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The Trichotomy of the Island The Islanders, the Others and the Enemies on Pitcairn Island: An Analysis of *Jutro przypłyynie królowa* by Maciej Wasilewski

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ABSTRACT: Pitcairn is inhabited by 56 people, largely the descendants of the mutineers aboard HMS Bounty. Despite being a British territory, the island never had a tight relationship with the Crown until 2004, when the British Empire had to settle a child molestation case that shook the whole island. In that case, 7 out of 14 men were accused of having sexual relations with minors during a timespan of almost 40 years. After the trial the island became divided into three camps — the Islanders, the Others, and the Enemies. Maciej Wasilewski's book is a (literary) reportage of the author's visit on Pitcairn after the trials of 2004. This article aims at analysing the three groups of islanders. By studying Wasilewski's interviews with them, we try to examine the dynamics of this small and remote island and elaborate on the problematic division into "us" and "them" (the Islanders vs. Strangers and Others) that emerged in times of conflict and remains to this day.

KEY WORDS: Pitcairn, Other/Otherness, Maciej Wasilewski, trichotomy, social division

The Other is a criterion that allows every human being to perceive the world as divided into two groups — the one that represents the norm, and the one that is seen as the deviation from the standard, something different and thus easy to discriminate against. This dichotomy is even clearer in cases when geography helps to create such divisions. As Jean-François Straszak claims: "Certain spatial patterns are very efficient, albeit discrete, in constructing and maintaining alterity. [...] Geography, like physical anthropology or history, has in the past proposed and continues to provide tales that form the basis of discursive constructions of a number of expressions of otherness" (STRASZAK, 2008: 6).

The case I wish to investigate in this article is the division that was created on Pitcairn Island in 2004, when the community was shaken by a case of sexual abuse and subsequent trials. Maciej Wasilewski, a Polish journalist and travel writer, visited the island a few years after the trials. Having studied his account of this visit, *Jutro przyplynie królowa* (*The Queen Sails In Tomorrow*), I attempt to analyse the trichotomy that emerged after the trials, which divided the small community of Pitcairn into three groups — the Islanders, the Others, and the Strangers. I wish to focus on the relations between the islanders, their post-trial life, and how the division changed the dynamics on the island.

The Other/Otherness

In accordance with Bernhard Waldenfels's theory of the Other, there are three possible understandings of this concept — the other as a place, the other as a property, and the otherness of the species. The most basic understanding of the notion is the assumption that otherness is something that exceeds the order we are used to or which cannot exist within that order of things because it has been rejected by it. The other is also seen as a potential enemy, simply because of the fact that every instance of encountering the other or otherness has the feature of being threatening to the self. As we read in Jean-François Straszak's "Other/Otherness" essay, "otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us,' the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them,' the Other) by stigmatizing a difference — real or imagined — presented as a negation of identity and [...] this is a motive for potential discrimination" (STRASZAK, 2008: 2). The process of finding differences and changing them into otherness in order to introduce the division into the in-group and out-group Straszak calls "othering." Such process and division seem vital for a human being. In *Dimensions of a New Identity*, Erik H. Erikson suggests that the need for otherness is, in fact, a natural human instinct, due to the fact that already in childhood we are subjected to clear divisions between the good and the evil, good and bad people, things, etc. The division is something that clearly shows acceptable and unacceptable behaviours that allow a child to gain acceptance from the society (ERIKSON, 1974: 42).

The Other is always present in our lives as something that must be contrasted with the Self. The Other is needed in order for us to see ourselves as us, introducing divisions based on our gender (men vs. women), sexual orientation (heterosexuals vs. homosexuals), race (black vs. white, colonialists vs. the colonized), etc. This dichotomy is necessary in order for human beings to perceive the world. As STRASZAK (2008: 2) explains: "The out-group is only coherent as

a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity [...]. The Other only exists relative to the Self and vice versa.” Another key element in creating this division is the imbalance in power relations between the groups. Only the dominant group can define the weaker group and discriminate against them. “By stigmatizing them as Others, Barbarians, Savages or People of Color, they relegate the peoples that they could dominate or exterminate to the margin of humanity.” The Others are neither neutral nor invisible — the members of the dominant group can identify them automatically, thus creating certain stereotypes, fears and behaviours. However, as Zygmunt Bauman notices, we cannot define the Other as something unknown: “In order to consider somebody as other, we must first know something about them. Firstly, those others must appear unwelcomed in my vicinity, thus making me look at them closely” (BAUMAN, 1996: 61).

