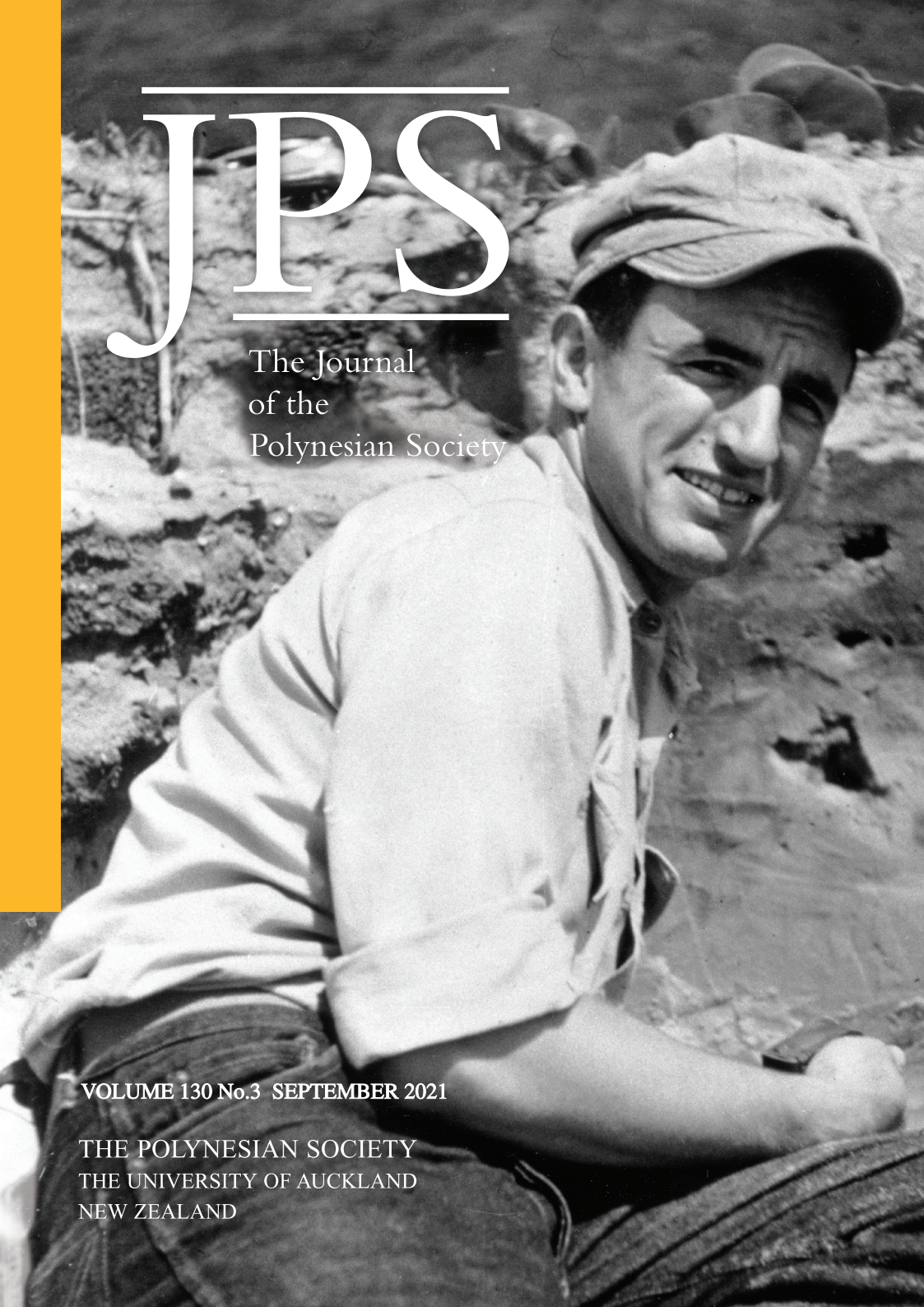

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WHEN MARGINS ARE CENTRES: DE-RANGING PITCAIRN ISLAND'S PLACE IN PACIFIC SCHOLARSHIP

ADRIAN YOUNG
Denison University

MARIA AMOAMO
Te Whakatōhea
University of Otago

MARTIN GIBBS
University of New England

ALEXANDER MAWYER
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

JOSHUA NASH
University of New England

TILLMAN NECHTMAN
Skidmore College

PAULINE REYNOLDS
University of New England

ABSTRACT: Pitcairn Island, settled in 1790 by nine mutineers of the British naval vessel *Bounty* and 19 settlers from Tupua'i, Huahine, Ra'iātea and Tahiti, has long maintained an ambiguous status in Pacific scholarship. On the one hand, its attachment to a storied moment in British history and its supposedly remote geographic location have granted it outsized attention. On the other, it has sometimes suffered a concomitant neglect, treated as peripheral to the primary concerns of Pacific studies. In this joint article, seven scholars of Pitcairn Island argue that the island's seemingly contradictory status as both central and marginal can be read as the result of disciplinary attentions and forgettings, a series of oublifications and focalisations. Moreover, metacritical attention to the ways the island has been made marginal or central to historical, sociocultural, political or regional discourses in turn reveals some of the structures and assumptions undergirding the disciplines engaged in the study of Oceania. Though Pitcairn Island, founded on mutiny and murder, is sometimes described as a space of derangement, we argue it is our own disciplines that are deranged through their study and use of an island that sits uneasily in the categories to which we have subjected it. Thus, we critique surprisingly recurrent notions that islands such as Pitcairn should ever be framed as pristine laboratory spaces or ready-made model systems. We conclude by positing the relevance of an alternative oceanic historicity that looks beyond the colonial archive to de-range supposed margins like Pitcairn Island.

Keywords: Pitcairn Island, Polynesia, HMS Bounty, marginality, derangement, linguistics, archaeology, history, island studies, historicities

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Pitcairn Island, located over 500 kilometres east of Mangareva and 2,000 kilometres west of Rapa Nui, has almost universally been represented as lying at extreme margins of both Oceania and the world, deep in one of the most putatively remote regions of the Pacific. Its physical geography strikes most visitors as similarly inaccessible: "Nature has fortified the coast with powerful barriers, which render the island most difficult to access", wrote one Victorian observer (Murray 1854). And yet, despite its supposed peripherality and impenetrability, Pitcairn Island has long occupied a starring role in the multi-century project of "foreign representations of Pacific Islands" (Jolly 2007). Famous as the ultimate home of nine of the HMAV *Bounty*'s mutineers and 19 settlers from Tupua'i, Huahine, Ra'iātea and Tahiti, Pitcairn's resulting mixture of cultures—and its romantic attachment to Britain's most famous naval mutiny—brought it persistent interest across the last two centuries. A 1964 manuscript about the island by New Zealand photographer Hardwicke Knight estimated that some 2,500 "scientific and romantic books and articles have been published on various aspects of the subject" (Knight 1964). The number has only grown since. The result is an island at once central and marginal, accessible and inaccessible, mysterious and universally known, eternally subject to myriad readings and framings.

Over the centuries, Pitcairn Island has become something like what French social theorist Lévi-Strauss once termed a floating signifier or zero symbol, "liable to take on any symbolic content whatever" (Lévi-Strauss 1987: 64). For Victorian missionaries, it was an Edenic example of Anglican purity (Belcher 1870; Murray 1854; Nechtman 2018). For early-twentieth-century eugenicists, it was a test case for racial admixture (Anderson 2012; Keith 1917; Shapiro 1936; Young 2020). For anthropologists and archaeologists, it was one of the last sites of expansion of the Polynesian cultural complex in the Eastern Pacific and a place where interisland interaction and exchange could be modelled (Collerson and Weisler 2007; Gathercole 1964; Heyerdahl and Skjölsvold 1965a, 1965b; Molle and Hermann 2018). For ecologists, it was an isolated environment where the human population dwindled and vanished, an ostensible lesson in "ecocide" (Diamond 1985, 1995, 2005). For linguists, it was a living laboratory for the study of contact languages and linguistic hybridity, a place to work out the definitions and boundaries of language itself (Källgård 1989; Mühlhäusler 2020; Nash 2018a; Ross and Moverley 1964). And for historians, it was the last chapter in a story of mutiny that occurred elsewhere, an outlying enigma largely separate from the broader narratives of Pacific history, even as for others it remained the very model of certain historical processes (Dening 1994; Diamond and Robinson 2010; Nordhoff and Hall 1934).

In much of the discourse surrounding Pitcairn Island, its marginality and exemplarity alike hinge on its appearance as a space of violence, trauma

and derangement. In journalistic and travel writing, Pitcairn emerges as an unruly "lost paradise" supposedly home to "mayhem" and "dark secrets" (Ball 1973; Birkett 1997; Marks 2009). In these accounts, the violence and trauma of the *Bounty* mutiny and the island's early years, during which many of the community's founders killed each other, rendered the island indelibly dystopian and fundamentally distinct from the wider world. Themes of derangement are particularly apparent in journalistic treatments of "Operation Unique" and the island's notorious 2004 trials, in which six men were convicted of over 50 counts of sexual assault and other crimes against the island's women and children (Oliver 2009). However, much of the broader writing on Pitcairn is also undergirded, tacitly or explicitly, by the notion that its violent and mutinous founding shaped it into an object singularly worthy of journalistic attention or scientific study. American anthropologist Harry Shapiro wrote in his famous 1936 monograph, *The Heritage of the Bounty*, that the mutiny and murder of the island's early years "also created, as a by-product, a social and biological experiment of profound importance" (Shapiro 1936: 137–38).

This article, the joint work of seven scholars of Pitcairn Island from across the disciplines (roughly, anthropology, archaeology, British history, linguistics, material culture studies, tourism studies and the history of science), posits that *derangement* is indeed a useful notion, but perhaps not for understanding Pitcairn Island itself. Rather, derangement can be repurposed as a useful framework for making sense of the island's varying treatments as marginal or exemplary in academic and writerly discourse. Literally speaking, to "derange" means to place "out of order", and indeed, Pitcairn Island has so often served as a model because, for good or ill, in writing about and thinking with it, we academics have repeatedly positioned and repositioned it to suit our own ends, dragging it to or from the margins, *de-ranging* or *re-ranging* it to bring it closer to or further from our own concerns. Moreover, our quests to position the island as both exceptional and metonymic, marginal to the world and a model of it, have rendered Pitcairn Island a site that muddles and problematises our research as much as it provides answers, consistently prompting those who study it to question or reframe some of the basic assumptions and categories that motivate and guide work within their disciplines. A metahistorical account of the island as a lens that focalises, magnifies and makes visible our existing disciplinary obsessions shows us that it is not the island itself but rather our own academic models, methods and theory-driven fascination that have most often been the site of and subject to derangement.

Academics often deploy "derange" as a verb, to mean something vaguely synonymous with "trouble", "complicate" or "problematise". However, we lack a substantive theory of epistemological derangement. John Zammito's

A Nice Derangement of Epistemes (2004) references Donald Davidson's ([1986] 2005) famous reference to a malapropism in Richard Brinsely Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), which showed that we need not follow the same rigid conventions of language in order to intelligibly understand each other. Zammito, however, was more interested in critiquing the science studies discourse of the late twentieth century than in tackling the subject of epistemic derangement per se. Rather, it is Johannes Fabian's reflexive critique of early anthropology (2000) that offers a more helpful point of departure. Through careful historical anthropology, Fabian shows that his own profession emerged as much from the deranged unreason of European explorers as it did from positivist rationalism, and indeed that it was only when proto-anthropologists jettisoned the latter in early field encounters that they were able to formulate new and productive knowledge. In what follows, we build on the notion that encounters between researchers and their subjects, particularly in the case of spaces construed as somehow marginal, can beget derangements conducive to disciplinary revaluations and reconfigurations.

Anna Tsing famously wrote that marginal spaces "are sites from which we see the instability of social categories" (1994: 279), and that is certainly true of epistemological categories born from the insular "margins". Across the disciplines, Pacific islands have long been forced into service as model spaces on account of their supposed marginality and isolation, appearing especially in Western discourse as sites for the generation of new ideas (Baldacchino 2007). As such, they are amenable to analysis as heterotopic critiques of the mainland (Foucault 1971), theory-machines (Galison 2004) or "truth spots" for the laboratory-like production of disciplined knowledge (Gieryn 2018). However, it is worth remembering that marginality is a constructed category; places like Pitcairn are not born insular, they are "islanded" (Sivasundaram 2012). By the same token, marginality is also fluid and relative. As Harms *et al*. write: "Remoteness is not simply a static condition found somewhere out there beyond the pale; rather, it is always being made, unmade, and transformed" (2014: 362). Indeed, building on Karrar and Mostowlansky's work (2018), it is perhaps best to understand marginality as a temporary assemblage, made, used and often abandoned for historically situated reasons.

Pitcairn Island thus invites us to think seriously about how disciplinary and historical structures have been subject to outsized attention, on the one hand, and myopic neglect, on the other, casting needed light on the reflective, critical and trans-disciplinary treatment of insular outliers and forgotten spaces in Pacific studies. We posit that Pitcairn Island has been subject to varying "focalisations" which, by virtue of what they centre and value, also served to produce elisions and forgettings as the island was

dragged into and out of the scholarly gaze, a process we describe below as one of oublification. Concomitant with this uncanny tension between what is focalised and what is oublified, we observe a history of derangements and rearrangements of our scholarly vision as brought to bear on Pitcairn as a model "model island". Below, we reflect upon some of Pitcairn Island's deployments and leveragings across and between disciplines, demonstrating some of the ways in which attention to the island reveals, reinforces or challenges scholarly assumptions: Pitcairn complicates our understanding of proximities, distances and interisland relations; it deranges our understanding of creolistics; it revises archaeology's notion of the island as a model system; it prompts a serious revision in our historical treatments of empire and decolonisation in the past and in the geopolitical present; it reminds us that cultural materialities like *tapa* 'barkcloth' can serve to reimagine critically needed historicities; and, perhaps most importantly, it compels us to rethink our reliance on and complicity in the construction of marginality as a concept in its own right.

PACIFIC MARGINALITY AND HISTORY'S OUBLIETTE

Pitcairn Island's marginality has a long and contingent history. Well before Oceania's land and seascapes were re-visioned by Europe as a peripheral and isolated outremer, they were imagined and experienced through local conceptions. In the case of a vast seaspace between the Pitcairn group and the Gambier archipelago, beginning around AD 1000 a network of ongoing encounter and exchange was vibrant enough to constitute an "interaction sphere" in which Mangareva held a "critical role" (Weisler 2004). As Molle and Hermann note (2018), it is now increasingly established that Pitcairn was inhabited by and regularly interacted with Mangareva and Mangarevans in a variety of culturally significant ways. However, as work in regional archaeology has also suggested, "[b]y western contact in the early seventeenth century, all islands in the Pitcairn group were abandoned, signalling a contraction of the sphere" (Weisler 2004: 57). That contraction is materially evident in the archaeological record, with various significant implications for regional history (Green and Weisler 2002; Walworth 2014; Weisler 1995) or ecological science (Conte and Kirch 2008; Kirch 1997; Rick *et al.* 2013). Moreover, the imposition of colonial frontiers threatened to render that closure permanent in the nineteenth century. Perhaps most notably with respect to our contemporary era, the advent of French nuclear testing during the 1960s imposed a regime of surveillance and isolation which seemed to cut off the islands from each other still further (Mawyer 2015).

And yet, this story of contraction and separation from former neighbours misses a fundamental point about the perdurance or even replication of relationships in the face of massive structural change. With our vision

distorted by the legacy and power of empire, one might see Pitcairn as British, the Gambier as French, both as marginal, remote colonies, and the ocean between them as an impermeable rupture opened up by the cartographic and bureaucratic violence of colonialism. But Pitcairn remained connected, even if those connections are too often elided: Pitcairn persisted as a site in Mangarevan culture history and oral traditions; Pitcairners and Mangarevans married across the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries; both islands contested rights to access and exploit nearby Henderson, Oeno and Ducie; interisland trade of fruits such as watermelons or other produce continued (Mawyer 2016). These imbrications intensely complicate the geosocial imaginary of Oceania, in which supposedly distant and, by colonial bureaus, bordered and distantiated, islands were understood to have relations with their respective metropoles, but not each other.

In part this summons to mind an old observation: giants cast long shadows. A key facet of the interpolation of Oceania's histories into global imaginaries and global histories has been the persistent dominance of a select few historical centres—Tahiti's storied relationships with (European) artists and novelists; Cook's death at Hawai'i; the founding of the Botany Bay colony on Australia's "fatal shore". Meanwhile, other islands have been cast in their shadows, coming into and out of view at particular moments. Pitcairn is notable both as a giant, at times monumentally in view, and as shadowed by the region's other behemoths, itself monumentally placed out of view or out of mind. Pitcairn's relationships with its nearest neighbour, Mangareva and the Gambier Islands, both prior to European encounters and arrivals (and departures) and after, summons this perspective. Queen Pomare IV, the last ruler of an independent Society Islands, once called the Gambier the lost islands, "*les îles oubliées*". And in some ways, her quip during the period of French colonial consolidation characterises not only the Gambier but their nearest neighbour, and other islands like it. Though Pitcairn would achieve a privileged status in anglophone and global imaginaries across the last two centuries, in administrative terms the British colonial office regarded Pitcairn as a burdensome *île oubliée* on the empire's far periphery, too far afield to effectively govern (Eshlemen 2011). The result was an island at once remembered and forgotten, celebrated in literature but beyond the range of administrative oversight (Nechtman 2018; Young 2016).

Oublification—a term we use to summon into view the interwoven historical processes of forgetting, eliding and enshadowing recalling Queen Pomare IV—is a helpful concept for understanding the tension between processes of focalisation on the one hand and processes of marginalisation and historical defocalisation on the other. Though related to historical amnesia, or similar terms which suggest the ways inconvenient or putatively minor historical facts are consigned to the scholarly dustbin as they are

overlooked or otherwise displaced, we use oublification to capture the constructed or even agentive processes by which pasts and their linkages to the dynamic present are dismissed. When historical or storied pasts-and-places are oublified, the result may be the kind of de-rangement we described above—as if they have been cast into an oubliette, a space beyond scholarly vision from which there seems to be no escape. Like Mangareva and the Gambier generally, Pitcairn was made to be seen in some ways, and made to be forgotten in others. Its supposed distance and isolation from its close neighbour, Mangareva, is a case in point, revealing precisely how constructed those notions are. Prior to contact with Europeans, both island groups together constituted a densely occupied centre of a large Oceanic world (Kirch and Kahn 2007; Weisler 2004). However, as some regional centres were focalised, other islands were marginalised. When the French leveraged or simply annexed all of what was to become French Polynesia beginning in the 1830s—and especially when, by the *fin de siècle*, the Third Republic achieved a sort of administrative focalisation on Tahiti—the Gambier became peripheral. Pitcairn Island and its three uninhabited outlier islands, a lone British colony suddenly stranded on the other side of a freshly inscribed colonial frontier, became one of the world's most distant places. It had been cast into the oubliette, de-ranged and placed out of sight.

However, if we look just beyond the limits of the colonial gaze, fixing our vision instead on interisland relations and "interaction spheres", the putative marginalisation and isolation (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2016) of Pitcairn sticks out like a hammered thumb. In the islands of the Eastern Pacific, sometimes referred to as "remote Oceania", many indigenous communities experienced their islands as *piko* or *pito* 'navels', which centred local worlds (Mawyer 2014) within a sea of islands (Hau'ofa 1993) connected by an active, expansive network of encounter and exchange. Across much of Polynesia, many islands are navels, or grounded centres from which elsewhereness is projected. From this point of view, what Weisler and Walter (2016: 370) call the "Mangareva–Pitcairn group" is a centre from which Tahiti is a remote elsewhere and Paris or London a distant margin. Interisland relations and interactions (Kirch 2007; Kirch *et al.* 2010) and the "existence of widespread interaction networks" push back or even invert the perspective of marginalisation. More recent studies, for instance, "offer new evidence for previously unsuspected patterns of exchange between Polynesian islands during pre-European times and put into question the idea of isolation" (Molle and Hermann 2018: 85). "Given that Mangareva was a gateway to remote archipelagos such as the Marquesas and the Society islands, the Pitcairn group was likely to be highly dependent on Mangareva for long-term survival. This dependency became even more critical after the interruption of long-distance voyaging and connections with the Marquesas" (p. 92).

Marginality is a historically contingent and ever-changing category. And even in the case of "marginal" Pitcairn, complex neighbour relations persist in the shadows, deranging received colonial notions about its peripherality—just as they derange the conceptual model of "peripherality" within the disciplinary and interdisciplinary discourses around Oceania's island worlds. Perhaps a refocalisation of our vision not just of Pitcairn as a remote island, or even model isolate, but on the processes that have centred and decentred its proximities, intimacies and neighbour-relations would raise new and critical questions: How can we narrate the cultural and historical dynamics not just of the insular but of the archipelagic, and especially of islands such as Pitcairn that are multiply entangled, with oceanic connections near and far? How can we ensure that those connections that defy the rigid logic and structures of the (post)colonial order of things are not permanently cast into history's oubliette? And how have these historical fences come to shape the boundaries and contours, the sitedness, of our own research in the first place?

LINGUISTICS AND THE "PRISTINE" ISLAND

A critical examination of the history of linguistic research on Pitcairn Island amply evidences the processes of disciplinary and scholarly derangement we seek to bring into view. Linguistics has long construed the island's language, born from contact between English and Polynesian cultures and languages, as uniquely amenable to study. The language itself began its development with the initial 1788 Anglo-Polynesian encounter in Tahiti, gelled further when the nine *Bounty* mutineers and 19 Polynesians arrived on Pitcairn Island in 1790, and has evolved ever since. However, how to characterise the language that their descendants speak, and in particular how to parse out the relative influence of English and Polynesian, has been the subject of strident debate, and consequently Pitcairn Island has served as a persistent site of interest—one that perhaps reveals as much about the assumptions and obsessions of linguistics as it does about the nature of language itself. The earliest, most quoted and most well-known entry in that discourse is Alan Ross and Albert Moverley's *The Pitcairnese Language* (1964), followed by Anders Källgård's several publications (Källgård 1989, 1993, 1998). More recently Nash, one of this paper's co-authors, conducted three months of field work on the island in 2016 (Nash 2016a).

One of the fundamental ideas tussled with in Ross and Moverley's seminal 1964 work is the notion that Pitcairn Island is "pristine", a site where we can know the history and origin of words and language *better* than other places. That is due in no small part to the island's intense focalisation in other literatures, which purportedly produced a legible archive of the language's origins and development. It is also a notion that relies intensely on the idea

of Pitcairn as an extreme isolate, uncontaminated by ways of speaking in other places. The result is a kind of supposed linguistic laboratory: as Ross wrote in the book's preface, "One can witness the actual birth of a language and follow it through to the present day" (1964: 11). At the same time, "pristineness" is also a term freighted with racialised meanings; Pitcairn was already famously understood as hybrid and perhaps racially impure, especially in eugenic discourse—but here, for Ross, it ultimately implies a profound, even noble transparency and knowability.

Pristineness is a term that exposes the ways that contact language studies and creolistics, a nascent research discipline at that time Ross was working, produced and leveraged the marginalisation of places like Pitcairn Island. Indeed, we argue that Ross's depiction of Pitcairn and its language as laboratory-like, model-esque or exceptional reveals considerably more about the assumptions and aspirations of linguistics as an emerging academic discipline than it does about the island itself. Ascribing the notion of the pristine to Pitcairn is a marginalising act, one that de-ranges the island by dragging it to (or even beyond) the extreme periphery, while at the same time centring it squarely under an intense scholarly gaze. Ross wrote that a placename is pristine "if, and only if, we are cognisant of the actual act of its creation" (preface in Ross and Moverley 1958: 333). But in the case of Ross, we are cognisant of the actual act of the creation not of the language itself, which was accessible only through a fragmentary archive compiled mostly by outsiders, but rather of the birth of linguistic studies of the Pitcairn language. From that history, we can determine a great deal about how scholars might document and theorise about new languages and transform Pacific islands into distantiated or focalised truth spots.

While a professor of linguistics at Birmingham in the 1950s, Alan Strode Campbell Ross first stumbled upon the Pitcairn language in a decidedly de-ranged way, reading a decontextualised and to him un-understandable snippet sentence of Pitcairn in a newspaper account. His interest was immediately piqued, and he invited Albert W. Moverley, who served as a teacher on Pitcairn Island in the late 1940s, to collaborate with him as a graduate student and produce a study of the language. On the basis of that work, Ross (1958) introduced the concept of "pristine placenames", expanded by Nash (2012), and then, more famously, collaborated with a number of other scholars and amateur enthusiasts to publish *The Pitcairnese Language* (Ross and Moverley 1964). It contained much of Ross's thinking about the island as a kind of laboratory for studying contact languages, as well as a number of other chapters by additional authors (see Nash 2016b, 2018b). It ultimately amounted to a kind of wide-ranging edited collection of research about both Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands, taking in not only language

but history and sociology. Moverley himself had died early and unexpectedly before the book was finished, but Ross made his former pupil co-author.

It is striking that Ross himself never went to Pitcairn Island. Some of the other contributors to his volume had: Moverley was there as a primary school teacher, but at that point had no professional training in linguistics. Foundational Pacific historian H.E. Maude, who offered an historical essay, had visited in an administrative rather than scholarly capacity, but had documented a large number of placenames in a gazetteer (see Nash 2018b). Elwyn Flint, an Australian linguist, did conduct some fieldwork on Norfolk Island, where the Pitcairn-descended population speaks a sister language, but he never travelled to Pitcairn Island himself. Thus, Ross's work relied entirely on collaborators or material gleaned elsewhere to supply the raw material for his work, revealing, perhaps, the British academic's own insular and marginal geographic position. Indeed, linguistic knowledge from Pitcairn was notably de-ranged, dragged from its local context to a university half a world away in the form of tape recordings or published snippets of transcribed dialogue in travel accounts (Young 2016). As a text, *The Pitcairnese Language* is, thus, perhaps most revelatory of contact language linguistics at the moment of its formation, an archive of the globe-spanning relationships that made the study of places like Pitcairn possible—and at the same time a testament to the utter difficulty of studying a place that was ostensibly pristinely accessible.

In the ensuing decades, other linguists did conduct further work. But it, too, is revelatory of Pitcairn's utter limits as a truth spot. Much of the subsequent linguistic work on both Pitcairn Island and Norfolk Island came away not only with word lists, but with destabilising questions like "how do we even define what a language is?" Those following in Ross's and Flint's footsteps repeatedly disagreed about how to classify the Pitcairn language—was it a creole, a dialect, or a language in its own right or merely a cant designed to obscure knowledge from outsiders (Laycock 1989; Young 2016)? As attempts began to systematise and salvage it as an endangered language, orthography and indeed even the language's name and spelling themselves ("Pitkern" vs "Pitcairn" vs "Pitcairnese") abounded (Mühlhäusler 2020). Ultimately, Pitcairn muddies the waters a lot for a place where knowledge is supposed to be easier to create. The concept of the pristine à la Ross seems to befog and make fuzzy rather than make lucid or unambiguous.

And yet, Ross and those who followed him hardly came away with nothing. Ross reveals to us real threads hidden deep in the languaged stuff of Pitcairn. Eight decades of investigation into its grammar, lexicon, social and natural history, placenames and phonology and some textual analysis all hark back to a single yet volatile conclusion: Pitcairn *is* useful for linguists. We know something about the language and its history; we know how, when, by whom and for whom certain words and constructions were

brought into this way of speaking; and where we do not know, we suspect there are entrance points. But at the same time, Ross opened several cans of worms relevant to but possibly loathed by linguists. Both his work and subsequent linguistic investigation into Pitcairn's language revealed, as in the case of so many foundational studies in creolistics, the limitations of our own definitions and categorisation of language. Accordingly, a critical history of his work reveals the ways that the professional study of language has long relied on the marginalisation and focalisation of the spaces and people it studies—and at the same time the ways that linguistics has cast the messy, social, disciplinary work that produces its knowledge into the depths of the oubliette.

PITCAIRN AND THE EPHEMERAL SUBSTANCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALOGY

When planning her archaeological expedition to Rapa Nui, Katherine Routledge listed Pitcairn among its possible stops with the simple note: "Has never been worked. Specially interesting" (Routledge n.d.). Yet despite its apparently obvious allure, the island has only been visited by professional archaeologists a handful of times—often by expeditions calling briefly on the way to or from Rapa Nui, including Routledge herself in 1915, Henri Lavachery in 1935 and Thor Heyerdahl in 1956. Substantial work is even sparser: a three-month survey by a University of Otago team headed by Peter Gathercole in 1964 and excavations focussed on *Bounty* and historic sites by Nigel Erskine and Martin Gibbs in 1998. However, what is especially striking is that despite—or perhaps because of—a paucity of systematic work on the island, Pitcairn appears frequently throughout archaeological discourse in more conjectural and analogic forms, especially as a model or potential point of comparison. In the absence of substantial archaeological material, the island has instead floated ephemerally through our scholarly visions of the Pacific past. We suggest that a survey of these uses and appearances reveals as much about the nature of archaeology itself as it does about the island's material heritage, helpfully deranging our understanding of the discipline by refocusing our attention to the power and prominence of the analogic in archaeological thought.

Archaeology is grounded in the idea that the human past is discernible through its detritus; that the materiality of past human activity encodes culture and economy, including both deliberate strategies for existence and inadvertent consequences. Archaeologists generally embrace the idea that this materiality both transcends and complements documentary and oral histories, potentially providing an independent "truth" against the limitations and ambiguities of these other narratives. However, while its concern with landscapes, sites and objects is in many respects a mechanism

for distinguishing the discipline from its cognates, its remove has never been an absolute, with archaeology seeing itself as much as a form of anthropology as of history. At the same time, this does not mean that it is insensitive to the non-corporeal and the cognitive, with these being as much drivers of past behaviour and culture as any prosaic economic or environmental forces. Perhaps more than most disciplines, archaeology is rife with internal tension thanks to a disciplinary "spectrum" that ranges from hard-nosed positivist science through to phenomenologists, bound only by its attachment to the physical.

To paraphrase a popular handbook aptly titled *Bluff Your Way in Archaeology* (Bahn 1989), archaeology is like the Devil's jigsaw puzzle, as you don't know how many pieces are missing, most of them are lost forever, you can't cheat and look at the picture, and it is a project that will never be finished. Weaving the literal fragments of the past into a whole narrative is often dependent on processes of analogy to better-known examples, as well as the abstraction of models. Accordingly, in the absence of substantial material evidence, Pitcairn comes into focus instead as a sort of imagined island laboratory, generating questions about its own past—but also hopefully providing insights which can be applied elsewhere, especially in the Pacific world. A large part of this is reliant on the juxtapositions of the island's pre-*Bounty* (and pre-historic) deeper past of Polynesian colonisation and abandonment with its second occupation (and temporary abandonment) by the people that arrived with *Bounty*.

Courtesy of Molle and Hermann's (2018) review there is no need to revisit the nature of Pitcairn Island's archaeological landscape, the sequence of research or the prosaic elements of sites. However, we can certainly highlight some of the themes of archaeological interest the site addresses. These include colonisation (the processes by which people move to and inhabit new places), adaptation and invention (how people change themselves and their environment), lifeways (economy and society), connection (trade, exchange, mobilities), contact between cultures (domination, resistance, hybridity) and collapse (and death and abandonment). However, an attention to these themes returns us to the question of what drives archaeological inquiry into Pitcairn—and especially to the potential for derangements of our disciplinary vision.

Archaeological analogy suggests that the island might be conducive as a model, or perhaps even a thought experiment, for the processes of Pacific island colonisation. The arrival of *Bounty*, with its complement of men, women, plants, animals and material culture, arguably provides us with insights applicable to the experiences of the original Polynesian immigrants, or indeed other Polynesian voyagers and colonists elsewhere. Of course, the reality is that for the Polynesian members of *Bounty*, the existing plant

resources and signs of the preceding occupation shifts the narrative from one of encounter with a "naïve" landscape to one of reactivation of existing and perceptible resources and systems (even if these were not evident to the European members of the group). Elsewhere, Gibbs and David Roe have suggested that we may even be able to derive insights into spiritual aspects of these processes of colonisation, and the crucial role of creating relationships with the non-corporeal inhabitants of a new place (2017). However, concerns over the dangers and fallacies of appropriating insights from one context into quasi-functionalist analogical frameworks for understanding a broader range of situations, especially those in a deeper past, have been raised by many others for decades (Lydon 2019; Wylie 1985).

On a somewhat safer analogical footing, for those with an interest in the European side of the *Bounty* story from which the main documentary evidence and perspective of these colonisation processes might be derived, Pitcairn might be read as a real-life "Swiss Family Robinson" where the ship provides a warehouse of homeland resources with a gradual process of "civilising" a landscape (cf. Erskine 2004). However, a critical reading of that characterisation of the island's second settlement, and our awareness of archaeology's fetishisation of the European colonial arrivals, instead prompts us to question the operating assumptions of archaeological analogy itself. Can the arrival of people with the *Bounty* truly be seen as either a Polynesian or European colonisation, or should it rightly stand as a very particular form of cultural hybrid, where engagements with landscape, place, architecture, object and practice all inhabited a negotiated space?

Pitcairn abets other analogies and conjectures, too. Can Pitcairn be viewed as a site for understanding the pragmatics of life, economy and connection on small islands? Much of the archaeological research has involved itself with analyses of when Pitcairn, usually bundled with Henderson Island, was occupied, the nature of its subsistence base, and cultural similarities and connectedness via migration and trade with other islands. For Heyerdahl, his 1956 Pitcairn excavations were done in hopes of finding support for his diffusionist models of the colonisation of the Pacific as originating from South America via Rapa Nui (Heyerdahl and Skjölsvold 1965a). Heyerdahl's hypothesis utterly contradicted all conventional thought and evidence on the Asian biological and cultural pedigree of the Pacific Islanders and, despite its fulsome rejection by the archaeological profession (Kirch 2000), has remained in the popular imagination as a significant and meaningful derangement of the Pacific narrative. To this end there is some irony that the most recent scholarship is once again exploring DNA evidence considering if not colonisation from South America then at least connections with it. The material from the Pitcairn archaeological assemblages, of which Heyerdahl's potentially remains the most substantial, does not appear to have played

a role as yet. For subsequent archaeological works it has been about the place of Pitcairn in a web of resource-sharing relationships with Henderson, Mangareva and ultimately the Marquesas (Molle and Hermann 2018).

Most dramatically, Pitcairn potentially acts as a model for abandonment. It is one of the "mystery" or "mysterious" Pacific islands which was vacated after centuries of occupation, with no obvious historical driver. Into this space comes Jared Diamond, who uses the archaeological insights into Pitcairn's demise to reason his way through external social and economic relationships. The 1856 relocation to Norfolk, prompted by the population of nearly 200 *Bounty* descendants outstripping the water supply, provides for him a double validation. Comparing the fate of the island's former inhabitants to a world facing anthropogenic climate change, Diamond writes: "The fates of the former populations of Pitcairn and Henderson are a metaphor for what may await all of us if we continue on our present course" (1995: 2).

Strikingly, Diamond's grand pronouncements about the fate of humanity, like all claims built from analogy or comparison to Pitcairn's past, are supported by very little material. For all of what has been framed above, the amount of actual archaeological investigation on Pitcairn has been passingly small: partial surveys of the landscape and sites, a few cubic metres of excavation, stories built on stories. The archaeological heart of Pitcairn still awaits. In the meantime, what we have perhaps uncovered instead are the structures and assumptions that guide the discipline's reasoning about and interest in the material past. Pitcairn Island is, for archaeology, at present most interesting as a site of reflection, an assemblage of our archaeological attentions and preoccupations.

JOSHUA HILL, COLONIAL OVERSIGHT, AND HISTORY WRITING AT THE ENDS OF EMPIRE

Perhaps most crucially of all, an attention to the ways we have varyingly turned our vision to or diverted our attentions from Pitcairn Island reveals a great deal about our understanding of the colonial past and postcolonial present. Among British historians, the analytical investigation of decolonisation has been rightly *au courant* these past decades. Those who have been drawn to the topic, however, have most often observed the process like tourists eagerly watching the calving of a glacier. It is the echoing crack and sublime swells of water that come from the break-up of large pieces of empire that seem to get the lion's share of attention. In a purportedly postcolonial world, we might do well to be awestruck as much by the 14 places that still happen to belong to the British Empire as we are by the free-floating icebergs left by the fast-paced ablation of Britain's once solid empire.

What is left of the British Empire today is, though, easy to miss, long subjected to diverse processes of oublification. Not big places at all, small icy growlers and bergy bits, 14 dots, really, though these overseas territories stretch around the globe in such a way that the sun, thanks to Pitcairn's persistence, *still* never sets on the British Empire. Small though the residual and contemporary parts of the British Empire may be, it is worth asking whether or not the perdurance of that thin, globe-encircling thread still has something to tell us about the nature of empire more broadly, reorienting our vision of the postcolonial. What should we make of the longevity of empire in a supposedly postcolonial world? How did Britain govern these places, and how did "empire" come to them in the first place? How might the history of "overseas territories" like Pitcairn derange narratives about imperialism and its ends?

The existence of postcolonial colonies seems to revise the historical narrative of the collapse of Euro-American imperialism since the end of the Second World War, and one might undertake to study any one—or all collectively—of the 14 contemporary Overseas Territories (OT) in an effort to come to terms with the erstwhile contradictions in the history here. It makes sense, though, to turn to Pitcairn in this quest in part because most of the oublified OTs are, in fact, islands, and because islands, as more than a few historians and theorists have argued, are definitionally small and isolated/insulated communities, "able to be held in the mind's eye and imagined as places of possibility and promise" (Edmond and Smith 2003: 2). Pitcairn Island makes an especially interesting case, for we might argue that London's colonisation of the island was the direct result of inattention, oublification and colonial neglect—the same sort of excessive inattention to small places that allows us to insist that our world is postcolonial when colonies are scattered all about us (Houbert 1986; Jacobs 1996).

The key to Pitcairn's place in all of this rests on the dual and competing definitions of the word "oversight". Most who are familiar with Pitcairn history will know of Joshua W. Hill, who famously arrived at Pitcairn in October 28, 1832, and who effectively wrested, for lack of a better word, the island from London's colonial control until he was removed by Captain Henry William Bruce of the HMS *Imogene* in 1837. Hill's *revolution* at Pitcairn, to borrow the word used by Mark Twain (1879), has all the makings of a "caper" story, and Hill has most often been written of alongside histories of other nineteenth-century filibusters, conmen and imposters. In these framings, Hill is portrayed as the most deranged figure in Pitcairn's long and deranged history, described often as a madman or a tyrant. Both images serve to minimise a much larger point—namely that one man had been able

to confound and confuse the network of nineteenth-century British imperial power so completely that few noticed his antics and nobody quite knew what to do about them for the better part of a decade.

Forget, for a moment, what this narrative tells us about Hill in his singularity. Focus instead on the systemic lessons we learn about Britain and its empire. Expansive? Powerful? Global? Yes. But, simultaneously, stretched. Inattentive. Disjointed. Joshua Hill was only able to seize control over Pitcairn Island from London because of London's oversight of, its failure to attend to, the small Pacific island. And that was Hill's point. In a series of documents and letters that he wrote both before and after his time as the illegitimate governor of Pitcairn Island, Joshua Hill insisted that the island was vital as part of a pearled necklace of islands, rocks and atolls that spanned the globe and allowed Britain to encompass the earth. But, if one does not attend to one's precious objects, others are wont to steal them, and Hill had said as much to anyone who would listen—the London Missionary Society, the Foreign Office, the domestic media and political contacts throughout British society. But, in order that it might function as a Pacific nodal point in this global imperial system, Pitcairn required oversight—special and directed attention.

Had Hill's seizure of power at the island not been proof enough of his claims that London was overlooking a valuable piece of imperial territory, an American whaler arrived at the island soon after Hill's removal in 1837. During the vessel's two-week anchorage at Pitcairn, the sailors harassed the island, forcing the island's men to defend the community at gunpoint. The "Hill imbroglio", as David Silverman has described this period, "brought home the vulnerable position of Pitcairn". More and more sailors were targeting the island. More and more visitors wanted to meet these celebrated islanders. And, the islanders had no army or navy to defend themselves from any outside abuse. They were "up for grabs" (Silverman 1967: 179). Moreover, it was not just physical danger that threatened Pitcairn. The islanders were so naïve. They had fallen for and been flimflammed by Joshua Hill. They needed more than London's benevolent neglect; what they required was a directed colonial connection with the imperial centre—its oversight.

These were the arguments that the islanders placed before Captain Russell Elliot of the HMS *Fly*, who arrived at Pitcairn on November 29, 1838. Captain Elliott had no official authority to engage in Pitcairnese politics, but he was so moved by the islanders' plea for help and colonial attention that he presented them with a Union Jack, declaring "you are now under the protection of the English flag" as he did so (Young [1894] 2003: 91). Officially, it would be the British Settlements Act of 1887 that annexed Pitcairn into Britain's colonial structure. For the islanders, though, it was Captain Elliott's declaration that rendered them British, for with the flag came

a written, if protean, constitution, a document that collected and organised pre-existing Pitcairnese laws and legal customs and added to them radical concepts like universal suffrage for both the island's men and its women as well as universal public education for the island's children.

The Pitcairn constitution merits investigation in its own right, but that is beyond the scope of this argument. What is at issue here is an apparent contradiction in the historical narrative of this much-storied island. Joshua Hill had insisted that London ought to pay more attention to Pitcairn as part of a global imperial system. London had not. So, Hill took it upon himself to demonstrate the significance of the small island by forcibly seizing it from London's control to govern it in a way that he felt it deserved. In pursuing his agenda as he did, Hill made two things obvious to the Pitcairn Islanders. First, they needed a more comprehensive form of government, and, second, they needed protection from without. Both of these needs were met by Elliott's proclamation and constitution—steps that corrected British oversight (oublification) of the island with British oversight (focalisation) of the island.

Though many historical accounts of Joshua Hill's "reign" at Pitcairn Island have framed him as a deranged tyrant, there may be reason to think that historians and other scholars of the colonial and postcolonial could benefit from an attention to him and his time at Adamstown. Is it possible that postcolonial scholarship, and the scholarly work on decolonisation, in particular, may suffer as a result of deeply embedded structural oublifications? Perhaps an attention to Pitcairn and other sites that sit uncomfortably at the margins of our major categories and grand narratives would helpfully disrupt and derange our received understanding of both empire and its dissolution in Oceania and beyond. We suggest that the uncanny perdurance of formal overseas territories in a postcolonial age should prompt us to re-examine our scholarly treatments of colonisation and decolonisation, demanding that we attend to the structural reasons sites of formal persistence so often seem to lie just beyond our vision. Indeed, perhaps their invisibility itself is an artefact of varying, historically situated forms of "oversight", with absent-minded imperialism (to borrow a notion from Seeley [1883] 1971) leading, ironically, not just to formal rule but also to absent-minded historical accounts of the same.

PITCAIRN'S PRESENT AND FUTURE AS A DERANGING SPACE IN ISLAND STUDIES

Just as crucially, the view from Pitcairn deranges our vision not only of the colonial past but of the postcolonial present and future. The seismic upheaval caused by Britain's withdrawal from the European Union has radiated novel and profound stresses across the Pacific, in many cases laying bare the underlying cracks, fissures and structures of our postcolonial world.

Indeed, if "Brexit constitutes the promise of a different future, and a different world order" (Adler-Nissen *et al.* 2017: 580), then it certainly prompts us to think even more critically about the common concerns and assumptions in island studies, and especially the ways islands share a world with newly riven and fragmented continents. Pitcairn is an especially conducive site, we argue, for thinking critically about new and emerging reconfigurations of boundaries, borders and dichotomies of core–periphery that unsettle, disrupt and de-range static tropes of island insularity, dependence and marginality (Amoamo 2019). Indeed, in the "new political reality" (Pugh 2017) of Britain's Overseas Territories vis-à-vis Brexit, Pitcairn's present and future as a space of deranged or deranging investigation merits substantial consideration. Consequently, Brexit futures open up an opportunity to reflect on how (island) spaces for new and emerging forms of solidarity and identity are created, reworked or closed (Anderson and Wilson 2018) as the majority of the OTs undergo some form of sociopolitical change (i.e., realignment) to their small island communities.

Here, we pose the notion of a "revisionary core–periphery" relationship as a disruptive and deranging factor of the postcolonial present, one that shows well the ways that metropolitan disruptions such as Brexit open up dependencies like Pitcairn Island to the world. Brexit has provoked a realignment of core–periphery relations, triggering the perceived need for OTs to operate collectively to safeguard their interests. Moves by OTs to seek alliances, strengthen regional and global networks and pursue self-determining strategies exemplify the revisionary core–periphery model and transformation from liminal/peripheral subjectivities to one of *communitas* (McConnell 2017). While Brexit has enlarged the biopolitical imaginary of the UK beyond the territorial border of the state (Harmer 2018) in negotiating the Brexit machinery, OTs have shown an ability to transform diplomatic practices through *rapid/active response* and engagement that seek to reduce the limitations posed by dependency on their parent state.

While wider possible impacts of Brexit for the OTs were rarely considered by the metropole leading up to and during the referendum period (reflecting past criticism of Britain's historical administrative oversight of the OTs), in recent decades the UK has sought to re-engage with the territories through various White Papers that "better reflected the nature of a post-colonial 'partnership'" (Clegg and Gold 2011: 6). For Pitcairn, the core–periphery relationship has been "re-ordered" into one of "generalised reciprocity" (Putnam 2000). The latter is the foundation of cooperative behaviour both within and amongst groups, while confidence, trust and transparency are fundamental principles for groups faced with challenges. This has led to substantial tourism diversification beyond Pitcairn's *Bounty* image to (re)imagine island place/space through eco/

astrotourism. Working with NGOs and environmental partners, the Pitcairn waters (some 800,000 km^2) are now designated a marine protected reserve, and in 2019 Pitcairn became the world's first island group to gain Dark Sky Sanctuary status with the Mata ki te Rangi (Eyes to the Sky) sanctuary. European Union funds have contributed to building a new museum and cultural and community centre including a tourist office, improved roads and upgraded telecommunications. Further funds may enable an alternative landing site for cruise ship passengers, a dedicated tender and vessel and improved transportation vehicles for sightseeing.

Likewise, the post-Brexit context illuminates how Pitcairn's continuing work with regional neighbours in French Polynesia as part of the Forum Island Countries' Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA) deranges its supposed marginality, isolation or peripherality. In some sense, the refocalised present looks remarkably like the past, with its overlapping interaction spheres between regional neighbours. This is echoed in the sentiment stated by the president of French Polynesia at the 2019 EU-OCTA meeting—"What unites us is more important than what separates us." Regional projects with Pacific EU/OTs have been initiated to combat climate change and biodiversity loss. Closer relations with Mangareva and Tahiti Tourism have been established to promote tourism and trade opportunities and to secure specialist medical care for Pitcairners in Papeete. Relations between such island groupings are not just socioeconomic: in the case of Pitcairn and Mangareva they reflect part of the kaleidoscopic history of interisland relations in "deep time" (Dening 2005), a longstanding history of local connection and exchange that we show above to be all too easily forgotten when our vision is deranged by the structuring violence of colonialism. Brexit has shown that dependent islands can be examined as viable examples for the re-ordering/*deranging* of the mainly dyadic relationship with the metropole. As such, islands like Pitcairn can and should be reimagined as sites of reciprocal power projection—a new model of metropole–periphery relations transformed by the postcolonial present.

* * *

Prophesy is difficult work, and it is exceptionally difficult to imagine a definitive future for Pitcairn Island. Many others have tried, usually in apocalyptic terms. Indeed, because British observers regarded Pitcairn as too small to support a colony of any meaningful size, the Crown twice forcibly migrated the entire population, once to Tahiti in 1831 and then to Norfolk Island in 1856. The moves were necessary, thought officials, to stave off a bleak Malthusian future brought on by overpopulation or insufficient resources. That the Pitcairners in both cases migrated back to their home in defiance of British expectations is suggestive of the ways that outsiders' visions of Pacific lives have long been deranged by their own assumptions.

The same perhaps remains true today, as one observer after another suggests an impending demographic crisis that will shut down the community for good; in 1988, John Connell reported that "virtually all those who have visited the island in the post-war years and recorded their impressions have commented that the future existence of the community was extremely doubtful" (p. 197). And yet, the island and its community persist.

Instead, the most interesting problem at hand is perhaps not why or when the Pitcairn Island community will collapse but why writers have so consistently expected it to fail across the better part of two centuries. We suggest that expectations of imminent disaster are an extreme instance of Pitcairn Island's persistent marginalisation; the Pitcairn Islanders, by a certain logic, have lived outside of the laws and boundaries of history for too long, and eventually the unstable structure must collapse back into reality. However, like an anomalous result that exceeds the bounds of "normal science" (Kuhn 1971), perhaps the uncanny perdurance of Pitcairn Island is as a useful object with which to muse instead on the underlying notions underpinning our conceptualisations of the Pacific, of islands and of history. As we noted at the outset, Pitcairn Island is all too often regarded as a space of easy discernment—pristine, laboratory-like, a readymade experiment, conducive to obvious analogy—but even so, it simultaneously haunts our scholarly imagination as a site where the anomalous and unknowable accumulate in abundance, testing our disciplinary assumptions as much as strengthening them, a metacritical "mystery island".

However, if we instead focalise our attentions on Pitcairn as a site where our scholarly and disciplinary obsessions have piled up en masse, we can begin to view the island not only as a lens through which to see the world more clearly but also as a sort of funhouse mirror, capturing our gaze and returning it to us. In our deranged reflection, we can perceive the persistence of material relations and cultural entanglements across imagined geopolitical boundaries; we can see how notions of "pristineness" inflected the foundational assumptions of creolistics; we can locate the analogous reasoning that undergirds so much of archaeological thought; we can see the failure of (the new) imperial history to account for the outlying and marginal cases that were, in retrospect, perhaps more revelatory of the logic of empire than we had heretofore realised. And, above all, at a present moment when long-time "centres" like Britain are fragmenting and breaking from the main to pursue their own peripheral insularity, an attention to Pitcairn prompts us to rethink the notion of the marginal itself.

Of course "marginality" is always relative; one person's margin is another's centre (Mawyer *et al.* 2020), especially as archipelagic relationships re-emerge in our postcolonial era, supplanting the colonial dyad of central metropole

and peripheral colony. The case of Pitcairn Island makes exceptionally clear that marginality of any kind is historical and contingent, made, unmade and remade through acts of attention and elision alike. Pitcairn Island was a spot held sacred from history, a navel of the world, an isolated outpost on the edge of empire, an *île oubliée* despite a sea of ink, a vital node in an interaction sphere that stretched across the Pacific and the better part of a millennium, and much else besides. Pitcairn was and remains a multivalent space, playing many roles and taking on many meanings depending on who is assigning them and in what circumstances. However, even if contested, we need not abandon marginality as an object or analytic; rather, we should attend seriously to its plasticity and multiplicity, understanding always the situated, historical reasons for which the island was made central or marginal within particular discourses or disciplines, remembered or neglected in particular contexts, alongside the enormously generative potential of starting with the essential centredness of every island community to itself. Otherwise, we risk too much forgetting altogether, neglecting to critically understand our own disciplines and abandoning too much to the abyssal depths of the oubliette.

PROVISIONING: OCEANIC HISTORICITIES AND ESCAPE FROM THE OUBLIETTE

And yet, critique is relatively easy. Identifying paths forward is considerably harder. Having arrived at an understanding of the manifold ways Pitcairn has been marginalised and focalised in our scholarship, it is worth musing here, at the end of our joint article, on ways that a metacritical attention to the island's derangements in extant scholarship can guide us out of the oubliette. Perhaps one path is to look beyond the traditional disciplinary constraints that have helped to make islands like Pitcairn marginal in the first place. In an influential article, Chris Ballard called for a turn toward broader, more reflexive and more encompassing "Oceanic historicities" that, "rather than displacing, or obviating the need for, conventional histories … serve to situate colonial and document-based histories within the broader array of possible histories" (Ballard 2014). Here, we therefore choose to close our review of Pitcairn's place in Pacific scholarship not only by engaging in the pro forma and somewhat deranged work of "concluding"—but also by narrating an alternative, de-marginalised history that exists not in the colonial archive but in its interstices, an act we see as something like "provisioning" for future voyages within the work of Pacific history or neighbourly fields.

History has long made text central to its method and epistemological assumptions, though in recent years the discipline has revived its interest in material culture and looked to "thing theory" in order to break beyond its traditional limitations and expand its definitions of the archival (Appadurai

1988; Daston 2007). In the case of Pitcairn, a rich textile tradition reveals histories of connection and identity that scholars long thought difficult or impossible to tell. Histories of Pitcairn island have most often centred on its men and rely on English-language sources. The story of the island's "neglected matriarchs" (Langdon 2000), their deep connections to the broader Pacific world, and the profound influence they brought to the island's culture are consigned to speculation, conjecture and elision, when told at all (Dening 1994). However, if we look beyond the diaries of ship captains and missionaries and instead follow the patterns and peregrinations of Pitcairn's tapa, we can narrate a very different history altogether. These cloths helpfully derange our textual- and andro-centric historical vision, revealing novel and necessary modes of historicity.

Just one month before her death, Mauatua (often called "Mainmast", "Isabella", or "wife of Fletcher Christian" in historical accounts) presented a large bundle of tapa to the captain of the visiting HMS *Curaçao*. It was 1841, and the islanders were suffering from a nasty strand of influenza introduced by a previous ship's visit. *Curaçao*'s surgeon was able to bring relief to some of the sick, but the virus was spreading like wildfire, and Mauatua was among those most affected (Lucas 1929: 44). By then Mauatua was very old—she had witnessed Cook's first arrival at Tahiti's shores—but had the presence of mind to ask the captain to pass the finely made cloth on to the widow of Peter Heywood, Christian's close friend from the *Bounty* days. The cloth was given to Frances Heywood on the captain's return to England. Sixteen years later, aware of her own mortality, Frances arranged her affairs and cut the bundle of cloth into small rectangles, distributing the pieces among friends and presenting one to Kew Gardens in London (Kew Gardens Reference EBC42960; Belcher 1870; Reynolds 2016).

Piecing this story together is in its own way a disruption, a derangement of the "*Bounty*" histories told and retold since the mutiny in 1789 and the discovery of the Anglo-Polynesian settlement in 1808. The way these histories have been constructed has marginalised the Polynesian men and women, negating the enormous agency they had on the turn of events post-mutiny. Pushing beyond the disciplinary limits and recentring the story on the island's emerging culture rather than European/Western preoccupations and projections is essential in any serious recounting of Pitcairn's history. The inclusion of material culture provides a wealth of resources, and reminds us that Pitcairn was part of a large global network for voyagers, whalers, sealers and others.

By the time of Mauatua's death, the women of Pitcairn had gifted hundreds of bundles of cloth, *tīputa* 'ponchos', *pāreu* 'sarongs' and *'ahufara* 'shawls' to those who visited. These acts of gifting replicated the Polynesian ritual of investiture that guaranteed *taio* 'bond-friendships', so well documented

by the first explorers to Tahiti, as a way to integrate a newcomer into the community with cloth made by elite women (D'Alleva 1997). These gifts, left out of most of the history books about early Pitcairn, highlight how historians and anthropologists have undervalued the significance of tapa, underestimated because women's art practices and gifts were perceived as less important than men's or than the relics from *Bounty*, for example (Weiner 1992).

The celebrated Pacific historian Henry Maude wrote that Mauatua and Teraura (the youngest of the Tahitian women to have arrived at Pitcairn) were "at least of *raatira* stock—the landed gentry—and thus not inferior in social position to their husbands … [but] [t]he remaining women were nondescripts of the Polynesian lower classes" (Maude 1964: 51). This position has been repeated by scholars over the years, with the notable exception of Robert Langdon (2000: 35). However, an awareness of Tahitian language and naming protocols shows us that the majority of the women's names contained indicators of nobility (Reynolds 2012: 1). Furthermore, the quality of cloths they made and the kinds of clothing they constructed for themselves and their children resemble those worn by the elite classes back home. In Tahiti clothing was used "to assert political power, social status, religion, wealth"; however, on Pitcairn it appears to be an expression of origins and artistic skills (D'Alleva 2005: 48).

Tapa is an epistemological site. It is a site of knowing and learning, where the transmission of identity and belonging can take place that embodies cultural understandings of history, genealogy and relationships (Koya 2013: 13). More widely, the Pitcairn cloths carry evidence of an ancient common origin with other tapa makers across the Pacific. Conversely, long after the barkcloth mallets fell silent around much of the missionised Pacific, Pitcairn women were still beating bark into cloth right up until they left for Norfolk Island in 1856, carrying on the age-old tradition oblivious of changes outside.

It is surprising how much Pitcairn tapa is held in museums—the largest amount by far is at the British Museum. The collection contains 'ahufara made from gauzy breadfruit bark, colourful tīputa, deep red-brown pāreu and large ivory-coloured sheets. In Tahitian, these are not merely artefacts, objects or things, but *tao'a* 'treasures'. The tao'a tell us many different stories: of the makers, of becoming gifts and of the voyages that transferred them to the other side of the globe. Another Mauatua fragment is on display in a glass "cabinet of curiosity" in the Enlightenment Gallery of the British Museum. The tag reads:

> *Tappa or Native cloth of Pitcairn Island made by Mainmast Christian the widow of Fletcher Christian the Mutineer of the Bounty. H. Porter. Dec 9th 1837.*

Millions of visitors walk past the fragment every year, and its presence among the thousands of other "curios" disrupts—not only the *Bounty* story (the tag's reference is to "Fletcher Christian" or "Mutineer of the *Bounty*") but also the Gallery's narrative of "curiosities"—and makes us *think* because the cloth was not made by Christian, but by Mauatua. Indeed, the museum has updated its online data with "Mauatua" as the maker (British Museum). Whatever way one views the tapa—as "ethnographic material culture", "relic", "object" or "artefact", or from a descendant's perspective as a treasured manifestation of one's ancestor/s or as the ancestor herself—there is dialogue to be had about dominant discourses and representations of the Other (Schorch 2020; Smith 1999; Young 2018). For descendants, tao'a like the Mauatua barkcloths represent genealogies/ancestry, or, more precisely, *papa tupuna* (Tahitian) and *kamfram* (Norfolk and Pitcairn languages). In this way, these objects derange the museum just as they derange our Euro-and-textual-centric histories; it becomes not only a site of Western conservation practices, research and representation but also a place where the tao'a, the maker and descendants are all connected, and where inspiration for creative projects and contemporary activations can be imagined (Reynolds 2018). The tapa, extracted from the Pacific and placed at the far periphery of Pitcairn's world, becomes a locus where knowledge, belonging and identity again converge, placing once marginalised and forgotten women like Mauatua at the centre of the story.

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AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Corresponding Author: Adrian Young, Department of History, Denison University, 100 W. College St., Granville, Ohio 43023, USA. Email: younga@denison.edu

Alexander Mawyer, Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i, USA. Email: mawyer@hawaii.edu | https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9831-7633

Joshua Nash, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.
Email: jnash7@une.edu.au

Tillman W. Nechtman, History Department, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, USA. Email: tnechtma@skidmore.edu

Maria Amoamo, School of Business, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.
Email: maria.amoamo@otago.ac.nz

Martin Gibbs, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia.
Email: mgibbs3@une.edu.au

Pauline Reynolds, University of New England, NSW, Australia.
Email: paulineesreynolds@gmail.com | https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7044-3670