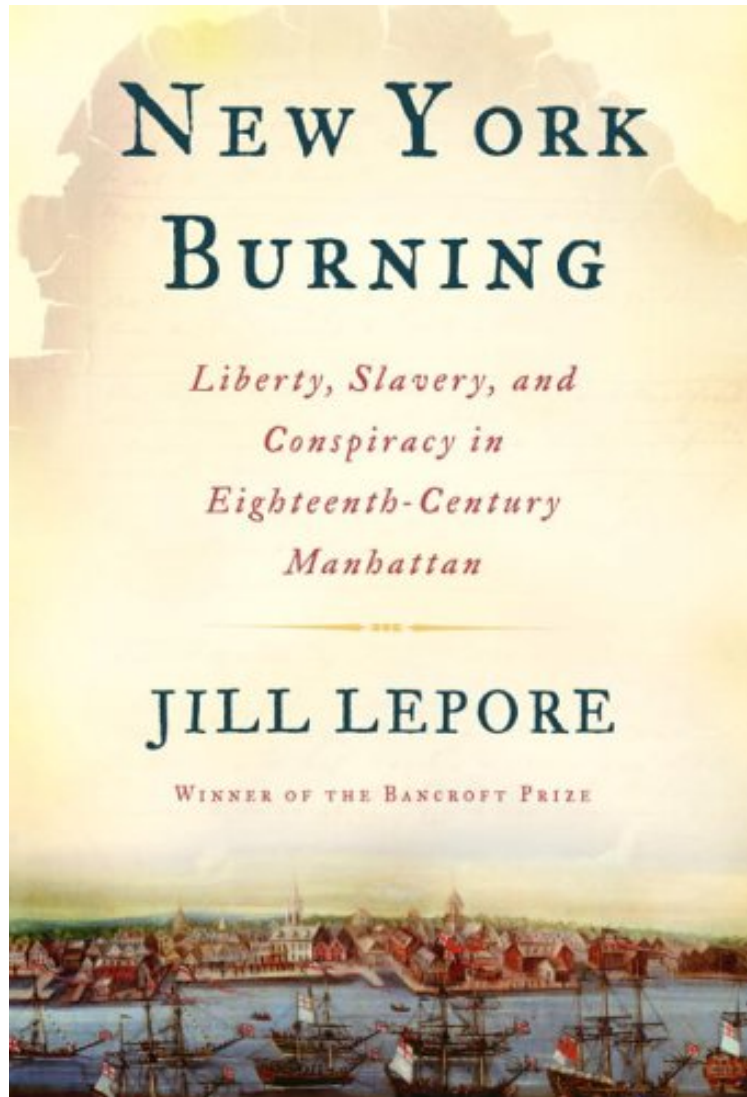


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New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan

Jill Lepore

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Jill Lepore : New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good For History LoversBy S. tamburinI doubt anyone who does not want to read a true historical book with a lot of facts but not as exciting as a non-fiction novel will enjoy this. I liked it because I learned a lot of things about New York that I was really surprised to read. Seems my beloved New

York had a pretty bloody, violent history towards slaves and Catholics and some others the leaders and people did not like. I didn't realize the punishments of the day were just as bad, if not worse, than those of the Salem Witch hunt days. Beware, some of the content may turn your stomach. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Spectacular Albeit Unknown History of Race Relations By Reckless Reader This is a great piece of historiography about something few know about at all --- slavery in New York City in the 18th century. How about a slave "rebellion" in New York City, how about more people burned at the stake than in the Salem witchcraft trials, how about dark byways and highways of old New York, barely transformed from its days as New Amsterdam, dark plots in dank places, shrill frightened tyrants overreacting with bloody retribution, burned ruins of an early African American village in Central Park? One cannot make up this stuff, it is too real so it must be history at its best. And written by one of our premier authors of history, a woman who makes our history live in *The New Yorker* to the acclaim of many, and yet whose best book, this one, is still too little known. If you appreciate Harry Truman's remark that the only new thing under the Sun is the history you haven't read, then this is one to curl up with and marvel at; a great way to spend a rainy day or a dark night. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What You Didn't Know By Robert B. Tauber Did you know that if you were a Catholic Priest on the streets of New York in 1747 that you'd be arrested and hung! Great book if you're interested in the times during which our founding Fathers were growing up. It'll give you a different concept on how slavery was different in NYC as opposed to in the South, and how many of the streets in NYC got there names from English magistrates. If you like history, especially of NYC, you'll love this book.

