



# Diachronic Fetishisation: Ruin Porn and Pitcairn Island Language, Archaeology, and Architecture

*Joshua Nash and Martin Gibbs*

## DERELICTION

Two meanings of the transitive verb *to fetishise* are “to make (something) the object of a sexual fetish” and “to have an excessive and irrational commitment to (something).” Our use of fetish in this chapter tends towards the second definition. We are *diachronic fetishisers*, committed to documenting and writing about old tangibles and vintage intangibles across time: crumbling buildings and near dead languages. Without us, much of what we record through viewing and hearing would be lost, because the people whose things we fetishise and archive are largely little interested in these very things themselves beyond any utilitarian or

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J. Nash (✉)  
University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia

J. Nash  
Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

M. Gibbs  
Department of Archaeology, University of New England,  
Armidale, NSW, Australia

economic value. Time is both our friend and our enemy. It creates the nature and the forms we consider. Ruining, ruin photography, ruin pornography, and ruin language documentation are our methods.

While archaeology, ruin photography, and ruin porn are established bedfellows (e.g. Gansky 2014, Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014 and other papers in *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 1(1)), the coupling of language and language death-as-ruination in locations where cultural and architectural downfall is occurring is more than feasible. However, such situations remain largely unexplored. The linking of archaeology, moribund languages and cultures, and aesthetic dereliction in remote, non-urban, island environments is a new venture for documentary ruin porn and ruin photography research. Where McNaughton (2013, 141) writes “we can see in ruin photography a morality tale of the dangers of material excess, a reminder that wealth and prosperity are fleeting and fickle[,]” we take an entirely different tack. Our case study, its images, and the results have little to do with the explicit establishment of empire and the excesses and inevitable demise associated with a bigger-they-are-harder-they-fall disposition epitomised by the mummified ruins of, for example, the well-known instance of postindustrial Detroit, as McNaughton describes (see also chapters in this volume).

Pitcairn Island, South Pacific is a far-flung island environment informed by an intriguing past and animated through seafaring connections. It is non-industrial, small in size, scale, and scope, and arguably maritimately bucolic, i.e. it looks beautiful from the sea. There has never been that much, so there is perhaps little ruining to witness. Still, it is in the fertile soil of this island in which we make several atypical statements about dereliction, aesthetics, ruin porn, and the relationship between language (documentation) and archaeology. We assert our position in the decaying deterioration of two specific non-monuments (read: simple houses) and their associated language domains.

Research into the Pitcairn Island language, Pitcairn (also spelled Pitkern), lies at the heart of the world’s insatiable fascination with the Mutiny on the *Bounty*, Pitcairn Island, linguistic and cultural hybridity, and the romance of the Pacific and Polynesia. This contact language, the linguistic outcome of the Mutiny and the settlement of Pitcairn Island by 9 British naval officers and 18 Polynesians in 1790, continues to be an enigma for language contact scholars. The development of Pitcairn language and culture was founded in the initial 1789 Anglo-Polynesian

encounter in Tahiti. When the *Bounty* mutineers and the Polynesians arrived on Pitcairn Island in 1790, the island was new to all inhabitants. They were opportunistic beachcombers and political usurpers in search of a safe haven away from the British Empire. By entering Pitcairn Island, they had crossed the beach both metaphorically—the initial unknown encounter of language and culture was now over—and literally—in 1790 there was a small sandy beach in Pitcairn Island's Bounty Bay where the *Bounty* arrived. The beach crossing at Pitcairn Island opened the possibility for an island beach community and its own distinct language, identity, and architecture to develop in parallel with the English language and cultural norms. The development of these features is now moving and merging with inevitable temporal and cultural dereliction. With piratical behaviour and breathtaking isolation breeds risk: despite the injection of human creativity, resilience, and hard work comes the certainty of *time: the ruiner, time: the thief*.

