in some other modes of expression.

Tory Fair: Yes, because I think in other modes of expression, you're focused more on, "Oh, what does the artist mean by this?"

Elizabeth Ferry: Right.

Tory Fair: Where I think the minimalists are confronting you with something very matter-of-fact, that you have... *Do I walk on these Carl Andre pieces? How do I experience them?*

Elizabeth Ferry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tory Fair: *Are they art?* So that it changes the habit in which you were interacting with some pretty fundamental ideas.

John Plotz: Yeah. That makes perfect sense to me, and that's a good connection. Like, I know, Elizabeth, we should go now to the connection you want to make, but I would just say, to put down a marker, that is a great connection to the minimalism of somebody like Samuel Beckett who said, that basically, choice had gone as far as you could go by way of adding, so he had to take the way of *subtraction*. So he ends up with plays like this play "Breath," which is literally just ... and that's the whole play. So it's just those three things. A cry, a breath, and a cry.

Elizabeth Ferry: We've been waiting.

John Plotz: Would you like me to do it again?

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah.

Tory Fair: Yes.

John Plotz: ... Thank you.

Elizabeth Ferry: In unison we'll do it at the end of the podcast.

John Plotz: But, yeah. But, that completely resonates with your point which is that it forces the theatergoer, in that case, to come directly face-to-face with the event or the action of the play, rather than all of the layers of meaning that the author has added on top of it.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. I think that makes a lot of sense. And it actually connects very well to what I would like to talk about, which is, maybe, what you thought this podcast would be about when you clicked on it, which is the extremely... the lifestyle movement that is the center of many conversations of minimalism, right? So, the texts that I would like to bring in is much lower in the brow than the works that we've been discussing, and it's part of this lifestyle moment of minimalism that has many books and blogs and websites devoted to getting rid of your stuff and arranging what is left with stylish Zen or maybe hipster simplicity.

Elizabeth Ferry: I think the URL of one website, *Be More With Less*, sums it up. It's kind of a combination of Le Corbusier and the less is more, and the old Army slogan, "Be all that you can be." And there's been a backlash to this movement as you listeners I'm sure know. Backlash takes a couple of... or the response takes a couple of forms. One is pointing out that the quantity of stuff that many minimalist sites try to get you to buy in order to simplify your life. There's a magazine called *Real Simple Magazine*, which is almost completely an advertisement for storage and cleaning items.

John Plotz: Real simple. *While supplies last.*

Elizabeth Ferry: Exactly. *All new, with added simpleness.*

John Plotz: Now, *15% more simple.*

Elizabeth Ferry: And another main kind of response has to do with the kind of privilege that is necessary and social or cultural capital that is necessary to living in a tiny house or traveling the world with a tiny backpack or simply a credit card.

Elizabeth Ferry: So my contribution to this conversation is the world best-seller, *The Life Changing Magic Of Tidying Up*, by Marie Kondo, who also has a massively successful organizing business in Japan. The book could certainly be rightly criticized for relying on privilege, and also for commodifying simplicity, although I will say that she argues for using shoe boxes instead of fancy storage systems. And I wouldn't describe

the book as, say, well-written or necessarily say "good", but I'm quite fond of it and I got fonder of it as I was reading it.

Elizabeth Ferry: I think that it points to some of these questions of the experience between humans and stuff that maybe has something in common with what we're discussing with these other kinds of texts. It proposes, the underlying premise of the book is that minimalism, getting rid of 3/4 of your stuff, say, alters your relationship between people and your things. And there's a kind of animism, anthropomorphism, but maybe even animism, that's sort of woven into this. As those of you who've read the book or read about it, know that she recommends that you hold each object to see if it *sparks joy*. That you thank each thing in your house before you get rid of it. Also that you thank your socks at the end of the day for taking care of your feet-

John Plotz: Oh. I already do that. Definitely.

Elizabeth Ferry: There you go. You're on your way.

John Plotz: They are the object... I am by far the most grateful to socks of any object in my life.

Elizabeth Ferry: There you go.

John Plotz: Sure.

