

Recall This Book 34

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Vincent Brown

Elizabeth Ferry:

From Brandeis University in quarantine, welcome to Recall This Book, a podcast that looks backwards 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 by looking at books that shaped the world we inherited. Today, the cohosts are me, Hello, John Plotz. Hi John. And Vincent Brown.

Vincent Brown:

Hello from quarantine in Cambridge.

Elizabeth Ferry:

Vincent Brown is Charles Warren professor of American history and professor of African and African American studies at Harvard University. He directs the History Design Studio and teaches courses in Atlantic history, African diaspora study, and history of slavery in the Americas. He's the author of *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, 2008. And the producer of *Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness* an audio-visual documentary broadcast on the PBS series, Independent Lens. And most recently he's the author of *Tacky's Revolts: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War*, which just came out a couple of months ago. And we have pleasure of talking about today. So maybe you could just start by telling us a little bit about the book and, and what you're trying to do, Vince.

Vincent Brown:

Well, first of all, John and Elizabeth, thanks for having me on, I really appreciate it. I admire both of you and your work. And I especially admire the

fact that you're even willing to do this during a quarantine in the midst of a plague and doing what you're recording this.

John Plotz:

I mean, it's either that or talk to our children.

VB:

So, you know, which is a fate worse than, than this.

EF:

Or contemplate the fact that they won't talk to us.

VB:

So, so I'll talk about *Tacky's Revolts: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* and kind of how I came to write it. I conceived the book, I think around 2005, but certainly after the initial invasion, the constituted that phase of the Iraq war. I mean, I think of the Iraq war now as, as running on three decades from kind of the early 1990s through the present, but certainly there was the invasion in 2003, which by 2004, 2005 already looked like it wasn't going well. So I was thinking a lot about empire and insurgency and how it was that kind of ragtag impromptu militias could be holding at bay, the strongest military in the history of the world, perhaps. And so I thought about that as I was thinking about the history of slavery, which was my specialized field and thinking about a whole series of insurrections that were staged by enslaved Africans from Suriname all the way up to New York City in the last third of the 17th century through the first three quarters of the 18th century and these Africans, many of them were from a particular region of West Africa then called the Gold Coast, roughly what's now Ghana.

And they became notorious for staging these insurrections during this period, even though they had been slaves. And lots of people had thought about why. One of the reasons was because these people were from a particularly war torn part of the African continent and those wars, in fact, facilitated the slave trade. Oftentimes it was European weapons that enhance the scale and

methodology of these wars so that they could produce more slaves for sale to the Europeans, to staff the plantations in the Americas. But many of those slaves had military experience because they've been involved in those wars or they had experience in evading and defending themselves from other kinds of armies during those Wars. And they didn't lose that experience forget that experience, even though they were enslaved in the Americas. And sometimes they came together, even former enemies coming together in new categories of belonging because they spoke similar languages or worshipped similar gods, recognize similar kinds of political authority. And then they stage these revolts against plantation society. So these people, called Coromantees at the time, as I said, developed an Atlantic wide reputation for military prowess. And one of the largest of these revolts was what is known as Tacky's Revolt that occurred in Jamaica in 1760 and 1761. So I decided I would write about Tacky's Revolt as a way of exploring this larger diaspora of militants throughout the Americas that staged these revolts during the period that I was, that I was writing about.

EF:

That's great. So I want to pick up on one dimension of that. I'm going to read you and everyone, a quotation from your prologue, which kind of encapsulates, one of what I find the most exciting threads of this very exciting book. So you describe imperial advancement and enslavement during this period, as I'm quoting "a borderless slave war—war to enslave or to expand slavery and war against slaves answered on the side of the enslaved by war against slave holders and also war among slaves themselves." And you link this emphasis on war to views of space and scale, and this actually connects to some of your other work, I think, both the mapping project and also the Herskowitz film, which I recommend to everyone. And we'll, we'll include a link to the trailer on our site is really great a movie, which is also kind of about how to rethink space through movements and through particularly the movements of empire and diaspora. So I wonder if you can talk more, you also say during the same section that warfare migrates, and that you want to think about how across vast distances, these wars within wars connected the constituent elements of empire, diaspora and insurrection. So can you tell us more about how this makes us think differently about space and about maybe the Caribbean in relationship to the rest of the world?