The compound *ruin porn* is a fitting descriptor for actualising and observing the physical state and social happenings of Pitcairn Island. Almost 230 years after arriving on the 5 km<sup>2</sup> island in the remote South Pacific, elements of the once robust edifice of one of the most isolated and inaccessible societies on earth are crumbling. The population of the island has hovered at just below 50 odd for the past decades with only around 35 being born and bred Pitcairn Islanders. The islander-outsider distinction is the principal social demarcator within the society. And with more than one quarter of the miniscule population having no Pitcairn Island blood heritage, namely the administrator, a New Zealand police officer, and a social worker, among others, and with the island's most recent history of child sexual abuse case convictions resulting in seven Pitcairn Island men being jailed for sex crimes in the mid 2000s, the future of this micro-society remains far from certain. Ruining, crumbling, weathering, fading—all of these gerunds are germane as applied to a late modern Pitcairn Island. Figure 8.1 depicts common Pitcairn Island house dismantling behaviour: breaking down, deciding, salvaging, burning, removing, reusing, and rebuilding.

We have both lived as social scientists with the Pitcairn Island community. Gibbs, an archaeologist, engaged in two months of archaeological fieldwork in 1998. This stint was followed by further pilot interview research with Pitcairn Island descendants in New Zealand concerning documenting Pitcairn Island cultural history, language, tangible cultural



**Fig. 8.1** A Pitcairn Island house being dismantled in April 1998 (Courtesy of Martin Gibbs)

heritage, and archaeology in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Nash, a linguist, travelled to the island with his family in 2016 to live and conduct linguistic and ethnographic fieldwork with the Pitcairn Islanders for three months. This fieldtrip was informed by two weeks of interviews in 2015 with Pitcairn Island descendants in the north island of New Zealand. As a team, we possess the largest collection of Pitcairn Island language recordings in the world, and an expansive photographic, ethnographic, archaeological, and cultural landscapes database from which to draw. More importantly, and more specific to our own work on ruin porn, we possess critical diachronic observational knowledge and experience from 1998 through to 2016 as well as a fascination with the crumbling. It is this change and charge with particular regard to the language, archaeology, and architecture of Pitcairn Island as applied to ruin porn, which we take up in this chapter.

We focus on the several matters in our exploratory takes. First, we apply contemporary theory and methods in ruin porn to Pitcairn Island linguistic and archaeological work to situate the topic of remoteness,

<sup>1</sup>Gibbs carried out this work at a critical juncture in Pitcairn Island's history, a mere few months before the first reports of child sex abuse on Pitcairn Island were initiated in what was to be dubbed Operation Unique.

insularity, temporality, and the linguistics and archaeology of isolation. We do this by summarising what we believe to be critical present and future elements of Pitcairn Island social science research as relevant to ruin porn more generally as a documentary and explanatory tool. Here, we present a brief mission statement of how experiences and theorising can interpret the action of *ruin porning* as applied to several tropes within which we have worked, namely indigeneity, island beach communities, and island beach community languages.

Second, we test two hypotheses: (1) Linguistic and archaeological ruining has happened across time on Pitcairn Island; (2) This ruining is observable and it attracts (at least our) attention. The case studies we employ are a ruined house—labelled as “Nola’s old house” by archaeologist Erskine (2004)—and its neighbouring, now unoccupied yet still standing residence. We call this structure “Nola’s newer house.” This house is one of a few remaining old Pitcairner houses. It is situated *downside* (Pitcairn: on the north coast side) the previous residence of Reynold Warren’s grandparents (Nola’s old house) some 300 metres west of the main settlement of Adamstown. What is significant is that during Gibbs’s 1998 work, the Warrens lived in Nola’s newer house and the now-ruin was still standing. The couple moved to a new less architecturally dilapidated and physically safer residence in 2015. During Nash’s fieldwork in 2016, Nola’s newer house served as a base for audio, video, and stills recording and many intricate discussions about Pitcairn Island life, language, housing, people, and history, because Nola and Reynold would frequent their old residence, most likely because they felt emotional attachment to the old ways of their house (see Fig. 8.7). The ruined house *upside* (Pitcairn: on the south coast side) Nola’s newer house was, as legend has it, recently mistaken by a tourist for the island’s junkyard. Because of the nature of this confusion, the type of thing- and language-based exchanges, and the encouraged move of this elderly couple away from their residence of more than 40 years, Nash captured possibly some of the final ruinings of the *old days* of Pitcairn Island, a famed past which has invited so much popular and academic attention over the centuries.

