

Recall this Book 52:

High Theory and the Pastoral (Kim Adams, Saronik Bosu)

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John Plotz:

From Brandeis University, welcome to Recall this Book, where we assemble scholars and writers from different disciplines to make sense of contemporary issues, problems, and events. I'm your solo host today, John Plotz, and I want to welcome you to a very special collaboration with the fantastic podcast, High Theory where they, and today we, get high on theory. So, Saronik and Kim, hello. Ofne of the things I really love about your podcast, (there's so many things I do) but one of the things I really love is the way that you have your guests introduce themselves. So, can I ask you just to introduce yourselves and tell us about the podcast?

Kim Adams:

So I'm a postdoc in the core curriculum at NYU, and I write about literature and medicine—specifically electricity and literature and how it's involved in medical devices. So recently I've been really excited about speculative fiction, and I'm excited to talk about that with you guys today. But I co-host this podcast, High Theory, with Saronik. It's been a pandemic project and one that is really excited about theory and its relation to the world.

Saronik Bosu:

And my name is Saronik Bosu. So Kim and I, we share an office at NYU English, and-

John Plotz:

Thank you for using the present tense for that, Saronik, rather than *we once shared* an office back when we were-

Saronik Bosu:

So the office is still there, our names are still there on the door.

Kim Adams:

My snacks are still in the cabinet.

Saronik Bosu:

Snacks are still there. That wonderful rye whiskey is still there?

John Plotz:

That's good to know. I have scotch in mine.

Saronik Bosu:

Mine too.

Kim Adams:

Will we ever get back to it?

John Plotz:

No. I'm bringing straw.

Saronik Bosu:

No. [crosstalk 00:01:53] and this podcast is a pandemic continuation of the conversations that we had in that office. But also a special shout-out to Gina Dominick with whom you originated this idea of High Theory. I came in a bit later, but Gina didn't continue and I took her place in some ways. And as for my own work, I am a currently 5th year PhD candidate at NYU English, and I work on South Asian economic writing for my dissertation that is.

John Plotz:

You guys have just started so many different threads related, not just to podcasts, but to the life of the mind generally that are worth pursuing. But I would just say one thing that strikes me is that in starting with the primal romance of sharing an office together, but then also emphasizing the indispensable supplementarity of the fact that you need to be away in order to make it, you're pointing at that there's a logical paradox at the heart of podcasts especially during the pandemic, which is that they register an intimacy, but they do it by way of alienation and dispersal. That we're apart in order to be together in this space.

Kim Adams:

Totally.

Saronik Bosu:

Yeah, absolutely. So we began with episodes where we would just interview each other, but then we started inviting guests and now we have had—I can honestly say that our guests have come all over the world. So it has been this, as you said, calibration, interrelated calibrations of disposal and intimacy.

Kim Adams:

But also that intimacy, I remember there was *N+1* issue a while back that I remember a line from it that they were talking about podcasts and they were talking about these little voices that whisper in our ears and how it's... So you often experience it as being really close to the body.

John Plotz:

Totally. So your guys were talking about your origin story is very much like my brother's origin story for a podcast which he's been doing for 15 years, is walking to lunch with two of his friends from the newspaper they all work worked at, and wanting to continue those conversations. And our origin story is basically a happy hour

at a bar that we have been trying to pursue in real life. We have a motto which is "after the conference, the bar," meaning what we're looking for is that third space where things do open up over rye whiskey or whatever. And yet what we actually are is this series of sound M4A files that get beamed out and then I see a map every once in a while that shows me where they've been beamed to. And so I'm still wrestling with that paradox of the warmth of the podcast, plus the dispersed nature of it.

Kim Adams:

Yeah. And I think a lot about what people do while they're listening to our podcasts. I don't know if you've ever thought about that, but... I mostly drive when I listen to podcasts, but I was recording these video lectures for a class and I had a student telling me she watches the video lecture while she washes her dishes. But I imagine people do that with our podcasts all the time or walk their dogs or...