A gripping tale and groundbreaking investigation of a mysterious, and largely forgotten, eighteenth-century slave plot to destroy New York City. Over a few weeks in 1741, ten fires blazed across Manhattan. With each new fire, panicked whites saw more evidence of a slave uprising. Tried and convicted before the colony's Supreme Court, thirteen black men were burned at the stake and seventeen were hanged. Four whites, the alleged ringleaders of the plot, were also hanged, and seven more were pardoned on condition that they never set foot in New York again. More than one hundred black men and women were thrown into a dungeon beneath City Hall, where many were forced to confess and name names, sending still more men to the gallows and to the stake. In a narrative rich with period detail and vivid description, Jill Lepore pieces together the events and the thinking that led white New Yorkers to make "bonfires of the Negroes." She reconstructs the harsh past of a city that slavery built—and almost destroyed. She explores the social and political climate of the 1730s and '40s and examines the nature and tenor of the interactions between slaves and their masters. She shows too that the 1741 conspiracy can be understood only alongside a more famous episode from the city's past: the 1735 trial of the printer John Peter Zenger. And, weighing both new and old evidence, she makes clear how the threat of black rebellion made white political pluralism palatable. Lucid, probing, captivatingly written, *New York Burning* is a revelatory study of the ways in which slavery both destabilized and created American politics.

.com *New York Burning* is a well-told tale of a once-notorious episode that took place in Manhattan in 1741. Though, as Jill Lepore writes, New York's "slave past has long been buried," for most of the 18th century one in five inhabitants of Manhattan were enslaved, making it second only to Charleston, South Carolina, "in a wretched calculus of urban unfreedom." Over the course of a few weeks in 1741, ten fires burned across Manhattan, sparking hysteria and numerous conspiracy rumors. Initially, rival politicians blamed each other for the blazes, but they soon found a common enemy. Based solely on the testimony of one white woman, some 200 slaves were accused of conspiring to burn down the city, murder the resident whites, and take over the local government. Under duress, 80 slaves confessed to the crimes and were forced to implicate others. When the trial was over, 13 black men were burned at the stake, 17 more were hanged (along with four whites accused of working with them), and 70 others were shipped off to the Caribbean where slavery conditions were even worse. By necessity, Jill Lepore bases much of her research on a journal written in 1744 by New York Supreme Court Justice Daniel Horsmanden, which she describes as "one of the most startling and vexing documents in early American history" and "a diary, a mystery, a history, and maybe one of English literature's first detective stories." Adding cultural and political context to the available evidence, Lepore questions whether there was a conspiracy at all, or if it was blind fear run amok that led to the guilty verdicts for so many slaves. As she points out, fear of slave revolt was a real and consistent theme throughout the early days of the colonies. Crisply written and meticulously researched (the book includes several detailed appendices), *New York Burning* is a gripping narrative of events that led to what one colonist referred to as the "bonfires of the Negroes." -- Shawn Carkonen From Publishers Weekly Starred . With riveting prose and a richly imagined re-creation of a horrible but little-studied event, Bancroft Prize-winning historian Lepore (*The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*) deftly recounts the circumstances surrounding a conspiracy in pre-Revolutionary Manhattan. In 1741, its teeming streets erupted into fire in at least 10 locations. At first, rival political parties blamed each other for the conflagrations, but they joined forces against black slaves when a young white woman named Mary Burton testified that she had witnessed several slaves conspiring to kill whites and gain their liberty. The colony's leaders arrested and tried at least 100 black men and women. Eventually, the colonial Supreme Court sentenced 30

men to death; 17 were hanged (along with the four supposed white ringleaders) and 13 burned at the stake, based solely on Burton's testimony. Out of fear, several slaves testified against others, and the bulk were sent into brutal slavery in the Caribbean. Drawing primarily on New York Supreme Court justice Daniel Horsmanden's *Journal of the Proceedings in The Detection of the Conspiracy formed by Some White People, in Conjunction with Negro and Other Slaves*, Lepore demonstrates that whites' fear of black rebellion led them to blame any threat to the colony on the activity of slaves. In this first-rate social history, Lepore not only adroitly examines the case's travesty, questioning whether such a conspiracy ever existed, but also draws a splendid portrait of the struggles, prejudices and triumphs of a very young New York City in which fully "one in five inhabitants was enslaved." 17 illus., 1 map. (Aug. 29)

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From *The New Yorker* On March 18, 1741, the first of ten suspicious fires broke out in New York City. In the months that followed, eighty-one slaves confessed to conspiring to "set Fire to the Town and kill the white People." The city was gripped by hysteria that, even at the time, drew comparisons with the Salem witch trials. Lepore's account is vivid and provocative; she evokes eighteenth-century New York in all its moral and physical messiness—the smell of the city is almost palpable—and shows how, at a time when one in five New Yorkers was a slave, the "Negro Plot" trials shaped the colonists' vision of liberty. In the end, thirteen slaves were burned at the stake, seventeen hanged (along with a white prostitute who gave birth to a black man's child), and hundreds imprisoned, until, Lepore writes, the dungeon under City Hall resembled "the hull of a slave ship." Lepore argues that some slaves were indeed plotting against masters, but in a way that had little to do with the authorities' wild surmises of Masonic rituals and disguised priests. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker