Hybridity, Race, and Science

The Voyage of the Zaca, 1934–1935

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ABSTRACT

In 1929 and 1934–1935, the physical anthropologist Harry L. Shapiro voyaged in the South Seas on the Mahina-I-Te-Pua and the Zaca, measuring mixed-race islanders, including the descendants of the Bounty mutineers on Pitcairn Island. His research in Polynesian hybridity reflects the growing cultural and scientific investment of the United States in the Pacific during this period. Shapiro’s oceanic adventures and intimate encounters prompted him to discount typological speculation and emphasize instead the liberal Boasian program in physical anthropology, giving him the confidence to refigure his evaluations of racial difference. The seaborne investigatory enterprise came to influence U.S. racial thought, adding impetus to the condemnation of racism in science. On his return from the South Seas, Shapiro tried to get his fellow physical anthropologists to issue a manifesto opposing the harnessing of their science to racial discrimination and prejudice.

"THE MARQUESAS!" Herman Melville exclaimed in the 1840s. "What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up." In Typee the novelist polished to a romantic gloss recollections of his stay as a young sailor among the cannibals of Taipivae valley on Nuku Hiva. This “peep” at Polynesian life, as Melville called it, revealed pagan worshippers and noble savages at the point of first contact, before missionaries, commerce, and civilization wrought destruction. Yet even then the “natives” were perhaps not as pure and untouched as the young American adventurer imagined. “The endless variety of complexions to be seen in the Typee valley” mystified him. He wondered about the “European cast” of the features of the Marquesans. He gave the

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maiden Fayaway alluring blue eyes. These observations all suggest that the Marquesas were not as isolated from European contact as Melville claimed. Indeed, he admitted, “once in the course of a half century, to be sure, some adventurous rover would break in upon their peaceful repose, and astonished at the unusual scene, would be almost tempted to claim the merit of a new discovery.”

As an adolescent at Boston Latin School, toward the end of World War I, Harry L. Shapiro read *Typee* with fascination, developing an intense interest in the Pacific. Later, from his teachers at Harvard, Shapiro learned the methods of physical anthropology, becoming expert at anthropometry, the comparative study of human body measurements. In a genetics class with William E. Castle, he heard debates about the racial status of the Pitcairn and Norfolk Islanders, descendants of the English *Bounty* mutineers and Polynesian women. Some scientists claimed that the mixed race showed hybrid vigor, while others believed them degenerate—yet none of these “experts” had managed to visit the islands. Encouraged by Earnest A. Hooton, the leading anthropology professor at Harvard, Shapiro decided to investigate the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers for his Ph.D. dissertation. A pioneering Jewish student in the Ph.D. program, he graduated in 1926 and spent the next fifteen years roaming the Pacific, studying human hybridity in Pitcairn, the Marquesas, Hawaii, and islands in between. Gruff and lanky, constantly smoking his pipe or fiddling with it, Shapiro saw himself as a manly intellectual, equally comfortable in the museum, wearing a tweed jacket and a bow tie, or donning a *pareu* and hanging out on some atoll. Yet a brusque manner never completely disguised his social awkwardness, pensive moods, and sensitivity. At the American Museum of Natural History in New York he became the curator of physical anthropology, emerging in the 1930s as a leading figure in the discipline and a staunch opponent of racism in science. The Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu provided Hari—as he was known locally—with a regional base and wildly entertaining traveling companions, including the anthropologists Kenneth P. Emory (or “Kneti”) and Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa) and the linguist J. Frank Stimson (or “Ua”).

In this essay I want to focus on Shapiro’s visits to the Marquesas in 1929 and 1934 and to Pitcairn in 1934–1935, the 1930s trip aboard the *Zaca*, the famous luxury yacht of the Californian plutocrat Charles Templeton Crocker (and later Errol Flynn’s boat). Surprisingly—in view of the topic of his Ph.D. dissertation—this was Shapiro’s first encounter with the Pitcairners. Bad weather had caused him to abandon an effort to land there in 1923, so he had to make do with the Norfolk Island descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers.