We build on the documentary archaeological evidence of Erskine (2004) based in 1998 data, a research team of which Gibbs was a part, and couple it with Nash’s 2016 linguistic and ethnographic documentation. We explore the extent to which the ruining of this quintessential Pitcairn Island house can be used as a representative microscope of larger

edificial, linguistic, architectural, and cultural crumbling and wrecking. And, we outline our theory of diachronic fetishisation and how we, as outsiders to Pitcairn Island, are across-time obsessors of a people who do not normally see beyond the pragmatic and serviceable of their own society.

### BEACHED LANGUAGE, CRUMBLING HOUSES

Our position is staunchly empirical; we are members of a small group of scientists ever to have spent a significant period of time living on Pitcairn Island.<sup>2</sup> There are several thresholds on Pitcairn Island; where most tourists spend anything from a few hours to a few days, we walked significant areas of the island and lived with the people, a verge few ever pass, for better or for worse. As any social scientist who has participated in long-term fieldwork would know, time in the field leads to different sensibilities about the nature of one's research objects. The diachronic and a partiality towards the antiquated is our focus throughout.

A cross-disciplinary and diachronic (1998–2016) viewing of the multitude of linguistic and cultural landscapes on Pitcairn Island seems fitting for ruin porn. What was crumbling in 1998 is most likely still crumbling today, if not totally *ma'alu*, the Pitcairn word for fallen down, run down, or ramshackle. The island's language and tangible culture is a hybrid. From the piracy of the Mutiny on the *Bounty*, which led to the arrival and beach crossing at Pitcairn Island of a motley crew of beachcombers (cf. Dening 2004), to the necessary adaption and brokering across time, which brought about a resilient and resistant people, the stage is now set for a nonsensical maladaptive late modern imposition which is leading to a disintegration of what Pitcairn Island means for storytellers, islophiles, linguists, archaeologists, and *Bounty* enthusiasts alike. The tangible-not-photographed and not-documented-by-now will either go back to nature, the sea, or be taken elsewhere; the language not written will wane and eventually atrophy. This is where Gibbs and Nash come in.

What else could have been the fate of the Pitcairn language and the island's architectural and physical remains? The fact there remains a small human population stationed so remotely has come about, to use

<sup>2</sup>We estimate there have been fewer than 200 scholars and writers ever to have conducted long-term research for more than a few days.



Fig. 8.2 Thursday October Christian's house in 1935 (<https://theroguephotographer.smugmug.com/History/History-of-Pitcairn-in-photos/i-LZ2CkxN/A>)

a well-worn cliché, against all odds. To pose an answer to this question we turn to Greg Denning's work on the *Bounty* (1988), beachcombers (2004), and island beach communities (1980), and work by Nash (2016) and Ehrhart and Mühlhäusler (2007) on island beach community languages. Island beach communities like Pitcairn Island and their resultant languages and architecture are grounded in the symbolism of their form and the pragmatism of their application. One learns the insider language and the hybrid ways of doing architecture and living in order to survive and take advantage of what begins as an unknown beached-beachcomber situation. The adapted states begin island beach communities. The spoken-worded and the built are two significant outcomes of these communities.