Elizabeth Ferry: And there's this sort of pleasing, homey, animism to this, and... But I would say also an attention to the bare bones of object-as-object and the illumination of distraction so as to better communicate with things.

Elizabeth Ferry: I did want to write, just to give you a quote. This will kind of give you a sense of the voice of it, too, which is I think part of it. This is in the chapter called *How To Fold*. "Folding goes even more smoothly if you fold thin, soft material more tightly, reducing it to a small width and height, and thick, fluffy materials less. There's nothing more satisfying than finding the sweet spot. The piece of clothing keeps its shape when stood on edge and feels just right when held in your hand. It's like a sudden revelation. 'So this is how you always wanted to be folded'. A historical moment in which your mind and a piece of clothing connect."

John Plotz: There really is nothing worse. I can't think of anything more satisfying in life than that. Yeah.

Tory Fair: It makes it sound great, doesn't it?

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes. She has a whole discussion of how she threw out basically all of her family's possessions-

John Plotz: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Elizabeth Ferry: ... and she kept... So, just go into their closet and throw stuff out and probably they'll never notice.

John Plotz: Right.

Elizabeth Ferry: And if they do, you can always deny it.

John Plotz: It's better to seek forgiveness than permission.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. And then, at the end, she kind of says, "Well, I sort of learned that your family gets pretty mad at you if you do that, so maybe it's not a good idea."

Tory Fair: But, I do think that what she's trying to get at is, making your experience of life more something. More pure, more... So, I think it's really funny to think about that in terms of Donald Judd, the minimalist trying to heighten a certain experience of your body in space around the material.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. Right.

Tory Fair: So I think that thinking of the viewer-

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah. Although Donald Judd would hate that probably, but...

Tory Fair: That's okay.

Elizabeth Ferry: That's okay. Yeah.

John Plotz: But say more. Because to me it does seem really different. I mean, because this seems like a very instrumental or utilitarian relationship to things. Like, in other words, you're talking about the things that come to life because they are of use to you. You're talking about the things that surround you-

Elizabeth Ferry: No. They spark joy. That's her criterion.

John Plotz: But don't these... But everything that you've described sounds like an interaction. I mean, I won't say necessarily, like, a consumer or capitalist interaction, but it's, you know, the objects to the extent that they're prosthetic for your life or extensions of your life or something.

Which seems really different from what Tory was describing, because she was describing walking into these rooms and feeling like, "Oh, wait, here's an object that's, like, kind of mandates its own experience."

Elizabeth Ferry: Well, I think, you slipped in-

John Plotz: Oh, Tory, just shook her head at me.

Tory Fair: Well, I think, you just said that the objects, the Agnes Martin paintings are *mandating* an experience, and I-

John Plotz: It's not like *mansplaining* but... yeah.

Tory Fair: No, no, you didn't because... She's putting it out there in a way that you come to it on your own terms.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Tory Fair: So, she's not dictating an experience. She's presenting and giving an opportunity for an experience, to empty your mind and address the painting.

John Plotz: To take the analogy of the socks or the sweater that you fold, would you accept that that's a decent analogy? Because it seems to me the socks or the sweater or something that you've already kind of recruited to fill a particular role in your life, whereas the art object is at least... I mean, this is why I came with the word "mandating" which is maybe the wrong word, but it's like, it's externalizing. It's offering you something from beyond. Like the whole point is that it isn't... like, you go and get socks.

Elizabeth Ferry: It's as if the person who's living in the house is, or maybe a prior version of the person living in the house, is the artist, and the person living in the... trying to go through the stuff...

John Plotz: Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: Who's the same person, but later is the viewer.

John Plotz: Yeah. Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right? And I would say that I'm not trying to say these are alike in every way, but I just find it interesting that this sort of attention to the provocation between things and people as a sort of elemental, pared-

down kind of, in this case, animated experience feels like there's something interestingly aligned.

Tory Fair: Yeah. By taking away material, you actually heighten the immaterial, which is that which she calls joy.

Elizabeth Ferry: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

John Plotz: Well, unfortunately, I'm having the opposite reaction, which I think that it's making me... I wanted to say that I have this incredible pleasure in going to the museum on Sunday mornings, sometimes that everybody's sleeping in, I go to the museum and my point in going to the museum--and Tory, sometimes I send you photos of what I discovered there--is to find something that I didn't expect to find there.