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2 The *Bounty* mutiny, led by Fletcher Christian against Captain William Bligh, took place in 1789. Nine of the English mutineers, along with twelve women and six men from Tahiti, landed on Pitcairn in 1790. Their descendants and the remaining mutineer were not discovered until 1813. The Pitcairners rapidly became temperate, devout, and loyal to the British Crown. In 1856 they all left Pitcairn for Norfolk Island, but a few homesick families returned in 1859 and more came back in 1864. They converted to Seventh-day Adventism in 1886. See Greg Dening, *Mr. Bligh’s Bad Language: Passion, Power, and Theatre on the “Bounty”* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992).

3 Harry L. Shapiro, “A Stroll Down Memory Lane” [ca. 1987], Box 26, H. L. Shapiro Papers, MSS S537, Archives and Special Collections, American Museum of Natural History, New York (hereafter cited as Shapiro Papers). On other occasions, Shapiro recalled Hooton lecturing on the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers. A brief biography of Shapiro appears in Anne Roe, *The Making of a Scientist* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1952). Hooton used to call Shapiro, who was his first graduate student, his “ewe lamb”; later, Shapiro called his former advisor “Hootie” or, more rarely, “Babe Ruth.”

Therefore his arrival on Pitcairn at Christmas 1934 was fraught with tremendous significance for him and would prove the culmination of his investigation of Pacific hybridity. It led to Shapiro’s most popular and influential book, *The Heritage of the “Bounty,”* published in 1936. It also gave him new perspective on his own identity, pushing him toward studies of his Jewish ancestry. Moreover, encounters on Pitcairn confirmed his drift away from formal racial classification in anthropology, causing him to try in 1935 to organize the first American public condemnation of scientific racism—issued in Hooton’s name, since Shapiro feared that it would be discounted as Jewish special pleading if he or his friend and mentor Franz Boas, the anthropology professor at Columbia University, affixed their signatures.

The history of racial science is largely subsumed within the history of ideas, but here I am attempting to reconstruct some of the practice of inquiry into human diversity between the wars. I want to show how these varied and sometimes confusing interactions with erstwhile research subjects and supposed natives in the Pacific could influence the sensibilities and thoughts of itinerant physical anthropologists. In describing human biology as a seaborne investigatory enterprise, I hope to relocate to the colonial Pacific the story of the disintegration of racial classification or typology in the 1930s and 1940s. That is, I focus here, as much as the records allow, on race science as part of the complex process of cross-cultural interaction and exchange in southern seas. The engagement of seafaring scientists and islanders inevitably was difficult, trying, and bewildering for everyone involved; often it was inflected with condescension and paternalism; occasionally it would lead all parties into moral peril; but sometimes it created intimacy and understanding, even a new sense of identity and what it means to be human. It is this modulation of the perception of human difference—this oceanic vision—that I seek to recapture here.

In this essay, then, I bring the history of race science into contact with postcolonial studies, prompting a sort of background conversation that sometimes interrupts the narrative. The postcolonial reframing of the history of science involves more than relocating the main action to the South Seas and other colonial sites, recognizing them as significant sites of cognition and critical reflection—though this is a good start. It means that we need to trace the influence of colonial engagements—the complex encounters in these contact zones—on scientific thought and practice more generally, thereby activating the “colonial” as a useful category of historical analysis even among savants who have tended to deny or forget their imperial or global relations. Such critical analysis entails a postcolonial insinuation of the agency of colonized peoples into the conventional history of science. To imagine a distinctive North Atlantic science simply diffusing out and capturing the attention of the world is to repeat colonial *amour propre* in one of its more self-deceiving forms. Of course, we must not ignore coercion and appropriation, dominance and submission, where they occur. But neither should we disregard more ambiguous and complicated interactions in the contact zones; scoff at sympathy and affection, however evanescent; or deny efforts at reciprocity, however unequal and confused. Postcolonial studies do not just relocate historical narratives: they open up conventional analytic frameworks to dispersive logic.

and disseminated agency. Historians might then become beachcombers, even in the North Atlantic, observing the science that washes up in the colonial wake.