What Pitcairn Island epitomises in terms of its loss of material culture and corrosion is how the fading of the old also results in the loss of the architectural history and knowledge. A stark example is the recent removal of the house of the son of head mutineer Fletcher Christian, Thursday October Christian's house<sup>3</sup> (see Fig. 8.2 for near original house, Fig. 8.3 for 1998 version during archaeological excavation, and

<sup>3</sup>Gibbs conducted excavations at this house in 1998. Nash saw no remains here in 2016. The site now merely commemorates with interpretive signage one of the most significant archaeological remains of pre-record Pitcairn Island tangible heritage (Fig. 8.4). The





Fig. 8.3 Thursday October Christian's house in May 1998 (Courtesy of Martin Gibbs)

Fig. 8.4 Signage commemorating the site of Thursday October Christian's house in June 2016 (Courtesy of Joshua Nash)



Fig. 8.4 for 2016 state of the site). Even in 1998, the preservation of such historic architecture as a potential tourist drawcard was rapidly giving way to the pragmatics of removing the seasoned miro wood walls for carving into saleable curios to passing cruise ships. By this time,

authors consider it a great loss to the culture of the island that the preservation of this house was not taken as a priority to be taken up by the Pitcairn Island Government and its people.



ownership of the house by the Pitcairn Island Government had negated many of the emotional connections and claims to the structure.

Additionally, such material loss consequently reduces visual and hence archaeological links to the earliest recorded imagery of the island produced by Captain Beechey and his crew only several years after the rediscovery of the community in the 1820s. By removing and ruining key historical sites, a sense of the pre-existing spatial organisation and relationships with outbuildings and external activity areas such as external kitchens and the well-known Pitcairn Island *bolts*, iron bars for holding cooking pots on an open fireplace, and dirt ovens (Pitcairn: *dot ubm*) is lost. Early images show a juxtaposing of a hybrid European architecture drawing upon maritime carpentry techniques (see Erskine 2004) combined with a village square layout and an overlay of Pacific Islander spatial sensibilities. Here the dirt ovens, pig fences, and chicken coops are writ large within the village square. Once ruined or removed, the possibility of comparative diachrony is minimised.

The reason why language is key to Pitcairn Island research is because it provides an excellent entrance point to other aspects, such as knowledge transferral, memory, nostalgia, and adaption. However, language is impossible to photograph. Additionally, archaeological evidence demonstrates the post-mutiny arrivals to the island were not the first. What then for the linguistic and archaeological remains of the present? The next experience-encounter of the beach as seen through the vessels of language and archaeological remains is that of ruining and natural diachronic deterioration. Our technique is methodologically distinct from other research in ruin photography and archaeological ruining because we are looking behind the scenes, in different directions, towards alternate ruinscapes, as the title of this section of this volume suggests. First, our use of photography is incidental rather than central. We use the camera pragmatically as a documentary tool rather than as an aesthetic or overtly creative medium. Where, many ruin photographers look towards the explicit and forefront that which is deteriorating, we are looking behind the scenes and in private and less accessible spaces even within the island community itself. We believe that through our presence in places like Nola's old house and through our documentation, places become important; not necessarily for the community themselves, since they are, as we argue, arch pragmaticists, but for ourselves as researchers and recorders. It is here that the implicitness we strive for within the temporal and natural ruining becomes manifest and manageable.



**Fig. 8.5** Elevation of Nola's old house in May 1998 (Courtesy of Martin Gibbs)

### DERELICTION AS (A) TEMPORAL PROCESS: NOLA'S OLD HOUSE AND NOLA'S NEWER HOUSE

Erskine's (2004, 61) describes this house:

[Nola's old house] is an old house located close to the residence of Nola and Reynold Warren and was last occupied by Reynold's grandparents – Roberta and Skelly Warren. The house and associated eating house and kitchen were recorded as an example of an archaic Pitcairn house and used for comparative purposes when analysing Thursday October Christian's house.

This house dates from the second half of the nineteenth century and consists of a wooden frame on top of an improvised stone foundation (Erskine 2004, 191–192). Figure 8.5 portrays Nola's old house in 1998. Figure 8.6 depicts the same now non-residence in 2016 in a state which led to it being incorrectly dubbed as a rubbish tip by an outsider.

