

Globalizing the Routes of Breadfruit and Other Bounties

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1. The eighteenth-century British quest for Tahitian breadfruit and the subsequent mutiny on the *Bounty* have produced a remarkable narrative legacy of maritime romance and revolution in print, film and the popular imagination. William Bligh's first attempt to transport the Tahitian breadfruit to the Caribbean slave colonies in 1789 resulted in a well-known mutiny orchestrated by his first mate Fletcher Christian, the pursuit, capture, and court martial of the mutineers who returned to Tahiti, and the flight of Christian and his colleagues to Pitcairn Island where they established a troubled society of Europeans and Tahitians. As a historical narrative rehearsed almost exclusively on the Pacific stage, the breadfruit transplantation has been segregated from its Caribbean roots. Despite the loss of officers, crew, and one thousand breadfruit seedlings, the British government decided to repeat the attempt and successfully transplanted the tree to their slave colonies four years later.¹ Here I focus on the colonial mania for what was popularly conceived as an icon of liberty, the breadfruit, and the British determination to transplant over three thousand of these Tahitian food trees to the Caribbean plantations to "feed the slaves."² Tracing the routes of the breadfruit from the Pacific to the Caribbean, I read this historical event as a globalization of the island tropics, particularly evident in human and plant migration, creolization, and consumption. In examining plant transfer in an age of revolution, I interpret the provision of the breadfruit for slaves as an attempt to displace a growing abolitionist revolution with a scientific one derived from the new knowledges of tropical botany.
2. As an effort initiated, coordinated, and financially compensated by Caribbean slave owners, the breadfruit transfer has not been fully examined in this Atlantic nexus of power. In fact, the Tahitian romance and revolution narrative of the

breadfruit transfer, a myopic focus on the tension between Bligh and Christian, has deflected examination of the nearly three decades worth of lobbying from the West Indian planters for this specific starchy fruit and Bligh's subsequent journey. As I will explain, this expensive transplantation was a drastic act of these planters to avert a growing critique of slavery through a "benevolent" and "humanitarian" use of colonial science to improve the diet of their slaves in years of famine. As an effort that radically transformed the island landscapes of the Caribbean, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, the mission for the breadfruit tree and its successful transplantation (with many other cultivars) was a global ecological event. Bligh's second and successful voyage on the HMS *Providence* from Tahiti to Timor, St Helena, St Vincent, Jamaica, Grand Caymans and eventually back to England's Kew Botanical Gardens (1793) brought these diverse peoples and their local ecologies into a complex and often contested material and metaphysical exchange of roots, seeds, culture, and soil.³

3. Following the lead of scholars who seek to historicize the complex process of globalization, this paper engages in what Felicity Nussbaum terms "critical global studies" to explore the ways in which the eighteenth-century commodification of nature contributed to world modernity.⁴ While globalization studies tends to configure history through the geographic movement of human agents and capital, my intention here is to deepen the temporal focus and destabilize the presumed anthropocentric subject of history by turning to the migration of plants. This is not to substitute the lives of humans with their vegetal cohorts but to engage the two in relation and to pinpoint those moments when human transplantation and revolution were circumscribed and deflected by botanical metaphors and substitutes. This dual focus requires attentiveness to naturalizing discourses about the cultivation and ingestion of plant foods that deflect the social politics of the consumption of nature. While Fernando Ortiz and Sidney Mintz's work on tobacco and sugar have provided exceptional models for sustained inquiry into the relation between nature, plantation agriculture, and modernity, it seems more difficult to locate the nexus of power and consumption when speaking of arboriculture. Trees tend to become recognized as political objects only when we are faced with their removal, eradication, or their displacement of a prior species.⁵ Generally speaking, trees are often perceived as metaphors for genealogy, roots, and familial branches rather than reflecting the social hierarchies and agents of colonialism. This helps explain why, as a food tree, the breadfruit continues to be associated with

feminized Pacific “Bounty.” In popular narratives of the *Bounty* mutiny, the indigenous breadfruit tree is displaced (thrown overboard) to establish a patriarchal genealogy of white settler independence from Great Britain in the Pacific. As an enduring symbol of Fletcher Christian’s bloodless revolution against William Bligh, the transfer of the breadfruit tree is rarely connected with African colonization and Caribbean slavery. Yet the history of its transplantation is nevertheless constitutive of this entangled relationship between culture, cultivation and, as Raymond Williams has demonstrated, colony.⁶

4. This story of “Bounty” and “Providence” suggests that those objects that seem the most rooted in natural, national, or cultivated soil are often already traveling in complex global circuits. In fact, plants and trees are far from vegetative; at once rooted and routed, they are vital to the literal and economic transits of consumption. Due to a complex network of regional trade blocs buttressed by transnational corporations and IMF and World Bank lending policies, it may very well be that the tropical fruit that has crossed the globe for consumption in the northern metropole is a sign of prior and ongoing colonization. As Jamaica Kincaid reminds us of botanical exchange, “perhaps every good thing that stands before us comes at a great cost to someone else.”⁷ This is particularly evident in tropical products from former European colonies. For instance, Cynthia Enloe has shown that the banana has a history that is gendered and routed in colonial struggles over national and natural sovereignty. That a fruit so domesticated and naturalized in the North American kitchen is the product of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the subjugation of South American landscapes and laborers, as Enloe demonstrates, helps us recognize that those very objects of consumption that seem so peripheral to human history have in fact helped to constitute its very existence.⁸
5. In this contemporary era of globalization, we tend to overlook the ways in which animals, plants, roots, and even soils have long been migratory figures, participatory objects in a type of globality that precedes human existence on this planet. Since many theorists of modernity have pointed to the technologies that create our contemporary sense of space-time compression, I’d like to turn to an earlier era of globalization to demonstrate how some elements of colonial natural history conflated, compressed, and homogenized the landscapes of the island tropics.⁹ The remarkable exchange of plants and trees between the British-controlled tropics in the eighteenth century led to a new understanding of spatial relations and radical

changes to the human diet and global habits of consumption. That the most vital spaces of plant incubation, transport, and acclimatization consisted of a series of tropical islands spaced across the globe's equatorial belt rather than the northern temperate cities was not coincidental. In the contained island spaces of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, forced migration and the transplantation of both peoples and plants radically changed the material and cultural ecology in ways that were rendered more visible than in their continental counterparts. This in turn suggests peripheral origins for modernity and the globalization process. While the directives for the transplantation of peoples and plants arose from the metropolises of the north, the impact was exacted on the global south, conceived as climactically similar tropical island colonies across the world. Since our perceptions of the natural environment are vital to "rooting" ourselves in the soil, the deep history of biotic exchange suggests a far more complicated globalization of local place than has been acknowledged. Reading the tropical island as synecdoche of the planet, this essay explores the *longue duree* of the globalization process.