John Plotz:

I want to teach a "literature by ear" class at some point, and one thing I want to really think about... I want to think about the radio play, which I just discovered was really only invented as a concept in the 1930s (which is interesting) by people Lewis MacNeice at the BBC. But also the intimacy with which novel reading was originally imagined, you think about 18th century responses to what a novel reader was, there was that... The notion of doing it while doing your dishes seems like a good analogy for how people thought about what the novel could be. It could be pervasively present in the domestic space in a very threatening way. And I definitely think that's true of podcasts.

You guys are keyword focused. So can you talk a little bit about that, and your three questions?

Saronik Bosu:

So if we are doing an episode on X, then we ask what the heck is X?
How do we use X, and how will X save the world?

Kim Adams:

Yeah. So today we're going to talk about the pastoral, so we would ask what the heck is the pastoral? How do I use the pastoral, and how will it save the world?

John Plotz:

Great. And I think we're going to try a role reversal today where I will be saying those questions just for the listeners to follow along. If you can't figure out who's who, that'll be me.

Saronik Bosu:

I think the keyword naturally evolved from our conviction that we are going to do very, very short episodes. And so if you're doing a very short episode, then there's not much room for anything approaching the monograph or long-form thinking. So it had to be staccato, which led us to, I think, the decision that we are going to do these very compact episodes focused on very comprehensive ideas.

So we began with the idea that it's going to be really short because we were also trying to do something slightly different from the media through which we apprehend theory. And one of the ideas I personally began with was that I remember being very scared of Theory in my undergraduates. And theory with capital T, and that's also because the way in which Theory came to us, which is if you don't start everything from Plato, then what are you even doing?

And so if you start everything from Plato, obviously you can't do 15 minutes episodes. And so that was one of the reasons why we decided that the point of origin is going to be determined by the speaker and that will not always pay homage to the long tradition.

So it's going to be like a cross-section of long thought which is very comprehensive and compact thing.

John Plotz:

I that idea. So, that leads me to my last conceptual question about the differences between our podcast, which is whether you guys understand yourself as interlocutors, interviewers, conversation partners... Because you play a somewhat recessive role in your own podcast.

Kim Adams:

I was just going to say there's a shape to a conversation, and we end up breaking that shape apart and putting it back together differently.

John Plotz:

Yeah. You guys are just making me think that there's a Victorianist versus Modernist distinction here because I'm very interested in the notion of the realist project in the Victorian period as being that prose is the poetry of everyday life or something. That the shrinkage of art is meant to be shrinkage that conforms to the original morphology as opposed to the Modernist where you have Ezra Pound just chopping out quartets or... It's a different conception of where the final object sits in relationship with the conversation. That's really helpful actually, because I think we struggle with that. It's not we are on the opposite side from you, it's more we are actually torn about which of those things we're trying to achieve.

Saronik Bosu:

But also that being said, I should point out that it's not always that we will cut out digressions. That's not how we operate. I think we keep in the stuff that's most fun.

John Plotz:

All right. So, okay should we try role reversal football then? Okay.

What the heck is the pastoral?

Kim Adams:

So the pastoral is a poetic mode, it's a really old one. And you're right to point to us as Modernists, I think, because we're both interested in this idea of the pastoral which is about very old relation of humans to nature and humans to landscape, and ideas about working the land. We're both, I think, interested in how that gets taken up in the early 20th century and is connected to ideas of progress and civilization. So, I think the image that we think of when we imagine the pastoral is of a shepherd draped in some Greco-Roman garb tending their flock. And this is where the image of Jesus as a pastor, as having pastoral care over the... Or even the word *pastor* that is used in Protestant religions instead of *priest*, it comes from this idea of tending a flock of sheep. And in the Georgics, in Spencer's Georgics, we have an idea of a romanticized labor in nature. So, not only do the shepherds tend to their sheep, they also (because this form of agricultural labor allows for abundant leisure) they also play pipes and compose songs. And so it's, I think, in that way strongly associated with poetry.

John Plotz:

One of Wikipedia's accounts of the pastoral, which I think it gets from Paul Alpers, is that the author employs various techniques to "place the complex life into a simple one." I found that a really interesting formulation. Kim, can you shed light on that? I could get *replace the complex life with a simple one*, that makes sense to me, but "place the complex life *into* a simple one," that's nuanced.

Kim Adams:

I feel like that connects a lot to what Saronik is going to say.

Saronik Bosu:

Yeah. So, I don't know when exactly you want me to begin the text as such, but-

Kim Adams:

Do it.

John Plotz:

Yeah, I think you should do it. Why don't you tell us a bit about that?

Saronik Bosu:

So, the text that I'm going to talk about is called *Hind Swaraj*, and it was written by M.K Gandhi in 1909 when he was traveling from England to South Africa aboard the ship Kildonan Castle, and which is not a trivium because he talks a lot about the experience of being on ship at sea between continents, between nations resulted in this really intense experience of writing this book in one breath, in a manner of speaking. And then the book is first published in South Africa in 1910, it travels to India where it is intercepted by the British government and proscribed for seditious content.

Incidentally, it was prescribed accompanied with Plato's defense of Socrates, which is an interesting fact.

And then it was translated by Gandhi to English, and the first Indian edition comes out in 1919. So *Hind Swaraj* is really important in the Gandhian corpus. He talks about the book himself as is his seed text. You also have this agrarian image there as the beginning of his political journey, one that germinates all of his ideas. And the name literally means... *Hind* is obviously reference to India, it has the root word as India and Hindustan. And *Swaraj* means self rule. *Swa* is self, and *raj* is rule or control. And the concept of *Swaraj* is complex in Gandhian philosophy, but it carries a meaning of both self-rule and home rule. So, both a control over the unruly and un-

tameable—ascetic practices of restraint and so on and so forth--but also home rule and rule of India by Indians.

But why am I talking about this in an episode about the pastoral is one of the main ideas that germinate in *Hind Swaraj*, and that Gandhi will take to extreme lengths throughout his career is his extolling the virtues of the Indian village and how the quintessence and the uniqueness of Indian culture and civilization lies not in supposedly urban centers which mirror and mimic the West, but in the Indian village which still carries on traditions that you find nowhere else in the world. So that's why the notion of a peaceable communion and cohabitation between humans and nature, instead of exploitative relationships entailed in the progress of technological advancement and civilization. So, that's the subset of the widely ramifying meaning of the pastoral that I'm digging for to talk about *Hind Swaraj*.

So in the book he sees the Western civilization as an advancement of physical good at the expense of moral and spiritual good. And he says that's not the way to do it, it's a machinic civilization, it reduces human beings to judges, things that obviously Marx also talks about and other people at the time were talking about. But just as an aside, that critique of civilization goes to extreme lengths. At one point in the book he says women are laboring as drudges in these factories and that is one of the reasons why the suffragette movement is happening right now, which makes very little sense. And it's one of the other things about this book, its extreme eccentricity.

But to go back to what Kim was saying, is that... This is not my reading. This is Akeel Bilgrami's reading, Akeel Bilgrami the philosopher who's at Columbia. He reads *Hind Swaraj* and he talks about it and he says that essentially in 1909 when the book comes out, Gandhi thinks of India as a political and moral crossroads where

it could take the path that Europe has taken since the early modern period, but that will result in everything leading to the Industrial Revolution and the moral and spiritual corruption that that has engendered. So why not given that we are trying to rid ourselves of the yoke of a colonial power, why not also get rid of the cultural and civilizational aspects that they have put on us and try to invent a new civilization that will essentially help us go back to our roots in a certain respect. So, going back to the romantic core of many Modernist movements, it's a qualified return to a past, but a past which is—It's not a complete return to the past, but it's a past that is essentially reconstructed.

John Plotz:

The larger question I wanted to ask, it's related to that, and I hope this is a question about the pastoral (I have to think about how it is) It's really a question about the elective affinity between the moral or spiritual degradation that the antithetical West that he's worried about, and the technological. In other words, is the notion that the technology itself is what precipitates this other moral and spiritual configuration that is to be avoided, or is there an image of disaggregation, like we could have our own *Cosa Nostra*, our own thing, which would be our own version of technology which would not go down that path? Do you see what I'm saying?