**AN AMERICAN LAKE**

In the twentieth century it became possible to imagine the Pacific as an American lake. Since Alfred Thayer Mahan had urged the nation in the 1890s to project its naval power across the ocean, the United States acquired an island empire, encompassing Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and other outposts. The Californian historian Hubert Howe Bancroft declared in his best seller *The New Pacific* that the ocean would constitute a broad basin for American expansion. In addition to direct territorial governance, the United States could exert influence informally across the patchwork of competing imperial claims, including those of France and Britain, infiltrating these other scattered sovereignties. American political and military commitment to the Pacific set the scene for wide-ranging cultural and scientific engagement with the region in the first half of the twentieth century. The Pacific tales of Mark Twain, Jack London, and Zane Grey proved immensely popular; Melville, long neglected, was rediscovered as an American master; the art world experienced a Gauguin craze; and the South Seas featured in countless romances and travel narratives. In 1919 the beachcomber and hobo Frederick O’Brien published *White Shadows in the South Seas*, an acclaimed account of his travels through the Marquesas, which stirred up American interest in Polynesia. For O’Brien, Polynesians seemed living representatives of the childhood of the Caucasian race, whereas he disparaged the European residents as wretched, displaced whites. In 1928 W. S. “Woody” van Dyke and Robert Flaherty filmed *White Shadows* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)—Shapiro watched the movie with a critical eye just before he too set out for the Marquesas.

Unlike the book, the film explored the sexual flouting of racial boundaries, a theme that soon predominated in American visions of the South Seas. The issue had been deftly

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11 Frederick O’Brien, *White Shadows in the South Seas* (New York: Laurie, 1919). O’Brien had edited a newspaper in Manila before his Pacific travels. He called *White Shadows* a “record of one happy year spent among the simple, friendly cannibals of Atuona valley, on the island of Hiva Oa in the Marquesas” (p. v). When he left, he wrote: “The beauty and depressingness of these islands is overwhelming” (p. 448).

12 More generally, see Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the “Yellow Peril”: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1994). Margaret Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa: A
evaded in Hollywood’s Polynesian films of the 1920s, such as *A Virgin Paradise* (1921), starring Pearl White; *Aloma of the South Seas* (1926), with the “shimmy queen” Gilda Gray; and *Hula* (1927), the Hawaiian romance featuring Clara Bow, the original “It girl.” In contrast, *White Shadows in the South Seas* and its follow-up *The Pagan* (1929) daringly focused on the ambiguity of interracial romance, though usually it was clear that since Polynesians presumably were proto-Caucasians the racial difference actually was minimal. In *The Pagan*, the “Latin lover” Ramon Novarro played the half-caste hero who mediated between cultures as he sang the catchy “Pagan Love Song.” Yet two years later, F. W. Murnau made sure as he filmed *Tabu* on Bora Bora to avoid any reference to the mixed ancestry of his leads Anna Chevalier and Matahi. Sadly, the strict enforcement of the Hays Code after 1934 would gradually shift Hollywood’s attention away from the South Seas to the far less sexy Wild West—with a few notable exceptions, of course, principally the *Bounty* movies and *South Pacific*.13