The Island

Pitcairn is a group of islands that are a British Overseas Territory in the South Pacific, roughly 2,200 kilometers east-south-east of Tahiti. The group of islands is composed of Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno, but only Pitcairn, with an area of about 47 square kilometers, is inhabited. It is the least populous national jurisdiction in the world, according to the CIA Factbook. As a part of the British Overseas Territories, Pitcairn retains a constitutional link with the UK, but the relationship with the Crown “is based on mutual benefits and responsibilities” (UK Overseas Territories Policy issued on December 12, 2012). The first inhabitants settled on Pitcairn in 1790, when the Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian companions landed there. The mutiny on HMS Bounty, led by Fletcher Christian against the ship’s captain, Lieutenant William Bligh, took place on April 28, 1789. There are numerous theories as to the reasons for the mutiny, including Bligh’s treatment of his crew, harsh conditions on the ship or the longing for a better life after being stationed in Tahiti. As a result of the mutiny, Lieutenant Bligh and 18 other crewmembers were set afloat in a longboat by the mutineers and eventually returned to Britain 2 years and 11 months later. The mutineers settled finally on Pitcairn where they burned the Bounty. The group that landed on Pitcairn in 1790 consisted of “nine Englishmen, with their nine Otaheitan wives, and six Otaheitan men, three of whom had wives with them. These, with a little Otaheitan girl, made twenty-eight persons who landed” (Pitcairn.Fatefulvoyage.com). Of the nine mutineers, only Fletcher Christian and Edward Young were men of good education; the rest were mostly of the ordinary class sailors. They treated the Tahitians like slaves, which soon led to murders

that decimated the number of settlers. Fletcher Christian, first leader of Pitcairn, was killed within few years of landing. By 1800, John Adams remained as the only male survivor of the landing party. He became the leader of the community of 10 Polynesian women and 23 children, ruling the community with the help of the Bible. Since 1890, the majority of the islanders have been Adventists. By 1937, the population reached its peak at 233 islanders, but has been falling ever since, due to emigration (mostly to New Zealand). The 2010 census claims the population of Pitcairn to be 45 people, whereas a 2013 estimate counts 56 inhabitants (CityPopulation.de).

The Trial of 2004

For years, Pitcairn had been a forgotten island in the Pacific Ocean. However, this situation changed dramatically in 2004, when sexual misconduct charges were brought against seven men living on the island (including the mayor) and six men living abroad. This is when the population of Pitcairn became fragmented and formed three camps — Us (the Islanders who claimed the trials were unjust), the Others (the Traitors, accusers and those who supported their claims) and the Strangers (the foreigners who came to Pitcairn for the trial). During the trial, the Islanders denied the colonial status of their island, complained about the British involvement in the trial and the ridiculousness of the charges. It is also vital to remember that, due to the limited number of immigrants and small community, the majority of the islanders are related to one another, which made the whole trial a cause of disagreement among families. Moreover, Pitcairn is an extremely remote territory — despite the fact that the islanders enjoy the privileges of EU citizens. Thanks to its remoteness, that small community has always been shielded from the world. It is also necessary to remember the nature of the original settlers who landed there — they were seamen and their Polynesian families. Thus, it is understandable that life on Pitcairn was led in accordance with Polynesian traditions and was not under the scrutiny of any outside forces other than a handful of government employees, such as the teachers, pastors and police officers serving there.

Gail Cox, a police officer from Kent serving temporarily on Pitcairn in 1999, began working to unravel a web of sexual abuse and rape allegations. The same year, after a 15-year-old girl agreed to press rape charges, Operation Unique was set in motion. Thanks to it, a total of 21 counts of rape, 41 counts of indecent assault and 2 counts of gross indecency with a child under 14 were gathered. Between 1999 and 2003, the police forces of Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Norfolk Island managed to interview every woman who had lived on Pit-

cairn over the previous 20 years, in addition to interviewing all of the accused men. The case was led by Simon Moore, a lawyer from Auckland who had been appointed Pitcairn Public Prosecutor by the British government. In 2002, the Privy Council of Queen Elizabeth II passed an order for the trial to be held in New Zealand in 2004. Despite that, the defendant won a plea for the case to be tried on Pitcairn, thus making the three judges, numerous prosecutors and lawyers, and court staff plus 6 journalists travel to Pitcairn. The trial began on September 30, 2004 and lasted 7 weeks. The witnesses who lived abroad had to give evidence via satellite connection. All of the islanders had to surrender their guns prior to the trial in order to avoid any incidents. The total cost of the trial was NZ\$ 14.1 million.

The defendants who lived on the island were:

1. Steven "Steve" Christian (b. 1951), the Mayor of the island. He was charged with six rapes and four indecent assaults committed in the years 1964—1975. Christian was sentenced to three years in prison and relieved of his office.
2. Randy Christian (b. 1974), Steve Christian's son and the chair of the Internal Committee (a powerful group with decisive powers on the island). He admitted to having sex with an underage girl of 11 or 12 years. He was convicted of four rapes and five indecent assaults and was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, which was the most severe sentence passed on Pitcairn.
3. Len Carlyle Brown (b. 1926), Steve Christian's father-in-law. Brown was convicted of two rapes and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Due to his advanced age, he was allowed to serve his sentence in home detention.
4. Dave Brown (b. 1954), Len Brown's son. He admitted to having committed two indecent assaults and to one incident of molesting a 15-year-old girl, but continued to deny the 12 remaining charges (among them the charge that he forced a five-year-old to perform oral sex on him). Dave Brown was found guilty of nine indecent assaults, sentenced to 400 hours of community service, and ordered to undergo therapy.
5. Denis Ray Christian (b. 1957) pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 300 hours of community service and ordered to undergo therapy. It was reported that he emailed his victim showing remorse for his deeds.
6. Carlisle Terry Young (b. 1958) was convicted of one rape and six indecent assaults. The court sentenced him to five years' imprisonment.
7. Jay Warren (b. 1956) was cleared of his one indecent assault charge.

As the six convicted men comprised most of the adult male population of Pitcairn, there were concerns that the severity of the sentences passed would put an end to the small community. Some other controversies included the cultural aspect of the case (traditionally, the age of consent in Polynesian cultures is 15), and accusations of the British having manipulated the witnesses.

The Islanders, the Others and the Strangers

Maciej Wasilewski had the chance to visit Pitcairn after the trials of 2004. *Jutro przyplynie królowa* is a reflection of his ten-day visit to Pitcairn and an account of what he saw there, what he heard from the natives but also what the victims of the crimes told him. In his book, the dichotomy of Self vs. Other is complemented by a third element, namely the Enemy (the Stranger). This trichotomy becomes the new island dynamics, generating some dangerous situations and leading an uncertain future of the small community.

Talking about Pitcairn and its community, it is important to understand the image of the island. In *Jutro przyplynie królowa*, Pitcairn is presented as a hostile and unwelcoming place to everybody: “In the greyish dawn it is barely noticeable, deceiving, so that it is impossible to judge its shape. Only the scream, reflected from the walls and echoing back, makes one thing that the approach will not be an easy one. No beach, no dock, no sandy shoal [...]. Further away you can see the rocks, spikey, sticking from underneath the waves. Rocks like landmines” (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 3). It is clearly noticeable that the island is surrounded by the aura of danger and the lurking presence of some sinister entity from the very beginning. From Wasilewski’s talks with the sailors we find out that the island is believed to be cursed by the spirits of those who died sailing to or from Pitcairn and the events that took place on the island. But the island is unwelcoming even to the Pitcairn Islanders — the roads are slippery and treacherous, the rocks unsteady and the roads are of doubtful quality. Even the very process of landing on Pitcairn is hostile — one woman (Donna) checks the visitors’ passports and decides who has the right to land on Pitcairn. She is accompanied by 12 men who “are there in case you wanted to argue with Donna” (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 3). Also the atmosphere of the island is extremely important — in his narrative, Wasilewski keeps repeating the words “stuffy,” “suffocating,” “oppressive.” They are extremely accurate, considering the fact that the events take place on a remote island, 2 weeks of sailing from the mainland, where a group of around 60 consanguineous people lives. There is no escape from Pitcairn, and the only ship that docks there, arrives 6 times a year. “The Pitcairn Islanders are like a multigenerational family forced to live in a cramped flat — they intrigue and fight against one another quietly” (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 34).

For the Pitcairn Islanders, the keyword to describe themselves used to be the idea of community. It is repeated by various speakers, and echoes throughout the story. “Pitcairn is a place of natural selection. The people who live there are indomitable, ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the community” (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 4). The community has always been what kept the Pitcairn Islanders together, ever since Fletcher Christian decided to commit

mutiny on board of HMS Bounty. And ever since then, the community should be seen as something untouchable. "The community is the most important. A man is born and dies, but the community remains — it has been so for 220 years, ever since the mutineers came here. Donna says that a man without community means very little. And that the people who thought differently have already left" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 10). The community guarantees survival, but is also a very tightly run group: "The blood of the descendants of the Bounty mutineers runs in our veins. [...] We chose our husbands and wives from outside of the island very carefully. Not everybody can live in our community. We have clear rules: our spirit is strengthened by work, we respect our bodies. We do not use alcohol or strong coffee. We have rejected passion" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 11).

The first islanders we become acquainted with are Donna and her husband Lu, who are hosting Wasilewski on Pitcairn. Donna (based on the character of Brenda Christian) is the former Mayor of Pitcairn, having succeeded her brother, Buck (Steve Christian) after the trial. Though born and raised on Pitcairn, she moved to the UK where she met her husband, Lu (Michael Randall). After they got married, they decided to move to Pitcairn, as Lu could be a great asset to the island thanks to him being an accountant and his knowledge of logistics. However, he becomes a person classified as a Convert, because he is from a different world, and the islanders consider him to be of a lower social class. Every Convert "is, at most, a butler to the Pitcairn Islanders. And if they allow him to the table, he may listen, but not speak" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 15). In addition, Donna is from one of the most influential families on the island (in fact Brenda Christian is a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian), thus making her relationship with Lu even more difficult from the social point of view: "Lu is like a have-not who married into a wealthy family" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 15). After the trials of 2004, Lu was one of the people who truly feared for their lives, as the in-group supporting the accused threatened to kill all the Judases for their treachery. Another key figure is Buck, Donna's brother, as the whole narrative seems to revolve around him. Buck is based on Steve Christian, one of the main accused and the former Mayor of Pitcairn. The author does not speak with him at any point, but it is clear that the whole island depends heavily on Buck. He is the leader of the Boys, a group of men who have significant power on Pitcairn. He is a key member of the community, as he has skills that guarantee their survival. He was one of the first islanders to become a dentist, he is calm under pressure, and he has a license to operate a digger. As one of the islanders says: "If Buck could read our thoughts, he would kill us at once. The problem is, we need Buck" (WASILEWSKI, 103: 40). Finally, it is worth mentioning Veronica who represents the victims of rape on Pitcairn and provides the point of view of a person who managed to escape the island. She lives in New Zealand and tries to cope with what happened to her on the island. In her conversations, she is chaotic, with

a volatile temper and self-destructive tendencies. We get to know her through a series of conversations with the narrator.

Throughout the story, the author presents the issue of Pitcairn's sexual abuse trials of 2004 from two perspectives — from within the island through conversations with the islanders, and the perspective of Veronica, one of the sexual abuse victims, who talks about the issue as an escapee living in New Zealand. The inside perspective is clearly fragmented, as the families on Pitcairn are grouped in accordance with their attitude towards the trials. Those who agreed to testify during trials, those who supported the accusers and/or talked with the British, fall into the category of Others, the traitors, the Judases. Their "sins" are still remembered by the Islanders, who sided with the accused members of the Boys. Thanks to the different perspectives presented in Wasilewski's book, we can analyse the subtle web of relations and divisions on Pitcairn. The first group that emerged because of the trials of 2004 is the group of the Islanders, the in-group. They are those who do not consider themselves British citizens, who believe that the trials of 2004 were only a way for the British to show their ownership of Pitcairn. This group is represented in the book mostly by Atkins, Donna's uncle, who hates Lu and all the foreigners, and by all the islanders who side with Buck and the Boys. The Boys are a vital element to this group, as they are the ones who guarantee the island's survival. The members of this group see nothing wrong with the rapes and try to justify them. There are numerous opinions that it was the girls' fault, as they kept provoking the Boys, or that the Boys "raped enough in order to satisfy their needs, but not enough in order for it to become a problem" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 42). One of the most common justifications is that rape is something that has been transferred through the tales of their forefathers and that the sexual encounters at the age of 12 are normal in Polynesian culture. The Islanders are shown as united against a common enemy (the British authorities and the Judases), supportive of each other (they take care of the accused and their families), and dominant. Every other party living on the island has to be mindful of what they say. "They are the secret-keepers, they build up fear. Who breaks the silence, becomes a Judas. [...] On Pitcairn, certain pieces of information are like grenade's safety pins" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 31). The Others, also known as the Judases, are mostly non-islanders who supported the trials (Lu), who helped the Strangers (Carl, Hank), and the women who testified against the accused. They are seen as the worst members of the community — the Traitors cannot expect any support from the Islanders — for example during the trial even some fathers decided to testify against their daughters: "Our daughters are whores, they are crazy, and the rapes are their delusions" (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 71). Lu is one of the Traitors, as he publicly expresses his opinion on the trial. Carl is one of the few islanders who became Traitors (another being Garwood — the only accused who asked forgiveness for his deeds), as during the trial, when asked by the public prosecutor whether Pitcairn belonged under British

jurisdiction, he answered that yes, it had always been so. All of the traitors were threatened by the Boys or by their families after the trial, and to this day they are seen as collaborators, liabilities, and the untouchables of Pitcairn. They also express their bitterness towards the British and how the trials ended:

At the beginning, I believed they would introduce order on the island. That's what they told us, they promised a new life, no persecutions, with the right to steer the boat and to use the digger, because before, only the Boys could do that. I should have known better; the public prosecutor played cricked with the accused. I should have known better.

WASILEWSKI, 2013: 76

The third group, the Strangers, consists of all the people who are seen by the Pitcairn Islanders as colonialists, invaders, occupants — the British, the tourists, the journalists, the government. They are presented by the Islanders as the white power that came to Pitcairn to abuse their rights and impose their point of view. To the Islanders, the British are the enemies who threaten their community and the natural order of things. They are the ones who want to destroy Pitcairn, not respecting their traditions and culture, are considered dangerous and untrustworthy.

The aftermath of the 2004 trial is a clearly divided small community — ever since then each group organizes their own holiday celebrations in different parts of Pitcairn. The division runs deep enough that the Islanders sent the pastor to tell the Judases not to attend the funerals of the members of their group. The British are seen as invaders who “came in, stamped on the islanders and left. The trials divided the island, destroyed marriages, even mothers refused to look at their daughters. Buck blamed the British” (WASILEWSKI, 2013: 99). The situation on Pitcairn seems to be very difficult. Due to the complex relations between the community members, the overall impression is that everybody there is under constant watchful eye of others. The trials of 2004 introduced a division that simply grew stronger as other factors influenced it. The families and their relations were broken after the trials, and the need arose for a new political leader to emerge. The islanders started playing the political game, creating alliances against others (e.g. Lu became an accountant so that he could help uncover the financial embezzlements committed by Mayor Watkins so that a member of Donna's family could become mayor). The trials also created a need for the British to become more involved — there is a scheme to repopulate Pitcairn, plans to create new sources of energy, etc. Such actions also introduced new people from outside to the island, as there are teachers, police officers and more strict supervision of the island. However, as the division into the Islanders, the Others and the Strangers remains, the efforts of the British are met with distrust, and strengthen the trichotomy already present on Pitcairn. Such a significant problem the community had to encounter left it scarred and changed. Pitcairn

Islanders will long remember the trials. It is commented in Wasilewski's book that, if a situation of rapes was to repeat itself, there would be no witnesses to testify, as the people have seen the reaction of the community.

It is clearly visible that Wasilewski's take on Pitcairn is an attempt to show the community faced with a difficult issue. Before the trials of 2004, Pitcairn Islanders defined themselves as Us against the Converts. The Queen was seen as a symbol of hope and the impulse for a change (as symbolized in a discussion after a hurricane that hit the island). The trials changed that small community and forced everybody to take a stand. Thus emerged a trichotomy of Us, the Others (this time seen as Traitors) and the Strangers (the British), further injuring the relations between Pitcairn Islanders. This situation is even more complicated if we consider the future of the island. It is believed that, if nothing changes, the island will be left with only three people of working age by 2045, leading to a complete destruction of the community.

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Bio-bibliographical Note

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