VB:

Sure. One of the challenges of this project and with the subject that I started with is that it's inherently transnational and it transcended the kind of regional units of analysis that we normally think of when we go to write history. So it didn't happen in one nation state. It didn't happen in one colony. It didn't happen just within one empire. It didn't happen just on one continent. So trying to kind of tie together this event the slave revolts in 1760 and 61 with its roots and its routes, and its reverberations became an inherently spatial project. And I had to think about how it was going to integrate the different histories that all pulled together into this, into this one place in 1760 and 61. And so already, I was trying to think about how I was going to map this history and think about how it is that say West African history featured in Jamaica, how it is that European Imperial history shaped West African history, even before that, how it is through reverberations of these actions by Africans in Jamaica, then reverberated up to North America back across to Europe, and then to some degree back to West Africa.

So already I was thinking about this entire region through which these events played out and I needed categories, units of analysis that were not the received ones for the kind of history that a lot of us have been writing. Now, I think this part might be relevant to, to the moment we're living in right now. I had already conceived my method of working as kind of like an epidemiological analysis in the first book in *Reaper's Garden* where one follows causal agents, right? What an epidemiologist would see as a vector follows causal agents from one place to another and looks at how they adapt or don't adapt failed to adapt to their environments and how they have certain kinds of causes, certain kinds of effects in different kinds of environments as they move across space. So already that kind of epidemiological thinking that I may have inherited from my father who is a bacteriologist and taught medical microbiology at UC San Diego for his entire career, I may have inherited that from him. That already was a part of my thinking. And I applied that to this book where it seemed especially appropriate.

EF:

Yeah. So I have one question, but also I, it's funny because you just posted on Facebook, we happen to be Facebook friends, a map of all the States and which States gave a lockdown and when. Right. And what that could be

predicted about the spread of that's spread of COVID. So you're clearly, this is clearly something that's on your mind.

VB:

Yeah, it's the way I think. And like I said, my, my dad was a bacteriologist and so he's had me washing my hands assiduously ever since I was a child.

JP:

Can I, so I would love to follow up on one particular aspect of this, cause I really love the way in describing it you talked about the, and this is something you unpack in the book a lot as well, the notion of the ongoing wars, you know, wars of empire that then have a resonance in the war of, you know, the war that is slavery and the war against enslaved populations of enslaved populations against their enslavers. But, I was thinking about this question of the way that vectors get carried and the, the way that military training works as part of the story of how populations are able to mobilize against other populations. And I guess the 19th century version of that I'm thinking of is that a lot of the working class people I study like in the early 19th century, like the chartists get their start out of radicalism caused by the Napoleonic Wars that is they get, you know, people have to go serve for the British against the French and that's actually what gives them the weaponry and the training that they need. So that's a very straight forward argument about like distribution of you know, forms of violence. Is the story like the story that you're telling overall, is it a story about that kind of unintended consequence too? Like, I mean, the ways in which one sort of war form kicks over and has an unintended consequence of, of producing a different kind of war form.

VB:

So certainly the story of unintended consequences was foremost in my mind, even when I began this project. And I guess, you know, if we go back to the early 2000s and thinking about the kind of launching of the terror wars, one of the things that kept going back and forth in my mind was how during the 1980s, the kind of big cold war period when the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan and the United States was backing the Mujahideen, Holy warrior rebels against the godless communist to the Soviet union, right.

EF:

Remember those bumper stickers with the praying figure?

VB:

Yes. Right. The Mujahideen were the good guys for Americans, right. They were our friends, even the Cold War icon Rambo, right in Rambo 3 is fighting alongside the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union. Right. And so like in late 2001, when suddenly, you know, it was the Afghans who had hosted Osama Bin Laden and who were at fault for the September 11th attacks. And we were now at war in Afghanistan and our friend had become our enemy. Right. I was thinking, you know, about those kinds of unintended consequences, where in fact, some of the very people that we had equipped and armed and trained during the Cold War ended up fighting the Terror Wars against the United States. So that kind of relationship of collaboration and betrayal and warfare was already on my mind. And I began to think about these West African slave trading states who traded actively with European States, for weapons to fight their enemies and then would trade slaves often in exchange, right. Had been in some ways in collaboration with these European slave traders. Right. But of course, the wars that were facilitated by those exchanges of weapons then had reverberations that the slave traders that the slave holders in the Americas hadn't counted on, there were unintended consequences.

So already that was something that I was thinking about. Now I also began to think about the entire environment as an environment motivated, shaped, conditioned by warfare. And that's where thinking about slavery itself as a state of war came in and I had Olaudah Equiano, Gustavus Vassa, we know better as Olaudah Equiano, who said in his autobiography, *when you make people slaves, you compel them to live with you in a state of war*. And then he actually goes on to quote John Milton in the conversation between Beelzebub and God about how, you know, people who are subject to tyrannical authority can only return violence, hatred. They can't return peace if peace hasn't been given to them. So for Olaudah Equiano slavery itself was a state of war. And this wasn't just a metaphor, right. He had been in Jamaica in the early 1770s when the Island was still reeling from the slavery revolts of the 1760s. So this was something that was kind of part of his real experience. So thinking of slavery itself as a state of war, then helped me kind of understand the entire world or this one in which war was the most important motivating factor for most of the actions that I described.

JP:

So yeah. So Vince, actually, when you and I were talking about this in the run up to this conversation, I also mentioned how much I had enjoyed just teaching *Oroonoko* recently. And that's another one in which the state of slavery is understood as potentially perpetual warfare. So that, so, so *Oroonoko* goes back to, it's like 1688, I guess. Is this, do you have a particular, do you, do you have a kind of moment of origin story about where this new configuration of slavery is like, do you like, do you see, I like, I really love that you quote you mentioned the age of servile wars that is this Roman period in which these, all these slavery revolts occurred as something that Europeans had on their mind in the 18th century when confronted with the possibility of slave war. But so do you, do you an analysis that puts this kind of slavery as warfare as being kind of woven into the nature of slavery itself all the way back? Or is it specific to, I don't know, like the American, the American modern capital experience, like, is it the Americas or is it just slavery in the modern age? What's the, yeah, what's, what's the story?

VB:

So I, I do kind of weave this notion of warfare into my understanding of slavery as an institution. And in some ways I'm going to admit to being a bit of a bad historian here, because what I, what I don't do is say, what I don't do is say here's an origin of transformation and a definitive end to this kind of phenomenon. What I do is I say, well, where are we think that we've got the beginning of one war and an identifiable trajectory for it, and a definitive end to that war, maybe we don't. Look at the kinds of conflicts that I'm describing. It looks to be war all the way down where it's very hard to tell where things end, where things, where things begin, where things end, and also where the divisions are between civilians and combatants. Again, I'll say that, I think that that's an artifact of having conceived this project, as we were all beginning to think about the implications of the terror wars in which, you know, it wasn't clear like who the civilians and combatants were. It wasn't clear where the battle lines were. It wasn't clear like which countries the war was being fought in. Right. And of course, military theorists have been trying to come to terms with that as well and changing their own conceptions of warfare. So, you know, it's a capacious definition of war, certainly probably too loose and too capacious for people who need very precise definitions.

And as I said, precise trajectories for things, but it functions as a kind of optic for this book. So that once we see war in this more capacious fashion, we can see all these things related to each other that had once been kept apart. And here's an example. So Tacky's Revolt in 1760 and 61 happens in the midst of the Seven Years War between Britain, France and eventually Spain. And that is a global conflict that has often been called the first European World War, right. But mainstream historians of the Seven Years War never really see Tacky's Revolt as part of the Seven Years War. And this is despite the fact that, you know, many of the more famous battles, so Seven Years War like the conquest of Quebec, were fought by people who then went to Jamaica to suppress Tacky's Revolt. People who were involved in the conquest of Senegal or the battles in Martinique and Guadalupe, then sail to Jamaica to suppress Tacky's Revolt. So they're all of these soldiers and sailors, military officials who were involved in other parts of the Seven Years War who were then fighting one of the longest and most protracted battles in the seven years war in Jamaica. And yet historian in the Seven Years War think that's a slave revolt, that's part of another history.

JP:

So can I ask you guys about a book from my period, this book that I'm holding up now? *Civilizing Subjects*.

VB:

Catherine Hall. She's a genius.