Racial fieldworkers like Shapiro participated intimately in the American cultural discovery of Polynesia. Frequently perched at the Papeete bar Le Cercle Bougainville, the anthropologist drank heavily with the filmmakers van Dyke and Flaherty. One night at the Blue Lagoon café Shapiro persuaded some local writers, the Americans Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, both married to Polynesian women, to look into the *Bounty* story. In 1932 they published *The Mutiny on the “Bounty,”* igniting a global obsession with that tragic ship, its crew, and their mixed-race descendants.14 Within a year, Charles Chauvel cast Errol Flynn in *In the Wake of the “Bounty”—*which may explain why the actor later claimed one of the mutineers as a relative.15 Although mostly filmed in a Sydney studio, this early Australian talkie contained footage of the mutineers’ descendants on Pitcairn, taken by Chauvel on a brief visit to the island. In 1935, soon after Shapiro returned to New York from Pitcairn, MGM released a more accomplished film, *Mutiny on the “Bounty,”* starring Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh and a clean-shaven Clark Gable as Fletcher Christian. A popular sensation, the movie won the Academy Award for best picture that year.16

There were also good scientific reasons for Shapiro to be interested in race mixing in the Pacific. Between the wars, anthropologists and biologists in the United States became fascinated with “miscegenation.” Boas had led the way: as early as the 1890s, the young anthropologist visited scattered Native American reservations and boarding schools to examine what he called the “half-blood Indian.” His evaluation of this new form of humanity was ambivalent at the time, but as his interest in race mixing grew over the following forty years his assessment of the outcome became more positive. “The impor-
tance of research on this subject cannot be too strongly urged,” Boas wrote in 1911, “since the desirability or undesirability of race mixture should be known.” 17 The Minnesota anthropologist Albert E. Jenks, on his return from the Philippines, followed Boas in studying the offspring of Native Americans and European Americans. He extolled their potential for assimilation into modern society. In the 1920s, Boas encouraged his Columbia graduate student Melville Herskovits to investigate the physical qualities and social accomplishments of the mixed-race black Americans creating the Harlem Renaissance. Assisted reluctantly by Zora Neale Hurston, Herskovits could discern no trace of degeneracy in the “New World Negro,” to use his term, and speculated that the emerging type might even be developing a unique civilization. 18 Over in Chicago, the sociologist Robert E. Park and his student Edwin B. Reuter were also evaluating the potential of mixed-race peoples, these new “marginal men,” during this period. They too were impressed with the new type. Park even imagined charting a “miscegenation map” of the world. 19

In 1935, the African-American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois lamented that fear of race mixing was still “the crux of the so-called Negro problem in the United States.” A little more than ten years earlier, Virginia had passed the “one-drop” rule in order to sharpen the boundaries of white identity. In 1925, Leonard “Kip” Rhinelander scandalized New York when he took Alice Jones to court for tricking him into marrying her by passing as white. Interracial marriage was illegal in at least forty states (though not in the American insular territories). 20 Du Bois was dismayed but not surprised when educated Americans continued to cite approvingly racial purists and eugenicists like Madison Grant, Lothrop Stoddard, and Charles B. Davenport, rather than their more liberal colleagues. Davenport,


with Morris Steggerda, had conducted a notorious study of race mixing in Jamaica in 1929, and he concluded that the Caribbean hybrids were physically degenerate and mentally deficient.21 Such assertions incensed Du Bois, Boas, and Shapiro. Yet Davenport seemed to attract all the public attention.

For Hooton at Harvard, then the major center for training physical anthropologists, the study of miscegenation was “perhaps the most important field of research in anthropology today.” Since 1916 his colleague Alfred Tozzer, a close friend of Boas, had measured mixed-race Hawaiians on his annual visits to his wife’s family on Oahu. The geneticist Leslie C. Dunn analyzed the data he brought back, extolling the “great experiment in race mixture.”22 At Harvard, Hooton taught a graduate course on the biology of miscegenation and from the 1920s sent most of his advanced students—the “Peabody boys”—out to study the results of racial amalgamation. Although studies in North America would have been more pertinent to pressing domestic racial concerns, fieldworkers soon discovered that African Americans, in particular, were resistant research subjects.23 Scientific light could best be shed on U.S. racial problems from a distance. Shapiro was the first to go abroad, but others soon ventured to different parts of the Pacific, Yucatan, and the Maghreb—anywhere race mixing was recent, research subjects compliant, and authorities permissive. The last of these Harvard rovers would be Joseph B. Birdsell, who with Norman Tindale conducted the 1938–1939 Harvard-Adelaide Anthropological Expedition, examining the “half-castes” of Australia. Birdsell admired Shapiro and modeled his Australian work on the earlier Pacific excursions.24