Saronik Bosu:

So the anti-technological stance of Gandhi is very well known. Hind Swaraj itself contains all of his opinions against the railways and how the railways essentially disturbed more pastoral and idealic landscape. So in terms of whether the evil rests in technology itself, or whether we should invent another technology for ourselves, I think Gandhi will allow technology up to the point that its main locus is the village artisan, let's say. There's everything to admire and wax poetic about the labor of the artisan, the labor of the farmer, the labor of people who are making a livelihood out of the

natural matrix, so to speak. But that is of course a labor of a different kind and order than from the labor of the workmen in the factory.

John Plotz:

I was just going to point out that Lukács' Theory of the Novel is 1914, so virtually the same time. And do you remember the line he has, that "we long for those days when the light that glowed in the stars is the same that glowed in our souls" so that's that notion that modernity is a site of transcendental shelterlessness, and that we had an organic integration between self and world, really that we've now lost.

Saronik Bosu:

So, definitely Gandhi's idea of the village is ideal, romantic. And so his opinions or his idea of the village comes to a head. It was right before independence around 1945 in his correspondence with people who would go on to form the first government of independent India, and mainly Jawaharlal Nehru who becomes first prime minister. And so in a 1945 letter to Nehru, Gandhi writes, "the village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all, every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals, men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague nor cholera, nor smallpox. No one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury, everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labor. I do not want to draw large scale picture in detail. It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph office. It is material to obtain the real article, the rest will fit into the picture afterwards."

So a couple of things; on the one hand is this heightened romance of this picture of the village that he draws. And this is 40-odd years afterward. And the village becomes this aspirational signifier with the help of which to orient present politics, right? But the main... I've

just written about this in a chapter, so this is why all fresh in my mind-

Kim Adams:

Love the words. You have all of the words.

Saronik Bosu:

But the main thing is that it's also the story. The denouement is that the government and the planning commission rejects Gandhi's idea of decentralization and chooses a strong federal government and Nehru says, "That's all and good, but we cannot rest our hopes and faith on the village. We have to have an urban developed India." So from the vantage of that when you go back and you look at Gandhi's, the romance really strikes your heart, so to speak.

John Plotz:

Yeah. So, Kim, can I turn to you and ask how do I use the pastoral? Is this a good time to turn to your text?

Kim Adams:

Totally. So I think my text is really good for the question of use. And also connected to that line that Saronik just quoted for us from Gandhi's letter from the forties. So, I wanted to talk to you guys about Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novel *Herland* which is a 1915 utopian text where three American adventurers who are strapping young men of various American types, get up an adventure to South America because they've heard that there is a civilization of all women who live in the mountains and they have their little biplane and they fly up there and they land and then they're taken over by the women and they're freaked out about it, and they have all these preconceptions of what a civilization of women like, and of course all of them turn out to be false because this is a piece of feminist propaganda. And it turns out that the women have this incredibly advanced civilization and it's one that sounds a lot like that ideal

village that Saronik was talking about. It's one in which no one is ever sick, in which everyone always has enough to eat, everyone always has enough to do, all of the potential conflicts are locally managed, and it's a perfectly run society. And the way the women-

John Plotz:

And it's called Wakanda.

Kim Adams:

Yeah, so they're like Wakanda. But anyways, the reason I was thinking about it in relation to the pastoral is because the way that the country is described, the way the landscape is described is basically as a perfect garden. So, it's a vision of nature that has been completely integrated with human culture. And I think that is a very modernist fantasy of the pastoral.

So, they describe the landscape as a garden a lot. They've actually dug up the entire forest and replanted it with fruit-bearing trees. And they refer to the country as a mighty garden. "I had never seen and had scarcely imagined human beings undertaking such a work as the deliberate replanting of an entire forest area with different kinds of trees, yet this seemed to them the simplest common sense, like a man's plowing up an inferior lawn and reseeding it. Now, every tree bore fruit, edible fruit that is." And it's like California, which is very of that moment. There's citrus fruits, and figs, and olives that grow up abundantly, and so this vision of material prosperity that's produced by human interaction with the landscape.