This architectural locale is the topographical setting of what we consider to be our Pitcairn Island *derelictus-aestheticus*, a type of derelict-aesthetic shrine of cumulated and disparate strands of a distant culture. Two houses standing in 1998; one in 2016. Remains, observation, less absolute language spoken, fewer actual people speaking the lingo across



**Fig. 8.6** Remains of Nola's old house in June 2016 (Courtesy of Joshua Nash)

time. Although the ownership of this very land persists, the subject of many personal disputes on the island, nature will soon have the last laugh within this soft and seemingly temporally inherent natural sabotage. Does one relinquish the ruin or simply let it return to nature?

Against the usual industrial statement of ruining where the natural is either purposefully or accidentally at a distance, we see trees, banana palms, and flourishing passionfruit vines taking over. Here the archaeology and language jungle-cum-bungle buried in these specific ruins are much closer to nature than the urban (Detroit or Las Vegas) jungle. The Pitcairn Island Government is attempting to repopulate the island with offers of land, help to build a house, and a means to live. However, questions about the remoteness, the ruining, disagreement about who owns what land, who can come back, and who deserves to inherit whatever remains remain. This actuality is crucial to the theoretical as well; we are mapping the transformation of the built within language domains at the same time as charting the process of loss and decay. This reality of Pitcairn Island as *hoem*, "home" in Pitcairn, as represented in different formations has serious implications for how the resident islanders, Pitcairn Island descendants off island, and the Pitcairn Island Government deal with the physical residues owned by people not wanting to go back and live on the island, yet reluctant to relinquish those tangible links to their past. Despite multiple attempts to attract people to Pitcairn Island for repopulation through both near and

distant relationships in order to ensure the survival of the island, none have come. This has been shown through the repopulation work from the early 2010s.

It is uncustomary to give up land (Pitcairn: *ground*) even if one has no plan ever to return. It is as if like Nola's old house, people would prefer to let things go back to nature, and preferably quickly, than to hand it over to anybody else. There is now a great threat, which may result in the abandonment of the island. Turning to Hypothesis 1, indeed, linguistic and archaeological ruining has happened across time on Pitcairn Island. The results of decay and ruination are not necessarily pretty, but the archaeology of sites and objects persists. In contrast, one cannot photograph or excavate language once it has gone. We believe numerous scenes of language across many decades must exist in the broken fragments of Nola's old house.

In Nola's newer house, there is more hope for the observer of language ruining. In 2016 Nash had video and sound recorders and hard drives to go along with the still image. He also had fluent Pitcairn. By this time, Gibbs's single 1998 cassette recording in English with Nola and Reynold in the same location together with low resolution early digital photographs were fading into a fragmented coma in parallel with the domestic destruction seen *upside*. We both received lessons in archaeology and language studies while we experienced the in situ ruining. The meeting area-cum-lounge on the northern side is one of the most exposed of the living areas to strong winds and rain. Nash saw windowpanes plummet to the ground, witnessed homemade roof supports fashioned from local pulau wood fall, and heard floor joists break underfoot (Fig. 8.7). Some areas of the floor were sodden from the leaking roof after storms. Nola and Reynold had not slept in this house for more than a year. It was a dangerous yet somehow attractive place. Despite the rampant mosquitoes, out the back Gibbs was charmed by Reynold's vice and his staunch refusal not to use power tools when making the famous Pitcairn Island wooden curios. To repeat: we like old stuff.