6. Plants and trees provide organic metaphors for civilization, a means of naturalizing the nation and/or ethnicity through the grammar of "roots" and genealogical "branches." While arboreal discourses have been tied to ethnic nationalism, they have been less visibly linked to the expansion of the British empire.¹⁰ Yet colonists were well aware of the powerful historical and psychological affects of altering new landscapes through the process of transplantation. For instance, amidst the islands of plantation slavery, one traveler observed of the St Vincent Botanical Garden: "Trees and fruits and flowers are humanizing things [...] calling forth only the peaceful energies of the intellect, and attaching mankind to the soil on which they have both grown together: a virtue much wanted in the colonies of America."¹¹ During the migratory heights of the late eighteenth-century, British discourse deflected the often-violent process of uprooting peoples and plants through botanical metaphors for the "transplantation" of slaves, prisoners, and biota. At the same time, the rapid rise of the nation-state constructed an ethnic nationalism that validated the stability of genealogical roots, ostensibly positioning diasporic Europeans in the tropical colonies as rootless, often seen as culturally and racially degenerating in proportion to their distance from their northern motherlands.¹²
7. Yet trees, particularly food trees, were integral to naturalizing the presence of white settlers, colonizers and

explorers outside of Europe. While much has been written about James Cook and William Bligh's multiple voyages to the Pacific (separately, and together on the HMS *Resolution*), few have noted that both men carved their names and the date into tree trunks in Adventure Bay (Tasmania), a symbolic act like "planting" a flag but tied closer to genealogy and metaphysical roots. Both men also relied on trees to globalize Pacific Island landscapes by introducing orange, lemon, quince, fig, apple, pomegranate, guava, and shaddock on their journeys. Associating arboriculture with a hierarchy of social cultivation, both complained that the Tahitians were not ecstatic over their arboreal "improvements." Bligh was offended that the Tahitians found some of his imported trees to be "good for nothing" and grumbled of the islanders' "indolence." Grafting the spatial hierarchies of the Caribbean plantation (which he was well acquainted with as a merchant) onto the Tahitian context, he complained, "no country could produce a greater plenty of ground provisions yet these lazy wretches cultivate scarce a yam or potatoe [sic]."¹³ "Ground provisions" refers to the barely arable land allotted to plantation slaves for food cultivation, particularly root tubers like yams and (sweet) potatoes. Far from idealizing Tahiti as the Nouvelle Cythere, Bligh's comments about his transplantations to Tahiti suggest an intertropical commodification (and homogenization) of labor and land.

8. The era of the breadfruit's transplantation was marked by a number of revolutions in agriculture (the sugar revolution), ideology (the humanitarian revolution), and anticolonialism (the American and Haitian revolutions).¹⁴ By and large, breadfruit historiography has interpreted the decision to transplant the tree as a part of the humanitarian revolution (to save the slaves), while Fletcher's resistance to Bligh has been interpreted as an anticolonial revolution against British rule in the Pacific. In fact, film versions of the mutiny repeatedly cast an Australian Christian against a tyrannical British Bligh with the alluring backdrop of the feminized tropics and copious dusky maidens. The *Bounty* mutiny thus validates British patriarchal genealogy in the Pacific, aligning the breadfruit with white settler nationalism and its extensive diasporic "seeds," including the mutineers' progeny with local women. Fashioning a bloodless (and thus palatable) revolution against British monopoly of the region, these American and Australian diasporic seeds establish white masculine legitimacy in the Pacific through their claims to island women, thereby erasing prior forms of indigenous sovereignty and suppressing the historical account of the Tahitian women's revolt against the

mutineers at Pitcairn Island.¹⁵ The global implications of uprooting people and plants across the world are discarded for a lucrative adventure narrative that naturalize the emergence of a revolutionary white masculinity—symbolized by the aptly-named Christian’s break from the empire--and his pursuit of a fledgling settlement in the Pacific.

9. Since the *Bounty* mutiny narrative is excessively covered in the Pacific, I’d like to turn to its American counterpart to trace out the ways in which the story has been used to naturalize British men as the founding agents of settlement history. The breadfruit’s malleability to national and colonial discourses is most blatantly seen in a special bicentennial issue of the American journal *Nutrition Today*, which refers to Bligh as the “Johnny Appleseed of the Revolution Era” and his journey as “the greatest ever undertaken in the name of nutrition.” Describing the tree as one of “the brightest stars in the plant kingdom,” the author establishes a founding narrative of white masculine diaspora that links the culture and cultivation of the British Caribbean with the U.S., writing approvingly of this “seminal voyage” that succeeded in “cross-fertilizing the world with domestic plants.” Feminizing the land, nature, and the indigenous inhabitants of Tahiti, the article mystifies colonial relations, positioning Bligh’s voyage as “a fabulous nutrition cruise” and like cinematic narratives, blaming the *Bounty* mutiny on the “intoxicating Siren Song of the Isles of the South Pacific.”¹⁶ As with the Pacific narratives, British men stage history upon the feminized landscapes and receptive island women, and are naturalized by spreading their seed through the “bounty” of botanical and reproductive offspring.
10. Interestingly, the visual depiction of the breadfruit transplantation in this journal offers a different interpretation of the impact of the reproduction of natural commodities and their human consumption. In a series designed to explore “Food in the Ascent of America,” the cover of *Nutrition Today* represents a Guiseppe Archimboldo-like painting of an eighteenth-century British sea captain, constructed primarily of the economic products of fruit trees. [Figure 1]



Figure 1: John Prezioso, The Great Nutrition Expedition

11. In a strange mixture of tropical and temperate crops, the legend to this John Prezioso painting explains that this Bligh-like figure consists of northern fruits like the apple and peach (his eyelid and upper lip), as well as equatorial tree products such as the coconut, banana, mango, nutmeg, and the breadfruit (his forehead, eyebrow, upper cheeks, buttons, and jowls). Behind this colonial figure awaits the technology of transfer, a European ship. The posture of this excessively naturalized colonist replicates a Crusoe-esque “monarch-of-all-I-survey” with the important difference that the economic crops are removed from the landscape and are embedded in his face. This is a literal representation of uprooted, anthropomorphized nature, reducing food plants to their detachable post-harvest pieces, where bite-size slices of lemons, limes, peaches, and apples symbolize the dominance of European economic and bodily consumption. The physical prominence of tobacco (his hat) suggests this image has less to do with the aphorism “we are what we eat,” but rather “we are what we trade (and consume).” Like the author of the article, the artist naturalizes the British empire as the patriarchal root of world modernity, the causal agent of historical bounty and its consumption. The painting cannot emphasize the mode of production because the plants are, after all, natural rather than man-made products. Thus the trader becomes a rather puffy-faced figure of consumption, expressing his modern identity through the

constitutive parts of natural commodities around the globe. This image of natural (yet rootless) colonialism links Caribbean history with U.S. nationalism in a bicentennial tribute to “the sea captains [...] who literally planted the seeds of modern nutrition all over the globe.”¹⁷

12. Edouard Glissant has demonstrated the ways in which the metaphysics of the genealogical tree reflect atavistic origins, a “totalitarian drive of a single, unique root—rather than around a fundamental relationship with the Other.” In fact, claims to Bligh’s “paternity” of the breadfruit in the Caribbean often naturalize colonial roots. This special issue of *Nutrition Today* not only positions white masculinity as an Atlantic progenitor, but sustains this claim by representing of one of the progeny of Bligh’s original breadfruit trees in the St Vincent Botanical Garden, ceremoniously marked with a plaque. This urge to establish a natural/national colonial root in the Caribbean has led even encyclopedic sources such as *The New Oxford Book of Food Plants* to mistakenly identify Bligh as the progenitor of Jamaica’s national fruit, the akee, even though it was well documented that it had been already transplanted by a slave ship.¹⁸ Bligh has also been erroneously attributed with introducing the Tahitian and Bourbon canes to the British West Indies and thus revolutionizing the sugar industry, but the French had transplanted the canes well before his arrival.¹⁹
13. While the colonial state has a vested interest in naturalizing the imperial archive, Douglas Hall has demonstrated that the origins of most plant transfers are continually contested and involve undocumented indigenous, creole and African human agents. Like the Tahitians who created and cultivated Bligh’s botanical bounty (and accompanied him on the *Providence*), the sailors, servants, and gardeners who assisted with the tending of the plants for both journeys, and the slaves who transferred and acclimated many of the plants to the Caribbean landscape, these narratives are difficult to excavate in a historiographical model that emulates only one arboreal or cultural root. Similar to the linear claims of genealogical origin critiqued by Glissant, these narratives of Bligh’s transplanted “root” uphold a monolingual, monocultural, and monocrop origin for Caribbean history. In these mistaken cases of origin, “the root is unique, a stock, taking all upon itself and killing all around it,” as Glissant suggests. It denies the participation of other human agents and, I would add, makes gendered claims to power.²⁰ According to the online *OED*, the term “root” suggests an origin, the founder of a familial lineage, a source of sustenance, and a foundation. Although Bligh’s contribution to the region upholds these meanings, in the Pacific the term also

signifies the penis, highlighting the ways in which the “seminal” roots of diaspora take a patriarchal root through colonial transplantation, not to mention the patronymic claims on its (creole) descendents.