Shapiro knew he was not adrift on some scientific backwater. The explanation of race mixing in the Pacific had become a major interest of anthropologists and biologists, whether based in Oceania or elite U.S. institutions. His own career followed the contours of rising commitment to Pacific research in both the Department of Anthropology at

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23 Apart from the research of Herskovits, assisted by Hurston, the other major study of mixed-race African Americans was conducted by Caroline Bond Day, Hooton’s only African-American M.A. student. Most of her research subjects were family friends in Atlanta, including W. E. B. Du Bois. See Caroline Bond Day, A Study of Some Negro-White Families in the United States (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum, 1932); on Du Bois’s own engagement with anthropometry see Maria Farland, “W. E. B. Du Bois, Anthropometric Science, and the Limits of Racial Uplift,” American Quarterly, 2006, 58:1017–1045. In the 1920s and 1930s Hooton sent Homer Kiddler to Tunisia, George D. Williams to Yucatan, Walter B. Cline to Egypt, Carleton S. Coon to Morocco, and Joseph B. Birdsell to Australia—all to study race mixing.

Harvard and the American Museum of Natural History. He was expected from the start to expand the racial investigations of his predecessor at the American Museum, Louis R. Sullivan, who had worked closely with the anthropologists associated with the Bishop Museum in Hawaii. Shapiro negotiated with colleagues and competitors—the other physical anthropologists at Harvard, Columbia, and the Bishop Museum, the sociologists at Chicago and the University of Hawaii—apportioning the Pacific field among themselves. More than the others, Shapiro was especially adept at attaching his scientific research to broader cultural enthusiasms, in particular the fate of the *Bounty* mutineers, thus giving race mixing a white human face. He combined the Polynesian craze and incipient South Seas tourism with liberal doses of science. The Pacific allowed him to elaborate on progressive Boasian physical anthropology—an agenda distinct from the parallel development of the “culture concept” occurring at Columbia. The vast sea of islands therefore gave rise to what might be called a modernist human biology, focusing on racial hybridity and environmental adaptation.

“FLOWER OF THE FOAM”

“The rumble of the elevated,” Kenneth Emory wrote to Shapiro in 1928, “is to be replaced by the roar of the surf.” Emory was planning a big trip the following year, outbound from Papeete and visiting the Tuamotus and Marquesas, putting together a survey of humanity in French Polynesia. “Come if you have to bust a gut, and brush up your French.” The cultural anthropologist wanted someone with expertise in anthropometry to relieve him of a task he found trying and unrewarding. “It is a tough job to jolly the natives along during the tedious measuring,” the gentle, curious Emory wrote to Herbert Gregory, director of the Bishop Museum, “especially if they feel it is a ridiculous stunt. The actual measuring takes a discouraging amount of time, but the preliminary work is even more exacting and drawn out, then at the end, the natives must be paid with photographs.” If the Bishop Museum permitted Shapiro to come along, these activities would become his responsibility.

But when Shapiro arrived in Papeete he found Emory and Nordhoff still building the boat. Eager to get to work, he decided instead to take passage on one of the rancid copra tubs calling at the other Society Islands and the Tuamotu Archipelago. On first landing in Tahiti, Shapiro regarded the inhabitants as “fascinating but dreadfully tantalizing.” From the start he wanted “to know each half-caste’s ancestry—to understand the complicated history that could produce so many varieties.” But his original hopes of describing pure
Polynesian types as well as those with mixed ancestry were soon dashed. Evidently few Polynesians boasted a pure line of descent. Accordingly, he would concentrate on measuring and assessing sociologically the tantalizing half-castes.