JP:

Okay, good. I was that, that's my main question. Is she a genius or not? Okay. So, so I love this book, but obviously it's about Jamaica in like sort of the 1830s to 1860s period, but she makes this really interesting distinction. And I was wondering if it was helpful that, you know, she says that people were trying to, that, that those who were trying to manage empire thought of them, thought of the empire is having colonies and dependencies and like India would be a dependency in that term because it's like, those are the childlike natives who have to be managed. So it's, it's a, it's a site of colonialism in the classic sense. And then colonies would be more like settler colonialism and that Jamaica was this problem. It kind of dangled between the two.



EF:

Well since as you said, 90% of Jamaicans during this time were enslaved.

VB:

Yeah. I mean, she's writing about the end of slavery and through the middle kind of, you know, third of the 19th century. So it's a bit later period. So by the time, you know, her story picks up, most of these, these Jamaicans have been born in the Island. They're no longer African born. It's a, it's a largely settled place. It's not in the same kind of turmoil that it's in mid 18th century.

EF:

But they're not colonizers. They're colonized still.

JP:

Yeah. So, okay. So, so when so that's helpful. So, but, so you're saying that basically that, cause I was actually thinking about how that sets up an interesting parallel, which you get in somebody like Thomas Carlyle also between Jamaica and Ireland, where Ireland and Jamaica are both these big, problematic islands that neither allow themselves to be colonized the way that like you can imagine Canada or Australia being colonized, nor did they settle into the standard Imperial relationship of India. But they're just, they're just in their annoyances in 19th century.

VB:

Yeah. I actually can't remember exactly how Catherine Hall makes that comparison. I'm sorry. But, but to me like the key distinction between say Ireland and India and the Caribbean is the Caribbean territories or utterly remade by the European colonization in a way that Ireland and India are not you know, imperialist empire and colonization is kind of an overlay certainly in India. And I think in Ireland as well, whereas, you know, the populations of the Caribbean are largely replaced in the 17th century and 18th century, you do get the Ulster plantation in Ireland also that is, there is an attempt to remake it.

VB:

Yes, yes. But I mean, when you're talking about a population collapse in the Caribbean on kind of scale that you have in the 16th century, right. And then a replacement of that population by people born elsewhere, predominantly in West Africa, from wide swath of territory from the Senegal Zaire river, it's a totally different story.

JP:

Right. But you get suborned agricultural production in both cases with the, with the, with what's seen as an inferior and arguably a racialized inferior population, you know, like the Irish Catholics are also seen as just like serving in these plantations, but yeah.

VB:

Yeah. And of course, you know, kind of when the British really get their plantations going in Barbados in the 17th century, they're using captives from the Wars of the three kingdoms. They've got Irish, indentured servants working on sugar plantations. Right. And it's not until they can replace them with, with Africans that they switch over to the way that it's customarily done by, by the Portuguese and the Spanish.

EF:

This is kind of connecting to the conversation we had with Ajanta a few weeks or months or years ago. What time is all meaning? Yeah, about the way that capital makes, what capital does about difference and how capital makes certain kinds of differences and sort of, you know, needs to, in order to be legible to itself or in order for labor to be legible and so on.

VB:

And that, and that comes with its own unintended consequences. So it's kind of to go back to the story because 90% of the population in Jamaica is enslaved. That means all the people who are doing the labor at varying degrees with various statuses are also enslaved. So you've got all these enslaved people of relatively greater status, right? So you've got slave drivers who are supposedly there managing other enslaved people for the benefit of

the overseers and the plantation holders, but those drivers are, you know, they're kind of ambivalent figures, right? So on the one hand, they're working on behalf of the agricultural capitalists, but they also have authority over the enslaved. And it turns out that many of the leaders of Tacky's Revolt had been drivers before they became slave rebels.

EF:

Right. And this is where you get into the question of this kind of category of Coromantee too. Right. But it's sort of seems to be partly, you know, it has some historical roots in West Africa, but it's also kind of constituted through the movement across the Atlantic. And it's also partly a category that, you know, enslavers put on. I mean, and it was, you know, it seemed as though some of these stereotypes about Coromantees were yeah, they're warlike, but they're also super smart and they have good dental hygiene and they're, you know, good for being in these key positions for various kind of reasons. Right. So it's sort of this interesting way that I guess identity gets like constituted mutually constituted and then becomes the sort of category of protagonism in this war.