Turning to Hypothesis 2, we have observed comprehensive ruining. This decrepitude caught our scrutiny and we delved deeper. Out of the deluge of terrestrial wreckage has come photographs, language recordings, and association with *ground* (land, property, place). The sound recordings are there and most of the physical debris rendered valueless. However, what grabbed our attention was the almost bankrupt edificial destitution that was filled with hope. These two houses, and the results



**Fig. 8.7** Nash in conversation about the Pitcairn language with Nola Warren in Nola's newer house, July 2016 (Video still courtesy of Joshua Nash)

from the two hypotheses epitomise how things accumulate—in cupboards, in homes, in heaps, in real and purported junkyards, on island—and never (really) leave. Nola showed Nash at least five aluminium kettles. None were in use. Reynold's tools, which Gibbs fetishised, are probably now meaningless now that Reynold is dead. The reality of these things ever being used again or valued beyond any practical purpose is doubtful.

### ABANDONING

We have presented a diachronic approach to ruining in remote environments, to documentation, and to possible-perceivable future dereliction based in first-hand empirical research on an isolated South Pacific island. Because our slant was intended to be exploratory, our conclusions must necessarily be open-ended. As compared to other sites of ruin photography and documentation, Pitcairn Island is not a rendition of a post-industrial or neo-apocalyptic modernising of a forgotten dream. The island is a well-known historical scene, which knowingly or unknowingly has inherited the world's expectations about what the place should be, a utopia, and how the Pitcairners ought to live their lives, at the same time as being a *hoem*, an abode for which many on and off-island have great emotional attachment. The contradiction between these opposing points

on the spectrum can account for how we are to perceive the ruins we have considered. It is here that expectation and assumption that things should or could be different from the way they currently are in several foundations of theory in ruin porn; things are not what we expect or wish, hence, they are documentable and photo worthy.

Pitcairn Island is both a place and a condition. On the physical level, it is a location where the remnants of its idiosyncratic culture hang on to the various real and imaginary surfaces against the stealthy will of time. Artefacts of language, names, and objects exist in and are attached to landscape and people. They reveal the shaky grip concrete and more abstract apparatus have on place and disclose how humans strive against all odds to manage the environments they inhabit. We have tried our best to observe several of these settings and not place too much emphasis on wishing they were otherwise. This losing and loosening of grip, as we have demonstrated over an almost 20-year period, advances ruin porn research in several ways. First, there is an inevitability of time-as-the-ruiner in rendering these non-glamour sites and their possible mistaken perception as junkyards. Within this non-glamour is an implicit rather than straightforward liking of the temporal with ruination. Pitcairn Island's ruination and decay is not overly seductive nor aesthetically pleasing in comparison to other examples of ruin porn. McNaughton (2013, 141) considers the ethics of categorisation and, "what it means to label a class of photography as ruin porn. By its very name, ruin porn renders these images crass and exploitive." Our Pacific island example queries this necessarily pejorative take on ruin porn and demands a reassessment.

One meaning of *pornography* is "printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement." A fitting etymology is from Greek *pornographos* "writing about prostitutes," from *pornē* "prostitute" + *graphein* "write." These positions are a far cry from the chiefly large-scale American-European and current smaller measure Pacific study; Pitcairn Island ruin research is not purposefully seductive, alluring, or intended for mass consumption. An ingrained and vigorous fascination with these out-of-the-way relics is more likely to be associated primarily with the authors, possibly with a very few interested others, and most probably least with those within whose culture these language and archaeological residues remain.

Ruin porn, then, is based in the assumption and expectation that that which is there is not meant to be or intended to be the way it is. And this leads to the crux of our argument. The Pitcairn Islanders are arch pragmatists; they are practical when it comes to interpersonal dealings, when handling things, and talking language. They are beachcombers at heart and busy ones at that: if there is no need for it, leave it. The islanders exude much less sentimentality than we do; the immediacy of need does away with the necessity to nurse any one or many things that defines them. Keeping old buildings standing and words and sentences intact is pointless without viable intent.

We are not ruin photographers, but became so through the necessity of documentation and interaction. We believe this became and is an obligation and responsibility, but not an onerous one. We could ascribe any number of expressions to our bearing witness to this cultural decline. There is more symbolism tinged by our European educational bents, a desire to preserve the past, and penchant for the old and less of a visual fascination verging on ruin porn. We fetishise and are fetishisers but do so in a different way to most other ruin porn photographers and documenters. Where the typical approach is about salving guilt and expressing condolence to that which is now not or might soon not be, our method is largely driven by the acknowledgement that those with whom we work are simply not concerned about the ruining of their culture. This healthy obsession with old stuff even verged on the ridiculous in the eyes of the Pitcairn Islanders, as Gibbs experienced: “Why is he so excited by my half-finished carvings, which I can’t even sell?”

Critics of ruin porn research (pace McNaughton 2013) have posed the methodological and theoretical construct as deriving out of this (possibly researcher made) guilt and ambivalence, an almost sense of deep shame that things should in some way be different. What we see when we photograph ruining is not really how it is *meant* to be. In the linguistically and social hybridity of Pitcairn Island, we posit that this almost romantic sentimentality is more from the European side of the island culture and less from the largely pragmatic approach of what we argue is the Polynesian side. We are diachronic fetishisers; where other types of ruin porn attempt to salve and soothe wounded environments through guilt ameliorisation, on Pitcairn Island we have acknowledged that without us, most would simply crumble and be left as junkyard or salvaged for more directed use. To put it bluntly: we are obsessed with old stuff, things that



may disappear if we do not do what we are doing. We have both experienced a degree of apprehension and hesitation from the Pitcairn Island community when they came to know of our intent, a quandary based in their query of our purpose mixed with a question of whether we would make money from our research.

Because Pitcairn Island life has been and is still keenly focused on survival and its associated pragmatics, for example, growing food, making money by selling curios to passing ships, and fixing things, there is little guilt associated with their cultural heritage becoming ruined. They become fascinated in the fact that outsiders (Pitcairn: *strangers*) would be interested in such oddities and ethnic quirks. This is the case so much so that over the years the Pitcairn Islanders have watched many parts of the *Bounty* disappear from their small island, but not without what they consider to be requisite financial remuneration or to establish advantageous social relationships based in the exchange. This is a well-established Polynesian form of cultural interchange. In colloquial Pitcairn Island English, “if you pay me for it, take it. That’s fine with me.”

Why are the Pitcairn Islanders less concerned with their cultural heritage than one might expect them to be? A brief typology of priorities suffices as an explanation. First, the *Bounty* myth is paramount. Second, their social relationships are integral to their sense of self. Third, the physical stuff, which is representative of the first two priorities, then makes sense to the islanders. That is, material artefacts matter less than story and personal interactions, because the islanders are performing their story in place. The real Pitcairn Island, whatever that may be, is not really about the crumbling architecture-cum-culture, the houses, the language, and what remains, but is founded in an “if you come here and visit us, we’ll be Pitcairners” type approach. The island itself embodies the physicality of the *Bounty* legend and how it is represented and packaged in and to the world. Pitcairn Island provides a nexus for the competing of story against reality in parallel with acting alongside a staging in contradiction to expectations together with the material scene of the island.

Walking from the Landing at Bounty Bay up the Hill of Difficulty to Adamstown is arduous enough and symbolic of a devoted Pitcairn Island past. For the islanders, however, Thursday October Christian’s house provides wood for carving and time is money. That said, they do not sell all things which leave the island; much is given to visitors as a

form of social connectivity and relationship creation: “Take this, so you’ll remember us.” Once again, Pitcairn Island is a place of encounter, a literal and metaphorical beach where liminal spaces may be crossed or not and where island beach communities, their languages, and their beachcomber natures are engaged. Building on our self-labelled temporal sentimentality and diachronic fetishisation, we take exception that ruin porn is taken as failure, a kind of not-living-up-to the way things should or could have been. As an alternate ruinscape, Pitcairn Island is ruin porn nostalgia made real in a remote environment with culturally neutral participants and active documenters.

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