In the western Tuamotus, low-lying atolls on the fringe of lagoons, Shapiro assiduously measured the inhabitants, keeping a daily “tally,” observing initially their distinctive frontozygomatic index, orthognathous profile, striking maxilla, and so on. Most of them looked very “Caucasoid” and therefore related to Europeans—whether through phylogeny or more proximate descent. But local genealogical reckoning was disturbingly imprecise, especially in identifying paternity, so it was difficult to interpret the accumulating measurements accurately. Shapiro described his field technique:

We unpack our equipment in a convenient native house and soon have an enormous crowd watching us. . . . The old men are pushed forth as victims but the young lusty ones are usually fishing or in the fields working. By slow stages we manage to catch enough to fill the morning and sometimes the afternoon. But usually after a native lunch we trudge off calipers in hand and seek those resting at home. . . . It requires almost a flirtation to get the women to be measured. In most cases a photograph is irresistible bait.29

Shapiro regretted that he failed to obtain blood samples for grouping: even seeking them proved an impediment to further work. On each island he laboriously documented subjects on index cards, wrote field notes, took photographs, and made films, producing a portable human archive. (See Figure 1.)

The longer Shapiro traveled among these people, and ate, fished, sat around, drank, and danced with them, the closer he became. Usually he doctored them in a basic fashion, mostly dispensing Lysol. Before long, the twenty-seven-year-old became sensitive to their “soft, languorous expression,” their “liquid eyes.”30 Emory and the older, pushy Stimson—Keneti and Ua—encouraged him to sleep with the local girls, as they did, thereby “normalizing” their presence, so it seemed. Once sexual relations were established, the research process might go more smoothly, or so Shapiro speculated.31 But mostly the “boys” simply relied on Keneti’s guitar and Ua’s fluent Tahitian to break the ice.

With his “collector’s cupidity,” as he called it—typical of the museum man—Shapiro also avidly sought Polynesian skulls and bones, especially the remains of the earlier long-headed type that the contemporary round-headed islanders had supplanted. He was aware of local sensitivities. To Clark Wissler at the American Museum he wrote: “At Tahiti the crania are in maraes which are still considered sacred and inviolable. Looting...
them would be a grave mistake.” Nonetheless, Shapiro and Keneti sometimes climbed high in the steep Tahitian valleys to raid burial caves, struggling back, sweaty and fatigued, carrying packs laden with skulls. On one occasion, Shapiro noted:

I had a knapsack with six skulls on my bare shoulders . . . and in one hand the axe and shirt full of bones. Literally, we moved by inches. At times we sat in helplessness. Thrown forward by the weight of the knapsack, I had the continuous impression of being ready to go headlong any moment. . . . When we finally reached bottom I could hardly see through my glasses running sweat, covered with dirt and perspiration.

That night they treated themselves to a steak dinner, and the intrepid anthropologist sent the bones to the American Museum of Natural History. As he continued to travel through

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33 “Field Notes of H. L. Shapiro, 1929,” 19 May 1929, p. 4, Shapiro Collection. As Emory wrote to Gregory at the Bishop Museum: “The cliff climbing, stream wading, march through the gloomy groves of mape trees, appealed enormously to Harry’s sense of adventure.” Emory to Gregory, 26 May 1929, Box 8, Group 12, Emory Papers.
the islands, Shapiro repeatedly attempted to “rescue” skulls from burial sites, but often he left disappointed. At Fakahina, though, he heard of a skull recently reburied in the cemetery. “I reacted to that as simply and decisively as the hind leg of a frog to an electric spark,” he wrote. “Because of the superstition of the natives I did not remove the skull at the time, but Emory and I had a minor adventure that night when we quietly abstracted it and hid it in my laundry.” Still, Shapiro could claim that, although “voracious enough, I hesitate to disturb the natives flagrantly.”