John Plotz:

Do you guys remember the Charlie Chaplin movie *Modern Times* that at the end there's a fantasy where he's describing to her (maybe they're dreaming what their life will be) and it is a California bungalow? And the tree sticks its branch into the kitchen window to

drop oranges on their plate. And then a cow shows up at the door, and he turns a switch on the cow's udder and milk comes out. It's not even like he milks, he just turns up... And I show that to my students sometimes to try to think about different modalities of fantasy and that notion of the *world for us*. I think that's such an important dimension of the pastoral. And I feel like that's in the classic period too. People like Marvell are already aware that the pastoral as a mode is already a vision of nature not in its wildness but *for us*? So on the one hand it's a return to nature. We're not in the city, we're going back out to the village or the simpler life. On the other hand, what we're returning to is a space that is already of and for us. It's instrumental in that sense.

Kim Adams:

Yeah. I think in that regard, a useful point of contrast and another theory of thinking about human interaction with nature would be the sublime. The pastoral is very definitely not the sublime. It is not nature as this overwhelming force that will take you out of yourself. It is not cataracts and waterfalls and mountains and nature's greatness, it is nature that is on a human scale.

John Plotz:

Yeah. So now I'm feeling like the text that I should have chosen again, it does feel like news from nowhere is the perfect text for this, because it also makes that same Herland claim. So it's a perfect vision of England in the future, but it's a repurposed medieval landscape, and there's all these woodblocks in the text which are very medieval, and the notion is that thanks to the magic of something called the *power barges*, we in England in the future are going to be able to remake this space, not in a technologically advanced way, but in a way that because we are so very, very sophisticated will be the ultimate utilization of nature. It's almost like a chiasmus. It's like it's a doubling-back to nature, but from a super advanced, sophisticated civilizational perspective.

Kim Adams:

Yeah. And so I would say that the thing that allows Charlotte Perkins Gilman to do this, to have this faith in the human ability to shape the environment is her faith in eugenics.

John Plotz:

Yes.

Kim Adams:

So the race of women who occupy this land reproduce parthenogenetically. So they just have virgin births over and over again, but they've culled their race. They've selectively bred. They figured out how to prevent themselves from doing parthenogenesis, and so they've got birth control and they say who can be allowed to reproduce and who can't. But they do that with everything else. It's not just the people. They've exterminated all animals basically, and they only have cats and birds, and they've bred the birds for the pleasure of their song, and they've bred the cats also for the pleasurable sounds they make. So the cats can no longer hiss and screech. They can only purr.

John Plotz:

It's interesting. So, the word I had originally floated for you guys was anthropocentrism or *anti-anthropocentrism*, and then you cleverly deflected to the pastoral. And it took me a little while to catch up, but now I can really see that turn there, because you're talking about a kind of anthropocentrism of the pastoral, which in a way is precisely exacerbated by the way that the pastoral positions itself as anti-technological or anti-urban or anti-modern, but nonetheless by way of locating the human is always already at the center of this world.

Well, I almost hate to turn to your final question then, but I want to see what you guys are going to do with it. So how can the pastoral save the world?

Saronik Bosu:

If I can take one thing away from Gandhi's, Hind Swaraj is his idea of using the romance of the self-sufficient happy utopian village as a transcendental political signifier to orient ourselves towards with the knowledge that we are not going to have that. But at the same time to use it to give us a motive force to imbue our politics with principles of care and trusteeship as opposed to exploitative relationships with each other and with nature. Kim?

Kim Adams:

Well, when you and I were talking about this before today's conversation, Saronik, you talked about how Gandhi spiritualized the resistance movement, and I think that's really connected to what you were saying, the fantasy of the pastoral could serve as this spiritual ideal.