John Plotz: In other words, to go there and just have some kind of encounter in which, what is... Yeah. I mean, I kind of want to come back to the idea of the *mandated* experience. Like, what I respond to is that I walk into a room and I don't know what I'm going to feel, but that some artist has given some thought to the thing that's going to happen to me when I walk into that room. Which is not how I feel about my socks, because what I feel about my socks is-

Elizabeth Ferry: But she would say, you should feel that way about your socks. That her process of tidying is intended to reanimate your relationship with your things in ways that you might not expect, by confronting them or by encountering them in this frame of spark and joy.

John Plotz: Well, that's really interesting. Actually, Beckett has something to say about that, about habit. He says that the problem is that we're continuously caught in habit, and then you need these moments that push you outside of habit. But, the distinction that Beckett makes (that actually Wittgenstein makes this distinction, too) he says that, "The difference is that an artwork requires you to be taken out of your habit," whereas other things you can kind of, you know, you can arrive at that. You can get yourself up for it. Like, if I come to my socks with the right attitude, I can de-sockify them.

Elizabeth Ferry: Right. That's what she's saying.

John Plotz: Right.

Elizabeth Ferry: Or, ultra-sockify them.

John Plotz: Yeah.

Elizabeth Ferry: I mean, is there essential sock-ness that is potentially...

John Plotz: Yeah. Except, I guess, I'm pushing back on that and saying that their essential sock-ness is more like habitual. Like, the thing that's really essential about them is that you went and bought them because you knew that they were going to provide this spongy, sweat-absorbing facility that you need at the end of a long day.

John Plotz: In other words, the essentialness... the essential part is not the strangeness, it's the familiarity.

Elizabeth Ferry: But isn't that also true with other kinds of... I mean, when you talk about plywood that's on the ground, right, it's partly the encounter with the usual that's being reconfigured in a new way, right?

Tory Fair: And by design. The minimalist wanted to actually take that Sunday morning self that goes to the museum and wants to be somehow *entertained*, and say, "No," like, "Let's... You can do better." Like, "You can find an aesthetic experience in a more common place."

John Plotz: So, okay, except for quarreling about the word *entertain*, because I don't think what I was saying is that I wanted to be entertained, I was saying that I wanted to be estranged or-

Tory Fair: Sorry. Sorry. [crosstalk 00:26:53] I was *mandating* that.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yeah.

John Plotz: Okay. Well... duly mandated. But, that is incredibly interesting. But then that raises the possibility that minimalist art is at its best when it's heading towards its own disappearance. Is that what you're saying? Like if Donald... like, in other words, that the point of the Donald Judd is not, we should always go back and look at those cubes, but that the effect of looking at the cubes is that you're now able to just look at plywood and be, like, "Oh, cool!"

Elizabeth Ferry: Well, that's one of the effects, right? That you're supposed to look at the world in a new way because you've been asked to experience it, not just in this esoteric space.

John Plotz: So, then, is the object itself unnecessary? You just need to have that experience once and then after that you're kind of done with it?

Tory Fair: Well, I'm going to go to Marfa and then I'm going to go and I'm going to fold my shirt.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes.

Tory Fair: And then I'll talk to my socks.

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes.

Tory Fair: No, but I do think that connecting the more elite kind of idea of what art is and bringing it down to folding socks, it's kind of an interesting way of trying to, again, like the... what's that magazine called?

Elizabeth Ferry: Real Simple.

Tory Fair: You know, the commodification of that is another thing, but the idea... I think I wanted to talk about my experience because I think it is about inspiring yourself to own up to your own experience and not have someone else tell you what your experience is.

Elizabeth Ferry: Which is kind of what I meant by *work* at the beginning of this conversation.

Tory Fair: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

John Plotz: Cool. I think that actually, believe it or not, brings us to the final portion of this podcast, Recallable Books. And I have to say, for this episode, we're not going to just say Recallable Books, we're going to saying Recallable Art. So, Tory, what book or artwork are you going to urge our listeners to recall from the library or go to see, or buy?

Tory Fair: I thought about this. I'm going to recommend Daybook: The Journal of an Artist, by Anne Truitt, and urge you to go to Dia and see her show right now, because there's an amazing show, and you can buy the book in the bookstore.

John Plotz: Excellent.

Elizabeth Ferry: What is Dia?

Tory Fair: Dia is a museum in New York, in Hudson, New York.

John Plotz: Cool. And when is the show up until?

Elizabeth Ferry: Check our website.

John Plotz: Check our website for further details. Tell us, Tory, give us one more sentence on what that book is like.

- Tory Fair: Well, I think in the book you get to see an artist think about a larger trajectory of her own work and where she came into her real life's work and her vision that is on view right now in the show.
- John Plotz: Awesome. That sounds great. Okay, and I am going to recommend *Aesop's Fables*, because we didn't talk a lot about literary minimalism, but I love the reduced quality of those fables, and I'm going to actually add a kind of maximal plug which is that you should read the Laura Gibbs translation from Oxford World Classics, because what she does is dissect those tiny stories by breaking down the relationship between the *story*, that is the events they describe, and then the *moral*. And she makes the point that sometimes the moral comes at the beginning, sometimes it comes in the middle, and sometimes it comes at the end, and the sequence really matters.
- John Plotz: I'm just going to read one, because I love the way that she breaks it down. So, what is probably the oldest of the *Aesop's Fables* was in Hesiod and it comes from... so that's the eighth century B.C. So, Aesop's fables were collected probably starting in the third century B.C. but this particular story is from the eighth century.
- John Plotz: "This is how the hawk addressed the dapple-throated nightingale as he carried her high into the clouds, holding her tightly in his talons. As the nightingale sobbed pitifully, pierced by the hawk's crooked talons, the hawk pronounced these words of power, 'Wretched creature, what are you prattling about? You are in the grip of one who is far stronger than you, and you will go wherever I may lead you, even if you are a singer. You will be my dinner, if that's what I want, or I might decide to let you go.' It is a foolish man who thinks he can oppose people who are more powerful than he is. He will be defeated in the contest, suffering both pain and humiliation."
- John Plotz: Wow. Talk about-
- Elizabeth Ferry: Dang. That's the *moral*?
- John Plotz: Talk about mandating. I know. So the thing that Laura Gibbs says is that you can't tell whether those last two lines are something that the hawk is saying to the nightingale, or whether they're the moral. So she talks about the way in which the voice either belongs *inside* the story or at the edge of the story. And that, I think, is amazing. That's minimalism, for me.
- John Plotz: Okay. Thank-
- Elizabeth Ferry: Can you do the play again? To close us out?

John Plotz: Oh. Can I do the play?

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes.

John Plotz: Of course. Can we all do it together?

Elizabeth Ferry: Yes.

John Plotz: Ready? One, two, three. ...[breath, gasp, breath]

John Plotz: Okay. From Brandeis library, that is *Recall This Book*. Thank you so much, Elizabeth, as my co-host, and thank you Tory Fair for joining us.

John Plotz: Recall This Book is the brainchild of John Plotz and Elizabeth Ferry, and it's affiliated with Public Books and recorded and edited at the Media Lab of the Brandeis library, by Plotz, Ferry and a cadre of colleagues here in the Boston area and beyond. Sound editing is by Anil Tripathy at the college department of production assistants, including website design and special media is the bailiwick of Matthew Schratz from the English department. Mark Dellelo advises on all technological matters. We always want to hear from you with your comments, criticisms or suggestions for future episodes. You can email us directly or contact us by Twitter or on our Facebook page and website, where you'll also find links to the text discussed today and suggestions for further reading and listening.

John Plotz: Finally, if you enjoyed today's show, please be sure to write a review or rate us on iTunes or Stitcher or wherever you get your podcast, and share the episode with your friends via social media or however else you do that. From Recall This Book, this is John Plotz along with Elizabeth Ferry and Tory Fair. Remember, if you like what you heard today, head off to your local library, bookstore or internet repository to read the book.