14. To understand the complexity of the British decision to transfer thousands of food trees from one tropical island to another, we might start by examining this story of “Bounty” by locating it in a larger environmental revolution in which the transplantation of New World food crops such as maize, potatoes, pumpkin, peanuts, chili peppers, and tomatoes had radically altered the landscapes and diets of the world. As Alfred Crosby has detailed, between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, the populations of parts of Europe, Africa and East Asia doubled, in a large part due to the widening availability of American food staples.²¹ While this gestures to a *longue duree* in which the *Bounty* and *Providence* story play a part, it also complicates Fernand Braudel’s polarization between revolutionary social events and natural history, so that cataclysmic change might also arise from environmental agents.²² David Arnold has pointed out that the concept of the *longue duree*--the European ability to conceptualize a global panorama of diverse ecological and social environments-- was made possible through the colonial process, particularly in the Caribbean.²³ The colonization of the tropics caused a radical shift in European epistemology, facilitating a break from a classical Greek framework in a context where it was no longer possible to deny the spherical contours of the globe or to uphold the notion that human habitation was not possible in the so-called Torrid Zones.²⁴ With the rise of sixteenth-century naturalists in the Caribbean, the relationship between ethnography and natural science was forged, and was deeply entangled with notions of spatial difference and colonial violence. The flora, fauna and humans that were captured and transported lifeless to European metropolises for analysis and display attest to the epistemic violence of the production of natural knowledge and a new understanding of globality. While globalization studies is based on the mobility of information, technology, capital, and peoples, these alternative seeds of dispersal have largely been overlooked. Perhaps because they seem so natural and rooted, the diaspora of plants has been obscured, despite the fact that their medicinal, agricultural, and economic uses have been crucial to the process of modernity itself.
15. As industrialization segregated rural and tropical agricultural production from the cosmopolitics of the northern

metropole, the natural world was increasingly objectified in a way that cloaked the role of plants as politicized objects of national and colonial power. The mania for eighteenth-century plant collection has been likened to the current pillage of indigenous knowledge by transnational corporations, suggesting a long history of a global economy of nature.²⁵ This new global theater of nature, as Donald Worster reminds us, was not only a repository of benevolence and *Bounty*, ordained by divine *Providence*, to invoke the names of Bligh's ships. The globalization of nature was effected by a system of natural "oeconomy," a word derived from the Greek term for household that reflected a new grammar of plant management. Importantly, Worster demonstrates that the new language of Linnaean ecology echoed the British industrialists. Thus to Carolus Linnaeus and his followers, nature was associated with a "mechanistic image of detachable and replaceable parts" coordinated by a human "artisan." This artisan was not simply a human gardener but increasingly a political state.²⁶

16. The new histories of nature, as Janet Browne has demonstrated, drew their language from the discourse of empire, inscribing biotic "colonists" and natural "kingdoms" that were increasingly regulated by a system of natural "law." Just as the Caribbean plant collection sustained the British Museum, the colonial trade in nature enabled Linnaeus' standardization of plant nomenclature, a crucial development that we might locate as an index of a new understanding of a globalized economy. Thus the 14,000 plants and animals that Linnaeus catalogued and named reflect an Enlightenment taxonomy of nature under imperial dominion.²⁷ In the words of Mary Louise Pratt, this linguistic and conceptual homogenization of nature "created a new kind of Eurocentered planetary consciousness." A new global science emerged that contributed to the erasure of indigenous knowledges while erecting a hierarchy of racial species and gendered difference. Linnaeus' scientific grammar represents an attempt to categorize a natural globality that was reiterated every time an exotic plant or species was brought to Europe.²⁸
17. By the mid-eighteenth century, plant collecting was constitutive of the science of empire; colonists provided European botanical gardens with the materials to display the plants of the world, a microcosm of the globe contained in the greenhouses of European architecture. By the end of Joseph Banks' tenure at the Kew Botanical Gardens (1821), he had personally supervised the introduction of over 7,000 new food and economic plants.²⁹ Banks coordinated a complex global network of plant collectors who often functioned as spies,

stealing cultivation techniques and technologies from their trading competitors. His connections to the West Indian plantation owners generated the first *Bounty* voyage in 1789 and Bligh's subsequent return to Tahiti in 1791 on the *Providence*.³⁰ While these components of the story are well known, of the thousands of pages published about the *Bounty* only David Mackay seems to have raised a question about the "collective national madness" that led the British to send their naval vessels 30,000 miles around the globe on two separate occasions to supply the West Indian sugar plantations with breadfruit.³¹ As I'll explain, this decision had less to do with nationalist science and more an effort to deflect the anxieties of consumption in a new era of globalization.

18. Every scholarly account of the *Bounty* voyage explains the dire need for Tahitian breadfruit to "feed the slaves" during a food crisis caused by the trade embargo to the West Indies during the American Revolution. Generally they do not question the assumption of benevolence and imperial bounty, nor do they examine the Caribbean plantation system that initiated the voyage. Instead scholars have largely repeated what the planter-historian and pro-slavery lobbyist Bryan Edwards wrote of Joseph Banks in 1794, after Bligh had transferred the breadfruit to St Vincent and Jamaica:

Among all the labors of life, if there is one pursuit more replete than any other with *benevolence*, more likely to add comforts to existing people, and even to augment their numbers by augmenting their means of subsistence, it is that of spreading abroad the *bounties of creation* by transplanting from one part of the globe to another such natural productions as are likely to prove beneficial to the interests of *humanity*.³²

19. In Edwards' contortion, sustaining a brutal slave economy can be likened to benevolence—demonstrating that one can displace the violence against human beings by appealing to a global sense of those natural and thus god-given "bounties of creation." In fact, Edwards' *History of the British West Indies* (1793) has been the primary source from which historians have derived their assumptions about the region's need for breadfruit. In that work, Edwards includes a testimony from the Jamaican Assembly that had documented human mortality in the British Caribbean attributed to drought, hurricanes, and a subsistence crisis due to a lack of imports from North America. The Assembly concluded that between 1780-87, 15,000 slaves had perished from "famine or of

diseases contracted by scanty and unwholesome diet.” Yet Caribbean scholars have demonstrated that these claims were exaggerated, that there was a rigorous illegal trade that kept the planters supplied, and that the slaves were not dependent upon imported food because many were compelled to grow supplies in their provision grounds. Ultimately scholars who have examined the evidence suspect that the planters were shifting the blame for “chronic slave mortality to other sources.”³³

20. While certainly hurricanes and decreased trade impacted the British plantocracy, this does not explain the clamoring for breadfruit, and we have to be cautious about relying upon the Jamaican Assembly, a group of absentee plantation owners, as representatives of slave conditions. The environmental and social transformation of the Caribbean sugar islands is instructive here—by the time the English had wrested Jamaica from the Spanish in the seventeenth century, the majority of its indigenous occupants had been either eradicated or displaced, while the island’s flora and fauna had been radically transformed with the introduction of sugar cane, plantains and bananas, coffee, indigo, and other crops from African trade routes. Few of the remaining indigenous plants were utilized in an expanding external market economy with the exception of small plots of cassava, sweet potato, and the pimento. As sugar cane is one of the most demanding crops in terms of its consumption of labor and soil, even in the more diverse ecologies such as Jamaica, it consumed most of the island’s resources.
21. As a whole, the Caribbean was remarkable for its cultivation of transplanted crops with transplanted labor, suggesting a creolization of the world’s plants and peoples well before any other place on earth. By extension, this positions the region at the advent of modernity and globalization. By the mid-eighteenth century, products gained from West Indian slave labor represented a quarter of imports to Great Britain and its planters proved to be the empire’s most important consumers of British products.³⁴ As many scholars have shown, the modernization and eventual industrialization of Great Britain was constituted by its peripheries—namely these Caribbean sugar colonies. This is a story of the Caribbean’s globalization, but it’s all the more remarkable for the planter’s resistance to becoming local to the tropical environment. Far from embracing the plant diversity of the tropics, wealthy European planters homogenized the landscape in a process of early environmental globalization. They perceived a crisis in the food supply because of their own inability to adapt their consumption practices to the ecology of the local landscape.

Their construction of sugar monoculture contributed to their dependence on imported food items that ranged from pickled beef and pork, onions, potatoes, corn, flour, and salt cod. From Havana they obtained their cattle and horses, and from across the Atlantic they imported iron tools for plantation agriculture as well as their supplies of wool, leather, glassware, paints, paper and tobacco.³⁵ As such, this particular class consumed and produced in British parochial terms rather than acclimating to the Caribbean's diverse social and environmental spaces.

22. I suggest that the *Bounty* story and this mania for breadfruit is the result of the planters' failure to accept the globalization of the Caribbean. After Cook's voyages around the globe, the planters were aware, more than ever, of the earth's boundedness, replicated in miniature in their island plantations. Locating the antipodes, the 'opposite feet' of the earth, in the Pacific thus led to a new understanding of the world's limits as well as its interconnection through the trade of peoples, plants, and other commodities. As Richard Grove has pointed out, botanical experiments in island spaces led to the first European understandings of global climate change in which island ecologies became vital to registering world events. The homogenization of the landscapes of the Caribbean sugar islands, coupled with the recognition of limited additional global territory, catalyzed an unprecedented demand for local 'improvements' with imported plants, of which the *Bounty* journey was only a small part.
23. In fact, well before the trade embargo and subsistence crisis, one of the members of the Assembly had already requested the breadfruit to be transported to the Caribbean (1772).³⁶ Two years later, the planter-historian Edward Long published his *History of Jamaica* (1774), which included an extended critique of the island's dependence on external trade, arguing that there was no need to import food, wood, cattle, horses, sheep, corn, and countless other items when the island could easily sustain itself by diversifying its economy and labor force by importing more white laborers.³⁷ To facilitate the process, bounties were offered for the import of economic food plants. Banks' Royal Society offered prize awards and gold medals for anyone who could improve the plant economy in the West Indies by importing consumable items such as olives, opium, cinnamon, nutmeg, indigo, safflower, sesame, vanilla, cloves, peppercorn and mango.³⁸ Ten years later the breadfruit was added to a list of well over 30 plants.
24. As Long acknowledged, Caribbean planters had no interest in diversifying their environment or economy when sugar was so lucrative. Lowell Ragatz has argued that having stacked the

British Parliament with their interests, the Jamaican Assembly had created a trade war in the Atlantic to ensure that they had no competition from other sugar colonies, effectively destroying their own regional trade networks. For example, they attempted to ensure that Jamaican small-holders growing coffee would pay five times its value in taxes to continue the colony's dependence on imported tea.³⁹ While the bounty on plants such as nutmeg, cinnamon and other spices was successful in some parts of the British Caribbean, Long was correct to argue that the reason these economic plants were not adopted was that most planters had a "prejudice" in favor of the European staples of the temperate zone, and "despised" their own local productions.⁴⁰

25. By the time Bligh arrived with the breadfruit in 1793, the higher yielding "Noble" Bourbon and Tahitian sugar canes had replaced the Creole cane throughout the region. As Ragatz has demonstrated, there was little reason to invest in arboriculture or crop diversity when Bourbon cane sugar sold for twice the value of the land itself.⁴¹ Ironically, during a period that scholars locate as vital to the creolization process, sugar "monoculture"—defined as an agricultural and colonial policy—expanded its structural homogenization of the cultural and environmental landscape. The supplanting of the Creole canes for Noble Pacific varieties ensured that the smaller economic and subsistence crops would never make a substantial contribution to external colonial trade. This was precisely the era Kamau Brathwaite pinpoints as a colonial failure in the Jamaican creolization process. Planters like Long and Edwards argued for economic product diversity, but preferred the island's colonial submission to Britain over the terrifyingly creative propensities of local interculturalization, including food consumption, language cross-fertilization, and "race-mixing." As Brathwaite has shown, this same planter class was already creolized by consuming local foods and customs, but preferred to uphold what he terms a "bastard metropolitanism," a pun on socially illegitimate reproduction, to altering their political or economic strategies.⁴²
26. The plantation slaves who cultivated indigenous and African staples in their provision grounds during their few precious moments away from the cane fields had little choice but to be imbricated in a globalization process. European planters cultivated African linguistic diversity in the fields, using globalization as a tool to establish mutual unintelligibility to reduce slave insurrection. Yet Caribbean planters were largely dependent upon the African and indigenous crops of the provision grounds, which were a vital component of the

islands' internal economies and were integral to the region's transition to emancipation and independence. Fearing the process of tropical acclimatization associated with moral and cultural decay, the planters consumed European staples, perhaps to sustain a myth that they had not left temperate shores. Plants and peoples, in the common thought of the day, were "naturally" associated with climactic zones—this seemed to justify why Africans might work in tropical agriculture while Europeans simply expired. In a visit to the Caribbean, James Lind explained (1768):

Men who thus exchange their nature for a distant climate [are] somewhat analogous to that of plants, removed into a foreign soil [...]since thus transplanted, some change and alteration must happen to the constitutions of both. Some climates are healthy and salutary to the European constitutions, as some soils are favourable to the production of European plants. But the countries beyond the limits of Europe [...] are very unhealthy, and the climate often proves fatal to them.⁴³

27. Lind's ideas on the natural fixity of peoples and climates and the deadliness of the very places that were sustaining European economies are remarkable for their resistance to the globalization process. Like the planters who insisted they could not survive without imported food, it suggests that one might be a participant and agent of globalization but retain a parochial vision for one's personal consumption. This also helps to explain why, of all of his orchestrations to transfer plants around the globe, Joseph Banks was primarily moving plants from one tropical region to another. The only plants he imported into England were contained behind the walls of the Kew Botanical Gardens and were rarely allowed to hybridize the landscape.⁴⁴
28. I'd like to turn to the breadfruit itself to suggest that the mania for this tree reflected a panic on the part of Caribbean sugar planters about indigenous, maroon, and slave insurrection. This is an entirely different kind of revolution than the popular concern with Christian's break from Bligh. The Jamaican planters insisted that the breadfruit would be a vital complement to the slave diet and had no intention of eating it themselves.⁴⁵ But as the slaves were subsisting on a diet of cassava, yam, taro, plantains and bananas, supplemented occasionally by imported salt fish and meats, the last thing they needed was another starch food. The planters also argued that the breadfruit would weather the seasonal hurricanes of the

Caribbean, but the tree is not impervious to strong winds, as Pacific Islanders well know, and it does not yield at the higher frequency of the root crops and plantain. In fact, if the planters felt arboriculture was the answer to hurricane damage, they might have turned to the akee, which was already naturalized as a staple food of transplanted Africans. The akee's rapid acclimatization--as well as its high nutrition and production yield--suggest a far better subsistence staple without any of the steep transportation costs of Bligh's (two) global circumnavigations. Or planters might have turned to other arboreal foods that were easily available. In a letter dated before the *Bounty*'s launch, Banks surmised that a species resembling the breadfruit, the Jack (*sitodium cauliflorum*), "possibly equals the bread fruit of the South Sea Islands." It was already growing in Jamaica as the bounty of a captured French ship.⁴⁶

29. Scholars have argued that the breadfruit tree was desired because it had received glowing reports from Pacific voyagers such as William Dampier, George Anson, and James Cook, but this is also a myth. While the breadfruit exists all over the Pacific Islands, it became inextricably linked to Tahiti. Yet none of the voyagers actually returned with glowing reports of the tree or its fruit. Instead, Pacific travelers and Caribbean planters reported that the plantain was far superior. Dampier gave the fruit its association with bread, describing it as "big as a penny loaf (when wheat is at 5 shillings a bushel)" with a "sweet and pleasant taste" when it is "baked in an oven" but the breadfruit only factors in a brief paragraph while the next four pages he raves about the plantain, which he calls "the king of all fruit." Anson simply remarked that the breadfruit, when roasted, tasted like "an artichoke's bottom" and referred the reader to Dampier's account. Cook adds that it is "white and resembles new bread" and that it has a "sweetish insipid taste." Far from romanticizing Tahiti, he named the island group after the rationalist Royal Society and theorized that the island's "superior fertility" caused "indolence" and recommended some industrious "improvement" to local agriculture. Like sugar, the most reiterated comment about breadfruit was its whiteness and purity. In fact, Cook reported that consumption of breadfruit was thought to lighten the color of the skin.⁴⁷
30. The breadfruit was becoming associated with whiteness and might be linked to the revolution in agricultural technologies in the mid-eighteenth century when the increasing availability of wheat meant that even the poorest classes of Europe were able to afford white bread. Wheat, according to Braudel, is one of those crucial "plants of civilization" and the inability to obtain

one's daily bread caused multiple riots in eighteenth-century Europe, most notably the French Revolution.⁴⁸ The material and symbolic link between peasant labor, daily bread, and a cycle of revolt is one of the most compelling reasons why the breadfruit gained such symbolic significance to the Caribbean planters, despite the rather lukewarm testimony about the tree from Pacific travelers.

31. Of the eighteenth-century eyewitness reports in English, it seems that only Banks produced an idyllic image of the breadfruit and linked this to an absence of material labor. Of the Tahitians he visited in 1769 he wrote, "They are exempt from the curse of our forefathers; scarcely can it be said that they earn their bread with the sweat of their brow when their chiefest sustenance, breadfruit, is procured with no more trouble than climbing a tree and pulling it down."⁴⁹ Of course, the procurement is far more complicated. The breadfruit is only edible when cooked; it is a domesticated cultivar and food product rather than the sign of purity and natural providence. Banks' invocation of the Biblical curse on human labor suggests the most ironic link between the presumed paradise of Tahiti and the slave plantation complex of the Caribbean. Of this paradox Greg Dening has written that the breadfruit, that "very symbol of a free and unencumbered life," was transported from "the island of freedom, Tahiti," to "the islands of bondage."⁵⁰ The planters' desire to deflect their accountability for slave mortality and revolt through a grandiose scheme to draw breadfruit from the farthest reaches of empire certainly informed their lobbies for the Tahitian breadfruit, despite the fact that they had ample local alternatives.
32. The association of Tahiti with a "pre-civilized" and thus "natural" freedom and the Caribbean slave islands as the brutal, "unnatural" excesses of western capitalist consumption brought these two island regions into a complex relationship of ideological and material exchange. The planters and colonials who lobbied for this particular breadfruit—despite the hundreds of other varieties of the tree throughout Asia and the Pacific--cloaked their desire for a "natural" cultural infusion into the slave states under the political guise of scientific colonial policy. This helps explain why the planters were determined to bring this specific Tahitian variety of the breadfruit to their slave plantations at great expense, even though they might have obtained it from countless other sources, some of them local. As early as 1780, Banks' Royal Society was informed that one of their colleagues was cultivating breadfruit in the botanical gardens of Sri Lanka and

India, but no attempt was made to draw from these closer sources.⁵¹ In February of 1787, six months before the *Bounty* began its journey, Banks was informed that breadfruit had already been introduced to the Caribbean by the French; a year later they also shipped the Tahitian variety to Saint Domingue on a slave ship.⁵² Although some have suggested that intense national competition spurred the British to obtain their own trees, there is a tradition of British and French botanical exchange in the Caribbean, despite political rivalries.⁵³ By the time Bligh introduced the Tahitian breadfruit to his first port of call, St Vincent (1793), the local gardener there had already obtained the tree from French sources.⁵⁴ Of Bligh's second stop, Jamaica, Douglas Hall has shown that the breadfruit had been introduced nearly two years earlier.⁵⁵ To trace the "root" of the breadfruit in the Caribbean is thus to uncover a fractured, rhizomatic genealogy of patriarchal and imperial interests. Conflating natural with nationalist history, most English sources erroneously attribute Dampier as the breadfruit's western discoverer, ignoring the Spanish account of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros almost two centuries earlier. While the plaque at the St Vincent Botanical Garden claims their breadfruit as one of Bligh's direct descendants, "rooting" British colonialism in the very nature of the soil, most anglophone sources neglect to acknowledge that the tree was probably introduced to the region-- centuries before Bligh was born--by the Portuguese.⁵⁶

33. Through a rich symbolism that invokes that staple of the European diet, bread, the breadfruit might be seen as an eighteenth-century symbol of both revolt and liberty in the wake of multiple revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic. It was also seen as a panacea for a Caribbean plantation context in which slave, maroon, and indigenous insurrections and revolts in St Vincent and Jamaica were creating considerable anxiety for British planters. Interestingly, the two islands that were characterized by ongoing revolt were repeatedly solicited as the primary sites of the royal botanical gardens, an effort to domesticate and order the landscape through vegetation when human transplants were fomenting revolution. In 1772, when St Vincentian planters first started lobbying Joseph Banks for the breadfruit, the British militia was engaged in lengthy battle with the island's Caribs. While indigenous revolt characterized St Vincent in these decades, across the Atlantic a humanitarian abolitionist revolution was gaining ground, catalyzed by the James Somerset Case (1772), which set a precedent for the illegality of slavery in England. By 1776, months after one of the largest slave revolts recorded in Jamaica, the Royal Society

offered a bounty of 50 pounds sterling to anyone who would transfer the breadfruit to the West Indies. 1776 was the year in which the first trade embargos limited the food supply in the British Caribbean, and planters wrote fearfully that if they were not able to supply food, the slaves would “cut their throats.”⁵⁷ It’s widely documented that of all the plantation Americas, Jamaica experienced the most extensive slave revolts, and planters at the time acknowledged that the American war of independence had influenced the slaves’ attempt to fight for their own liberty. An extensive militia had to be imported and the ports were closed. In fact the decision to close the ports and import a large militia drained more food resources than the trade embargo.⁵⁸ Colonists such as Edward Long renewed their appeals to end the practice of absentee plantership by increasing the white presence on Jamaica. As these appeals were thought to have failed, another white presence was imported, the breadfruit, a potent symbol of consuming freedom without its associated violence and revolution.⁵⁹

34. The decision to import breadfruit to St Vincent and Jamaica, while a global event that connected and transformed the Caribbean and Pacific, was also marked by resistance to the process of local revolution in environmental and social structures. By seeking to maintain the plantation hierarchy by importing one tree for the diet of slaves, Caribbean planters sought to delay the swelling tide of revolution that would transform Saint Domingue in the next few years. Like the Royal Society of Science and Arts of Cap François on the eve the Haitian revolution, colonists mistakenly felt they could solve the “political equation of the revolution [...] with rational, scientific inquiry.”⁶⁰ This use of science also bolstered European resistance to tropical creolization. When the trees arrived in Jamaica in 1793, the local paper reported almost gleefully that “in less than 20 years, the chief article of sustenance for our negroes will be entirely changed—plantains, yams, cocos, and cassava will be cultivated only as a subsidiary, and be used merely for change; while the breadfruit...will afford...the choicest and most wholesome food.”⁶¹ Clearly the breadfruit, that symbol of freedom from hunger, revolt, and violence, was perceived as vital to the replacement of a list of foods which are either indigenous to the Caribbean or derived from African trade routes. Like the tropical plant trade, the breadfruit transfer was less about an acceptance of creolizing propensities of globalization than its displacement *outside* European orbits.
35. Jack Goody has pointed out that the hierarchies between

social groups are visible in the ways in which food products are circulated and consumed. Patterns of consumption vary radically between the rich and the poor; in this eighteenth-century Caribbean context, breadfruit was imported at great expense so that wealthy Europeans might sustain their profits from luxury foods like sugar. But as the Jamaican newspaper suggests, the quest for the breadfruit, that Tahitian tree of liberty, was also an attempt to change rather than supplement the diet of the slaves. On the one hand, the transplantation of breadfruit represented the planters' attempt to adopt a "humanitarian" defense against the growing tide of abolitionist and slave revolt. In an age of revolution, to provide bread (and "bread kind") must have seemed an antidote to bloodshed and violent regime change. This was a point not to be missed by the coordinator of the transplantation, Sir Joseph Banks. In a letter written while the *Bounty* was being fitted for its initial journey, he summarized how the empire would benefit from new circuits of botanical exchange:

Ceres was deified for introducing wheat among a barbarous people. Surely, then, the natives of the two Great Continents, who, in the prosecution of this excellent work, will mutually receive from each other numerous products of the earth as valuable as wheat, will look up with veneration the monarch [...] & the minister who carried into execution, a plan [of such] benefits.

36. Like giving bread to the poor, Banks articulated this intertropical trade in terms of "exalted benevolence," an opportunity to facilitate exchange between the peoples of the global south that placed them in subservience to a deified colonial center of global power.⁶²
37. On the other hand, the Jamaican newspaper account reveals that the breadfruit transfer was also an attempt on the part of Caribbean planters to alter the food preferences of the slaves and by extension, the landscape and marketability of the provision grounds. The same years that planters lobbied for the breadfruit were also characterized by struggle and litigation over the internal provision economy which was increasingly controlled by slaves, particularly women. In islands where slaves grew the majority of their own sustenance, such as Jamaica and St Vincent, the planters were placed in a contradictory bind. By setting aside time and space for the slaves to cultivate staples such as yams, plantain, taro, and maize, the planters saved money in food imports and

discouraged runaways by providing an opportunity for slaves to cultivate soil and community. Yet they also inadvertently supported a vibrant internal market economy in which slaves provided the majority of the region's sustenance and gained significant amounts of currency, autonomy, and even freedom. By growing African and indigenous cultigens, the slave provision grounds and their internal markets contributed a vibrant, alternative economy to the monoculture of the plantocracy. Ira Berlin and Philip Morgan estimate that by the late eighteenth century, over 10,000 Jamaican slaves attended the Kingston market on a weekly basis. The success of the markets caused planters to complain that a fifth to a half of the currency in Jamaica and the Windward Islands was in slave hands. Miles beyond the Euclidean geometries of the plantation, Barry Higman has explained, slaves were able to cultivate alternative concepts of spatial order in their provision grounds.⁶³ It was here, Brathwaite explains, on that "sacred plot of land where slaves wd plot" an alternative revolution, a place that they would find "groundation," or a "root possession" of a plot of ground.⁶⁴

38. After nearly twenty years spent on the effort to transfer the Tahitian breadfruit to the Caribbean, the slaves refused to eat it. The planters made few arrangements to distribute the breadfruit or instruct locals in how to harvest, prepare, and cook the fruit. Alexander Anderson, the botanist at St Vincent, explained that the local population preferred the plantain. Etymologically, one breaks bread with a "companion," suggesting a level of intimacy and trust. Sharing a meal, like consuming the breadfruit, demands a reciprocal social contract. I'd like to think that the slaves of the Caribbean plantation complex recognized that this food contract was bought at the price of their own freedom. While we have few indications of their reasons for refusing the breadfruit, it's surely significant that it didn't begin to appear as a food staple until fifty years later, after emancipation.⁶⁵ While today it's an important staple, especially in poor and rural areas of the region, the breadfruit continues to be stigmatized as a "low" culture object in a region still marked by European colonial hierarchies of consumption and which continues to import many of its food staples from temperate metropolises.
39. Although we don't know the reasons for the slaves' refusal of the breadfruit, Austin Clarke's culinary memoir of the Caribbean gives some tantalizing clues. In his folk narrative of the story of the breadfruit, Clark describes Bligh as a trader who kidnapped African slaves on the *Bounty* and brought them to the Caribbean. Moreover, Clarke makes an important

narrative connection between the commodification of human lives and the aesthetics of colonial botany. He imagines that “whilst the slaves were being dragged on board the HMS *Bounty*,” Bligh sits “drawing pretty flowers of all the exotic plants surrounding him, that he find in Africa.”⁶⁶ Historically speaking, Bligh had no direct participation in the trade, but his uncle, Duncan Campbell (who helped commission the breadfruit journey), was a Jamaican plantation owner and had employed Bligh on multiple merchant ships in the Caribbean. Campbell was also deeply involved, with Joseph Banks, in transporting British convicts to the colonies of Australia. In fact Banks’ original plan for the breadfruit voyage was to drop off convicts in (the significantly-named) Botany Bay, and then proceed to Tahiti for the breadfruit. Campbell owned a series of politically untenable prison hulks on the Thames which he emptied by shipping his human chattel to the Pacific. Banks helped coordinate these early settlements, including the trade of women and plants to encourage white Australian domesticization.⁶⁷ The commodification and rationalist dispersal of plants and human convicts, slaves, the impoverished, women, and other unwilling participants in global transplantation is a rarely told narrative root of colonial “Bounty.” That the Caribbean planters might have suspected that their breadfruit bounty had less to do with benevolence and more about the violence of conflating human and plant exchange and commodification is not known. But in this image [Figure 2] taken from a guide to relocating breadfruit and other tropical plants, we might interpret the breadfruit cage as the artist’s recognition of the violence of commodification and the metaphysical and material substitution of human lives with plants.

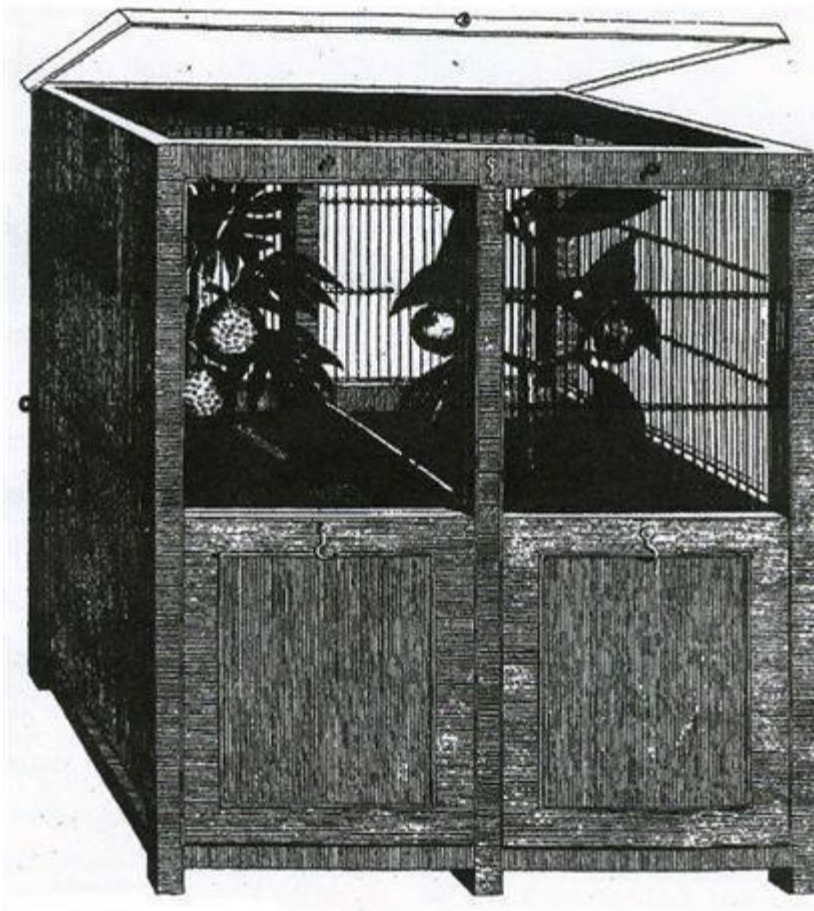


Figure 2: “A Wired Case for bringing over the Bread Fruit Tree”⁶⁸

40. To conclude, Clarke’s memoir foregrounds orality, food, women’s knowledge of nature and the science of cooking as important vehicles for memory in a colonial context in which the majority population’s history was denigrated and marginalized. In reconfiguring the source of history, he encodes far more of the violence and power involved in transferring peoples and plants than any other *Bounty* history in print. Of the few slaves who did consume the breadfruit, Clarke reports that “After (they) eat breadfruit, the gas is so distinctive, and is sensed so far and wide and long, that the slave-catcher and the Plantation manager use to love it and love slaves who eat breadfruit. The slaves could no longer hide!” In his rendition of creole folk knowledge, the consumption of breadfruit is inextricably linked to being captured by slavers, a violent process rendered possible due to the inability to

ingest—or digest--- the story of the fruit of liberty. But in this narrative about making something out of nothing, in a social context in which slaves “had to learn how to ‘cut and contrive,’ how to improvise,” the breadfruit was adopted into the space of the ground provisions, a place where other “breadkind” such as potatoes, eddoes, and pumpkin have long been established. The creative culinary dishes Clarke recounts such as breadfruit coucou, boiled breadfruit, steamed breadfruit, roasted breadfruit and pickled breadfruit have “put food in the belly of a lot ‘o poor people” in the Caribbean. In a remarkable recuperative gesture, Clarke concludes, “from a bad, disreputable journey, a segment of the Middle Passage, a good thing spring up: a green and large harvest of breadfruits.”⁶⁹

Endnotes

My thanks to The Center for Cultural Studies at UC Santa Cruz for their fellowship support of this research in 2004. I’d also like to thank Barry Higman and *JCCH*’s anonymous reader for their helpful feedback on this essay.

1 There are countless sources on the mutiny; the most recent and thorough is Caroline Alexander, *The Bounty: the True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003).

2 For details on the plant transfer see Dulcie Powell, *The Voyage of the Plant Nursery, H.M.S. Providence, 1791-1793* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1973).

3 For Bligh’s second circumnavigation of the globe the following sources have been especially helpful: Ida Lee, *Captain Bligh’s Second Voyage to the South Seas* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1920); Powell, *The Voyage of the Plant Nursery*; and Douglas Oliver, *Return to Tahiti: Bligh’s Second Breadfruit Voyage: Log of the H.M.S. Providence, 1791-1793* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1988).

4 Nussbaum, introduction to *The Global Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1-20.

5 Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham:

Duke University Press, 1995 [1940]); Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985). See Paul Sharrad on another south-south transfer, "Estranging an Icon: Eucalyptus and India," *Interventions* 9, no. 1 (2007) 31-48.

[6](#) See Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1975) entry on "culture" from the Latin *cultura* and *colere*, which led to the terms cultivate and *colonus*, colony, 87.

[7](#) Kincaid *My Garden (Book)* (FSG, 1999), 152. See also Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: The Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin Press, 2006); Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (South End Press, 1999).

[8](#) Enloe, *Bananas Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Los Angeles: The University of California, 1990), 127. See Bruce Robbins on the rise of "Commodity Histories," of which this breadfruit narrative is a part: *PMLA* 120, no. 2 (March 2005): 454-463.

[9](#) On time-space compression see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990).

[10](#) On arborescent metaphors see Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44 and Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Trans. Betsy Wing, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). On British identity and trees, see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 153-174.

[11](#) Henry Nelson Coleridge quoted in Richard A. Howard, "A History of the Botanic Garden of St Vincent," *Geographical Review* 44, no. 3 (1954): 388.

[12](#) On degeneration, see Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982); on the "unnatural" refugee, see Malkki.

[13](#) On the tree carving see Richard A. Howard, "Captain Bligh and the Breadfruit," *Scientific American* 188 (March 1953): 89.

On the transfer of trees, see Bligh, *Log of the H.M.S. Providence*, entries for February and April 1792. His critique is found in the entry for 5 June 1792.

[14](#) The discourse on revolution in this era is enormous. Some of the more relevant sources to this essay include Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (April 1985): 339-361 and the debate that followed; Barry Higman, "The Sugar Revolution" *Economic History Review* 53 (2000): 213-236.

[15](#) I refer to the series of films spurred by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall's *Bounty Trilogy*. For the record of the women's revolt, see Teehuteatuaonoa, "The Mutineers of the 'Bounty,'" *Scribner's Monthly* XXII, (May 1881): 54-63.

[16](#) Cortez F. Enloe, "De Ship da Hab de Bush," *Nutrition Today* 10, no. 3 (1975), 5, 7, 14, 13, 15.

[17](#) Editor, *Nutrition Today* 10, no. 3 (1975) 1.

[18](#) J.G. Vaughan and Catherine Geissler, *The New Oxford Book of Food Plants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 108. The confusion arises because akee was named for Bligh (*Bligh Sapida*) after his voyage on the *Providence*. For accurate accounts of plant transfers to Jamaica, see John Parry, "Plantation and Provision Ground: An Historical Sketch of the Introduction of Food Crops to Jamaica," *Revista de historia de America* XXXIX (1955): 1-20; and Douglas Hall, "Planters, Farmers and Gardeners in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *Elsa Goveia Lecture 1987* (Mona: Dept. of History, University of the West Indies, 1988).

[19](#) David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 433 explains that the French had introduced the Bourbon and Otaheitian canes to the Caribbean in 1782.

[20](#) Glissant, 14, 11.

[21](#) Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[22](#) Braudel *On History*, Trans. Sarah Matthews, (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[23](#) Arnold, *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (New York: Blackwell, 1996), 39-47.

[24](#) Arnold, 142-168. The Caribbean context is explored in more detail in the introduction to DeLoughrey, Gosson and Handley, eds., *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (University Press of Virginia, 2005).

[25](#) See Lucille Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), 10-11.

[26](#) Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 53, 39.

[27](#) On the museum, see Parry, 3; Janet Browne, *Secular Ark: Studies in the History of Biogeography* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983), 78-79, 16.

[28](#) Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 38.

[29](#) W.B. Turrill, *Royal Botanical Gardens: Kew, Past and Present* (London: Herbert Jenkins 1959), 24.

[30](#) See John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, The British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1988); David Mackay, *In the Wake of Cook: Exploration, Science, and Empire, 1780-1801* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985); and Alan Frost, *Sir Joseph Banks and the Transfer of Plants to and from the South Pacific 1786-1798* (Melbourne: Colony Press, 1993). See Kincaid's commentary on Banks and his colonial companions in *My Garden (Book)*.

[31](#) Mackay, "Banks, Bligh and Breadfruit," *New Zealand Journal of History* 8, no. 1 (April 1974): 61.

[32](#) My emphasis. Edwards, "Preface to the Second Edition," *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, Vol 1 (London, 1794), 13. *Eighteenth Century Collections*

Online.<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>.

[33](#) Qtd in Edwards, Vol 2, 397; Richard Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1976): 619.

[34](#) Brockway, 31.

[35](#) See Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica...In three volumes*, vol. 1 (London, 1774): 549. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>. See also Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978 [1971]), 71-76.

[36](#) Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Valentine Morris had requested the plants in 1772; see Mackay "Banks."

[37](#) By that point, 11 acts had been passed to increase the island's white population; see Long, 427. Sheridan, "Crisis" discusses Long's interpretation of these events.

[38](#) The Society of Arts' bounty on plants is appended to Long's *History of Jamaica*, 903-7; see also Lowell Joseph Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963) 72-3; and Howard, "A History of the Botanic Garden of St. Vincent," 381.

[39](#) Ragatz, 52, 42.

[40](#) Long, 413.

[41](#) Ragatz discusses the importance of these canes to the Caribbean, 76-79.

[42](#) Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica*, 307.

[43](#) Quoted in Arnold, *The Problem of Nature*, 154. See his discussion of the construction of tropicality, 141-168.

[44](#) See Mackay, "Banks."

[45](#) Hinton East described the breadfruit to Joseph Banks in 1784 as a “wholesome and pleasant food to our negroes, which wd have this great advantage over the plantain trees from whence our slaves derive a great part of their subsistence, that the former would be rais’d with infinitely less labour and not be subject to be destroyed by every smart gale of wind as the latter are.” Qtd in Mackay, “Banks, Bligh and Breadfruit,” 63. Mackay notes the exaggeration of breadfruit resistance to hurricanes.

[46](#) On the akee and other African transplantations, see Parry. Banks quoted in Neil Chambers, ed., *The Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection 1768-1820*. (Imperial College Press, London, 2000), 90.

[47](#) Dampier, *A New Voyage Round the World* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968 [1729]), 205, 214; Anson, *A Voyage round the World in the years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV*, Compiled by Richard Walter (12th edition, London: 1767), 310; Cook, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean undertaken by command of His Majesty for making discoveries in the northern hemisphere...*, Vol 2 (Perth: 1787), 65, 67, 155. On whiteness and purity, see Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.

[48](#) Braudel borrows the phrase from Gourou. See Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, Vol. 1 (University of California Press, 1993), 107.

[49](#) *The Endeavor Journal of Joseph Banks 1768-1771*, ed J.C. Beaglehole, Vol 1, (Sydney: Angus & Roberson, 1962), 341.

[50](#) Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power, and Theatre on the Bounty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11. See also Tim Fulford “Romanticism, the South Seas, and the Caribbean: the Fruits of Empire,” *European Romantic Review* 11, no. 4, 2000, 408-434.

[51](#) See Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Harvill Press, 1995), 363. In *The Miscellaneous Works of Hugh Boyd*, ed. Lawrence Dundas Campbell, Vol 2, (London, 1800), the author argues that breadfruit has grown in Ceylon “from time out of memory” and that the botanist Thunberg (having published an account in the *Transactions of the Royal Society*) proved its

existence there circa 1780, “a fact,” Boyd argues, “our government appears to have been unacquainted having sent Bligh two times to Tahiti,” 36.

[52](#) See Sir George Yonge’s letter to Banks, which links their success to a national “vivacity” the British lack, Mackay, 67. James McClellan documents the French attempt to import the Tahitian breadfruit into Haiti in July of 1788 from a slave ship; see *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 158.

[53](#) See McClellan, *Colonialism and Science* on botanical exchanges between Jamaica and Saint Domingue in the late 1780s, well before Bligh completed his voyage, 159-160. See Howard, *A History of the Botanical Garden of St Vincent* on the good relations between French and British botanists in St Vincent.

[54](#) Banks’ letters in Alan Frost, *Sir Joseph Banks and the transfer of plants to and from the South Pacific, 1786-1798* (Melbourne: Colony Press, 1993), 60-61.

[55](#) Hall’s “Planters Farmers and Gardeners” cites the arrival of breadfruit, mango and other items in January of 1786, 6.

[56](#) William Harris, “History of the Introduction of the Economic Plants of Jamaica” *Bulletin of the Department of Agriculture, Jamaica* (1910), 183. There are many varieties of the breadfruit, seeded and unseeded, which contributes to this confusion of origins.

[57](#) Quoted in Sheridan, “Crisis” 624.

[58](#) Sheridan, “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution” *Journal of Negro History* 61 (1976), 291 and “Crisis” 624, 641.

[59](#) See Long, *History of Jamaica*; and Brathwaite, *Creole*, 86-88, on the series of Jamaican Acts to increase white presence. On the link between the breadfruit transfer, abolition, and revolutionary violence, see Fulford, “Romanticism.”

[60](#) McClellan, 281.

[61](#) *Royal Gazette* quoted in Powell, 26.

[62](#) Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1982). Banks to Yonge, May 1878 in Chambers, 89, 90.

[63](#) Introduction to Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *The Slaves' Economy: Independent Production by Slaves in the Americas* (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 12-14; See also Mintz and Douglas Hall, "The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Marketing System," *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, eds., Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Kingston, Ian Randle, 2000); Barry Higman, *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Kingston: University West Indies Press, 2001), 261-266.

[64](#) "Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms," in *Missile and Capsule*, ed. Jurgen Martini (Bremen: Universitat Bremen, 1983), 25, 52.

[65](#) On slave refusal to ingest the breadfruit, see Parry, 19, and Watts, 505. Anderson's report is printed in Frost, 60. Kincaid writes that "perhaps Antiguan children sense intuitively the part (the breadfruit) has played in the history of injustice and so they will not eat it... (here) the breadfruit is not a food, it is a weapon," 136-137. On food reciprocity, see Mintz *Sweetness*, 4-5.

[66](#) Austin Clarke, *Pig Tails 'n Breadfruit: Rituals of Slave Food* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999), 113-114.

[67](#) See Gascoigne, Mackay, and Frost. See also Dan Byrnes *The Blackheath Connection*, <http://www.danbyrnes.com.au/blackheath/contentsbc.htm>

[68](#) From John Ellis, Esq. *A Description of the Mangostan and the Bread-fruit*, (London, 1775), 21. "A Wired Case for bringing over the Bread Fruit Tree, the Mangostan or any other usefull Plants from East India or the South Seas."

[69](#) Clarke, 115.