Saronik Bosu:

Yeah. I think one of the successes of Gandhi's work is that he was able to bring together political and spiritual aspects of what he was doing together so that at the opposite end of it, like if someone, the random Gandhian, let's say, which people from my family were also involved in at the time. So this person who was coming to the Gandhian movement will have this comprehensive thing to imbibe and follow which promises both personal, spiritual upliftment as well as a direction towards political emancipation. So that's really, I think, one of the successes of what Gandhi was doing.

John Plotz:

I totally take that point and I really appreciate your modernist impetus to look at something like pastoral progress without

modernization narrative or something. That's very interesting.
Okay, so I want to hear your Recallable Book.

Kim Adams:

Okay so I-

John Plotz:

As listeners know, recallable book is where we say, if you love the conversation here, where else might you want to go? What other books might you want to look at?

Kim Adams:

So I would suggest that if you want to think more about the direction that we seem to be headed, you do some research into this commune called Drop City. It was a commune. There was a couple of books about it. None of them are truly amazing. There's a novel called *Drop City* by T.C. Boyle, but it's actually about the Morningstar commune, which is a different community in California. Drop City was in Colorado, it has amazing architecture. There's a memoir about it called *Droppers: America's First Hippie Commune*. And there is a film about it which I think has the same name. And it's about a bunch of art students who buy a goat pasture in Colorado and build geodesic domes, and have this fantasy of living off the grid. But it's very much the denouement of this modernist pastoral mode, but one that is fallen apart into a technological utopianism and a failure of the agricultural component of it.

John Plotz:

Interesting. I would say not just geodesic but psychedelic geodesic. Looking at the pictures it's amazing. That's fascinating.

Kim Adams:

They have good architecture. *Dome Book* also, if you're curious about the domes. There's a whole bunch of collections about how to make the domes, and photographs of them.

John Plotz:

Fantastic. Okay, cool. And Saronik, you said you have a recallable book?

Saronik Bosu:

I did. So mine is more mainstream, and my recallable book is John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which is the key inspirational text for Gandhi, and Gandhi talks a lot about it. And he read it while he was in South Africa together with Tolstoy, and he was reading Tolstoy and Ruskin at the same time. Tolstoy was also reading Ruskin, and Gandhi went into a correspondence with Tolstoy. It was the very end of Tolstoy's life. So, Ruskin as you know, was a Victorian polymath, but first famous for his book *Modern Painters*, and principle exegete of the pre-Raphaelites. And so Gandhi read *Unto This Last*, and he called it *this magic spell of a book* which brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. And having read the book, he left the city of Durban and he went to the Phoenix settlement which was the basis for his later developed ideas of communal living and where he also published his periodical *Indian Opinion* from there.

The title of the book *Unto This Last* comes from the parable of the workers in the vineyard where the owner of a vineyard promises to pay the same to every worker and to this last irrespective of how much time did that they have worked. And Ruskin uses this idea to critique popular classical economics ideas that have come down from Smith, Ricardo and Malthus. And so Ruskin kind of imbues the idea, the core economic tenets with principles of care. And he has this hierarchical, paternalistic idea that the people who have under their control the means of production should have responsibility to

care for socioeconomic lower classes. And this is directly influential in Gandhi's idea of trusteeship where he thinks that the wealthy are not owners but trustees of wealth who hold the wealth in trusteeship for the poor, which is of course a very complicated and very paternalistic idea. And Gandhi himself translates and paraphrases *Under This Last*, and he renames it *Sarvodaya* which literally means welfare for all. And that's my recall.

John Plotz:

I think there's been this agreement among Victorians to just put Ruskin away because we fight about him too much. And I think you make a really good case for we really need to surface him again and have those fights all over. Because honestly I find his politics reprehensible. I find Ruskin disgusting. I have zero, zero tolerance for the vision, the critique that he is making of liberalism. And this is not from a position of wanting to defend Victoria and liberalism, but the grounds on which he attacks it seems so problematically paternalistic to me, that I can't find any way through, but so many Victorianists do. There's so many people who are inspired by it, and I would never want to argue with that. It's when I go back to the texts themselves, I'm filled with rage. It's like...

Saronik Bosu:

When you go back to the definitely incomplete conversation about caste. One of the main through line from Ruskin to Gandhi is as you said, the paternalism and the trusteeship, the idea that the elite are somehow responsible for the benefit of the oppressed, and it's impossible to build a politics that will actually help the oppressed from that position, so which is why I also am in complete disagreement with that through-line. But at the same time, I also agree with you that Ruskin is definitely like in the larger field of heterodox Victorian ideas, definitely Ruskin is--

John Plotz:

Hey I totally agree. And even the fights between him and Darwin, which again, I'm 100% with Darwin, but the nature of those disagreements about the peacock and the bat, and the ideal, like God's inspiration and form, all of that stuff, it's heterodox and germinative, it's very germinative. I don't like most of what comes up, but yeah.

Okay, so I'll just very quickly say, this is again, a good pivot to my Thomas Hardy novel which is 1878. I can't remember when *Unto This Last* comes out, but is it...

Saronik Bosu:

Ruskin's *Unto This Last* comes out in 1860.

John Plotz:

Okay, '60. So, *Return of the Native* was relatively early Hardy novel, but I wanted to think about the anti-pastoral impulse in Hardy. And I feel like a lot of the impetus towards anti-pastoralism has been something we've canvassed in this discussion, but just to say it explicitly, I think what Hardy is against is the elegiac and nostalgic tendency to imagine the green sward of England as a place that the elite and the urban wealthy could return to to find redemptive meaning. And so *Return of the Native* is really about the... It's a complex genealogy of how every space on earth is laminated historically by all of these layers of meaning. The first chapter doesn't have any human beings in it, and the second chapter, I believe the title of the second chapter is "Humanity Appears on the Scene Hand in Hand with Trouble."

So the idea is that every effort to create ideal backward green space that is there for human benefit is always a fiction that is brought along with an instrumental rationality that means to exploit and uproot. So, I guess I'm making the case for Hardy as anti-

anthropocentric, partly by way of being anti-pastoral. And I just wanted to note, interestingly I did a Google search on the *anti-pastoral* because I thought, "Oh, surely there'll be like some mode," and I found a very nice poem on a website called "The Anti-Pastoral," and I found a thesis written by somebody in Durban in 2003 about the anti-pastoral. But it doesn't seem to be a mode that people have named. When I look at Hardy, that's part of the way I understand what Hardy is doing.

Saronik Bosu:

Yeah, I completely agree. So I have had a complicated relationship with Hardy's work. Hardy featured big in my undergraduates, and we read *Return of the Native*, we read Casterbridge. And to go back to something that Kim was saying that-

Kim Adams:

How much I hate Hardy?

Saronik Bosu:

No. I don't really think the *Return of the Native* is definitely about the sublime in nature, it wrenches you out of yourself and then you are completely overwhelmed by the massive power of this displace, and that's something that obviously Hardy enjoys as opposed to methodized (in any way) nature. So yeah, I completely agree with your point that this is an anti-pastoral sentiment.

John Plotz:

Well, you guys it's a great conversation, it could go on and on. Seriously, I really enjoyed this, but I think it just remains for me now to say that Recall this Book is sponsored by the Mandel Humanities Center. Music comes from Eric Chasalow and Barbara Cassidy, sound editing by Claire Ogden, website design and social media from Nai Kim and we always want to hear from you with your comments, criticisms, or suggestions for future episodes. You can email us

directly or contact us via social media or our website. And if you enjoyed today's show, first of all, please head right over to High Theory and subscribe because I think you will love it. It's a fantastic podcast. And then also I invite you to check out other episodes of Recall this Book, and be sure to write a review or rate us on iTunes, Stitcher, or wherever you get your podcasts. So, Kim and Saronik, thank you so much.

Saronik Bosu:

Thank you so much, John, for inviting us and having this conversation with us. We are so very thrilled and can't wait for this episode to come out. Kim?

Kim Adams:

Thank you. It's been an honor.

John Plotz:

Yeah, it's been a pleasure. Okay, so thank you all so much for listening.