VB:

Yeah. And in this case, it's a category of belonging and identification and performance that's constituted in through and by warfare. And so it becomes key to explaining how this war played out. So it's not just a question of, you know, identity politics. Right. And it's not just a question of a cultural identity, right. It's a question of how the politics of identification are made in this context and what consequences and effects they have in the prosecution of these, of these conflicts.

EF:

As a kind of agent of mobilization.

VB:

Yeah. Right.

JP:

And then isn't there the category of isn't the maroon sort of a separate third category for you in the argument? Like, is it not so much?

VB:

Yeah. So yes. I mean, so many of many of the slave rebels who initially kind of started resisting, if you can, if you can use that word resisting British colonization of Jamaica when they conquered the Island from the Spanish in 1655, and then went to the mountains and continued to raid plantations through the late 17th and early 18th century, a lot of these people wind up being from the gold coast.

They were also Coromantees. By the 1720s or so their assaults on plantations became kind of so frequent and so, so destructive to British enterprise that the British were engaged in a major war against the Maroons. And through the 1730s, it wasn't clear that the British were even going to be able to maintain their hold on the Island. They thought they might lose it to the Maroons. So they ended up signing treaties with Maroons in 1739 starting from 1739, which allowed the Maroons to maintain roughly their autonomy in their kind of mountain strongholds, but also required the Maroons to police subsequent slave revolts, which they did. And so in Tacky's Revolt, you find them Maroons are key adjuncts to the British military and their suppression of the revolt, even though many of them probably would have been Coromantees as well.

And this is why, you know, important to me in the argument is the idea that you don't know as much as you think you know, about the politics of the enslaved and the politics of anti-colonialism just by knowing the identity of the rebels. Right. If you kind of know their--people have assumed that if you kind of, if you have an identity for someone, you kind of know where they're coming from culturally, you can largely predict their political activity. And I'm resisting that argument here. I'm saying even once you've got the category of belonging created, that is still going to be fractured and inflected by politics as they play out on the ground. And the reason for doing that is to make sure that we understand the enslaved as political people as well with geopolitical implications.

EF:

Yeah, yeah, that was sort of what I was meaning about this kind of symmetry thing. And, and I think, you know, that approach sort of the, the idea of being able to connect the dots that way it's, well, I mean, I guess I'm asking you,

would you say that that is kind of artifact of historical description, previous histories in the sense that it's sort of like, okay, we're going to kind of figure out who the actors are and the actors become these sort of conflated somewhat essentialized categories.

VB:

Yeah. I mean, I don't, I don't, I'm not sure how to answer that. Cause I don't want to kind of tar, you know, traditional history with too broad a brush.

EF:

Easy for me, I'm an anthropologist.

VB:

I would say, I would say there was a kind of interpretive conceit that thought that kind of, most of politics could be inferred by what you knew about people's cultural identities and that's, that's one that I'm rejecting. And I'm trying to, I'm trying to leaven that with a strong dose of materialist analysis.

EF:

Right? Well maybe materialist analysis is our pivot point to the other book that we wanted to talk about, which is *The Black Jacobins* by CLR James, which also takes a war, both war, but war also in the sense of class conflict that is racialized. And in that sense, different from a lot of the Marxist analysis at the time. So

VB:

So I love *Black Jacobins*. *Black Jacobins* was introduced to me as an undergraduate history student by my undergraduate mentor, Stephen Hahn, who now teaches at NYU. And he said, Hey, you know, you're interested in slave revolt. I think you might like this. And I loved it. And looking back, I think one of the things I, I love most about it and still love is again, this sense that enslaved black people were geopolitical actors and that their actions had broad world changing historical implications. Now, you know, I didn't think

about this in a very sophisticated way at the time, but I've come to appreciate how much we are struggling against some of the kind of fundamental assumptions and conceits of modern thought, which, you know, if you trace back to, to GWF Hegel, the philosopher who claimed that Africa forms no historical part of the world, there's this assumption that Africa is kind of a land before time.

There's kind of a prehistory. And when you look back at the formation of the disciplines in the 19th century, you look at what historians thought they were responsible for. Mostly they thought they're responsible for the political decisions of elite actors, right in Europe and North America. But history wasn't a subject that applied to Africa for the 19th century, really, I mean, through the mid 20th century, it's not really until decolonization that you get people thinking very seriously about African history in the same way you might be thinking about as you're as European and an American history. And so just this idea that kind of, you know, black people do form a historical part of the world that their actions are, are sometimes radically consequential was the thing that still sticks with me in that book. Now, there weren't many actors acting as Africans, right? Drawing upon their African experience in that book that came much later.

And for that, you know, there was a book called *Africa and Africans in Making the Atlantic World* by John Thornton. That was initially published in 1992, I believe. That really tried to assert the importance of, again, not only kind of African culture, but of African history and historical transformation in the making of this larger Atlantic world. And that has been important for me too, to kind of pick up where CLR James left off and, and combine that with what John Thornton asserted, which is that, you know, these African histories also play out in certain ways in the Americas and ways that you can trace right. Sometimes, and this goes back to your earlier question, using fairly old school methods, who did what, where, and when those were the fundamental questions that I started with, and it turns out that when you really ask them and try to answer them, honestly, you can see African actors engage in their own diplomatic negotiations in their own worlds, then happening to be enslaved and pursuing different kinds of war aims in the Americas. And that, to me, I think picks up you know, the insight of CLRJ games that, that these people have geopolitical visions and that their actions have geopolitical consequences.

EF:

Yeah. One of the things that really the first thing that struck me about it, the first time I read it was that the chapter in which he really talks about the motivations and the political actions of France and Haiti is called "The Property." And it's this very kind of ironic title and sort of Marxist title, right? Like this is the collaboration of you know, the, the setting up of the class conflict. But it's the, the sort of, yeah, the irony is palpable of having just where you're having this very strikingly complex and, you know, layered sets of activities and motivations and mobilizations it's in a chapter in which they're defined as it's, you know, property and commodities by.

VB:

Yeah. Yeah. That's great. I mean, like, you know, which is appropriate to kind of Marxist analysis, right? Just like that was their role in the slave society. And what I hope historians are bringing to that now is the idea that they weren't just property, that their role in the slave society mattered. But so did those prior histories that they brought with them.

EF:

Yeah. Clearly aware of it...definitely is kind of ironic...

VB:

--is kind of ironic in the title

EF:

How has the book been received?

VB:

So far, so good. One of the most gratifying things is that I've done a couple of interviews for Jamaican radio. And I was on a call with a guy and Derek black X Robinson who the last decade or more has been advocating for Tacky to be

named a national hero within Jamaica, alongside Marcus Garvey. And Bob Marley. I think Bob Marley might not be a national hero yet, but, you know, Marcus Garvey.

JP:

What does it mean to be a national hero?

VB:

So it just means you're recognized as a kind of, you know, in the, you know, I don't want to say Pantheon, but you're recognized as one of the kind of major national heroes.

EF:

I think you're on the money.

JP:

Do you get a stamp?

VB:

I think you're on the money. You're in government documents and things like that, but, you know, Black X has been advocating for this for more than a decade by walking from the site where the slave revolt started at Fort Haldane in St. Mary parish all the way down to Emancipation Day park in Kingston. And he was on the radio with me and he quite liked the book and has decided that he wants to use it also to create a tour of Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica. And so that was pretty cool to feel like the book was already going to be useful to someone for whom this history has been meaningful for a long time. So even before the historians, I don't know how, I don't know how the historians are going to receive it. It's too early for their reviews, but even before the historians get to it, you know, I know that some activists in Jamaica, I have found the book to be of use, which is cool.

EF:



Yeah. Yeah. You were telling me about a couple of reviews in England.

VB:

Oh yeah. So that was funny. So I got a review in The Guardian where the guy was appreciative of, it was an appreciative review. It was a positive review said that it wasn't a popular history. But it was an important history, which I, which I thought was cool. And then it turned out that this reviewer was someone who was a special assistant to both George HW. Bush and George W. Bush. And I felt like in some ways, like maybe, you know, if he likes it, maybe I haven't made my animosities clear enough.

EF:

You thought you were daring them, but they thought you were inviting them.

VB:

But I'll take, I'll take all the readers that I can. So it means it's reaching people that, that a book like this might not normally reach which, which I think is a good thing.

EF:

Yeah, absolutely. So maybe we're at the moment to bring in Recallable Books. So this is kind of a simple one and, you know, you don't have to recall it by going back very far. But I was thinking about Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women*, which is a fantastic novel which is about a slave revolt, but not just about a slave revolt. Well, you'd kind of know a slave revolt is coming and it's predicted at the very beginning of the book, but really it's a kind of almost a Victorian romance where you are with an enslaved woman and the women around her. And you're really kind of, you know, taken into their dreams and aspirations and how those dreams and aspirations are frustrated by slavery, right. And, and even kind of, you know, intimate dreams, sexual dreams, like the kinds of liaison that these people envision that are utterly distorted and frustrated and, and kind of, you know, just, just mangled by slavery.

And it's a really fascinating book that it doesn't start with the enslaved as nonpersons and ciphers, but allows that kind of symmetry that Elizabeth was

talking about, which is like, what if you imagine an enslaved woman having a similar kind of desire to a woman in the 19th century romance, and then you look at the effect of slavery on that desire that leading up to a slave revolt, just kind of, you know, it makes it internal, it makes it psychological. It just kinda brings it alive in a way that the historians often can't. So I would, I would advocate everybody read that book alongside *Tacky's Revolt: The Story...*

EF:

So mine is going in a little bit of a different direction and sort of thinking about the space and scale questions. I just finished teaching a course that was partly about the Caribbean and the anthropology of the Caribbean and the way in which world systems theory of the 1960s and 70s, which is an incredibly powerful tool actually of analysis. But, you know, has this fairly static interpretation of the world with Europe at the core, and then these other places, as, you know, periphery and semi periphery, the book that I'm thinking of is by John Tutino, it's called *Making a New World*. And it's about the area that I've done a lot of research, which is the Bajío in Central Mexico. And sort of saying like, what would you think about that as, as a world system, world economic system, and what does that do to our other views of things? And it reminds me of your discussion about Tacky's Revolt as part of the Seven Years War. It has a similar kind of like tilting the view slightly in a way that kind of really reveals a lot and has a lot of both historical and political implications.

VB:

Oh, that's neat. I mean, so I don't, so I don't know that book, but I still have a soft spot for world systems theory and world systems analysis in part, because of the ambition to, to see an integrated world, not to start with the nation state as the natural unit or container of history or the continent or the people, but to, to envision the world as being interactive and dynamic in that I very much jump off that.

EF:

Yeah. I think we can't forget too, that like it was in contrast and explicit criticism of modernization theory that was hugely dominant. Right. And that was very explicitly part of US old domination. Right. I mean, the subtitle of the

stages of economic growth, which is kind of like the, you know, primary text of modernization theory is a non-communist manifesto, you know, Rosedale was an advisor to Kennedy in the early sixties. Right. So, absolutely, and, and comes along with a lot of economic theory from the economic council in Latin America about the transfer of value that you've talked about really amazingly in terms of sugar and oil dense museum a few months ago. But yeah. And I think like when I teach it now, students don't see that, right. They're very, it makes them very uncomfortable. Right. But I think there's ways in which it can also be, you know, the tilting is very, it was very useful.

And I should just say just to get a little so Tutino, I really liked Tutino's book, but there's actually an article much from quite a long time ago by Angel Palerm called "The World's First Economic System," which is about the Bajío. So, Tutino does a great job with an idea that comes from Palerm.

Okay. So this was great. And I'm going to pivot for a second to our credits. And first off, I wanna thank you, Vince for talking with us and this, that was great. Rainy and quarantine-y afternoon, quarantine-y afternoon with no quarantine.

VB:

A quarantini. You, what kind of drink is that going to be? I don't know.

JP:

Come on. You got to make a Coro-Mantini man.

EF:

Whatever it is, it has to have quarantine in it.

JP:

Yes, definitely. Oh my God. Right? The tonic for our time.

EF:

Yeah, exactly. Recall This Book is the brainchild of John Plotz and Elizabeth Ferry. We're affiliated with Public Books and typically we're recorded and edited in the media lab of the Brandeis library by Plotz, Ferry and the cadre of colleagues here in the Boston area and beyond. 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 Shratz and Kaliska Ross. Mark DiLello oversees and advises on all technological matters. We appreciate the support of university librarian, Matthew Sheehy, and Dean Dorothy Hodgson, and of the Mendell center for the humanities at Brandeis. We always want to hear from you with your comments, criticisms, or suggestions for future episodes. You can email me, email us directly at ferry or at plots at Brandeis EDU, or you can contact us through social media and our website. Finally, if you enjoyed today's show, please be sure to write a review or rate us on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcast joy and comfort.

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