Impatient, Shapiro set off alone for the Marquesas in June 1929, aboard a tramp steamer. The rugged archipelago was enthralling: a scene of romance conjured up by Melville, the stunning precipices rising abruptly from the ocean. “Is it possible,” Shapiro asked, “to transfix the subtle impression of Nuku Hiva?” But he had arrived in the middle of a dance festival, and few Marquesans showed any inclination to stop to be measured.

“It was sad, my first day, seeing the change at Taiohae,” he recorded, “the wooden houses, the half-caste slattern women, the depleted population.” Fayaway was nowhere to be seen. “Without doubt,” he went on, “mixture has been as rampant here as in the Societies.” Overcoming the local distractions, Shapiro managed eventually to measure forty-eight inhabitants of Nuku Hiva, most of them half-caste, some dubiously pure. The people of Hiva Oa proved less cooperative, with one protesting that he was not a pig to be measured. But when the scientist promised each potential subject an illegal glass of wine, most complied. On the whole, the anthropologist found the somber valleys of the Marquesas dispiriting, leaving him nostalgic for the lost world of Typee. “It is a sad population now,” he wrote, “mixed with white, dirty and unkempt. Not a trace of the old life. No evidence of joyous youth.”

On his return to Papeete, Shapiro discovered that Keneti had finally launched his cutter, Mahina-I-Te-Pua, the “Flower of the Foam.” In September 1929 they set off, again with Ua, for the Tuamotus, the “Dangerous Isles.” Traveling east, Shapiro located remarkably Caucasian elements on Fangatau, a very “primitive” group on Reao, and the “divergent” inhabitants of Napuka. The reddish-brown hair and gray eyes of many of these people impressed him. He observed how “white blood” appeared to have spread even to the fringes of Polynesia. But the expedition proved troubling. Frequently, islanders assumed that Shapiro was an agent of the French government seeking information on available manpower for the next war. Some of them believed his equipment would make them sick. Still more disturbing, Shapiro and his fellow argonauts soon realized that their boat was far too small and unstable for the expedition; repeatedly, it broke down, bits came off, and capsize seemed imminent in the imposing swells. The bunks soon resembled lagoons.

34 On the “minor adventure” see Shapiro to Wissler, 17 Oct. 1929, Shapiro Collection. See also “Journal of Kenneth P. Emory, 1929,” 15 Oct. 1929, pp. 14–15, Box 8, Group 12, Emory Papers. For Shapiro’s claim regarding his restraint see Shapiro to Wissler, 31 Aug. 1929, Shapiro Collection.

Often they struggled to find enough fuel, and then the schooner carrying the canned food to replenish their provisions sank. Ua and Keneti began to bicker. Hari took to singing sea chanteys in a very loud voice. When the Mahina’s engine developed some trouble, Keneti dropped Hari and Ua on Hao atoll and sputtered back to Papeete for repairs. Somehow he forgot to tell anyone they were out there. Abandoned for six weeks, florid and foaming, Ua never forgave Keneti—though Hari soon did. (See Figure 2.)

Despite such inconveniences and diversions, Shapiro accumulated an anthropometric series of about eight hundred subjects by the end of his South Seas voyages. But genealogical uncertainties and inconsistencies, along with persisting gaps in his sampling of French Polynesia, meant that Shapiro was unsure just what to do with all this information. For the moment, he piled up the boxes of Pacific material in his offices at the American Museum of Natural History and talked to the New York newspapers about his adventures. He told them that Polynesians derived from Caucasian stock and that race mixing was restocking the islands with new sorts of people, even more Caucasian. “We hope to throw some light on the laws of inheritance,” he stated in the Herald Tribune, “and

Figure 2. Hauling the Mahina ashore, Bishop Museum Tuamotus Expedition, Vahitahi Island, 1930. Courtesy of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii.

36 H. L. Shapiro, “Field Report, 1929”; and Shapiro to Wissler, 13 Sept. 1929: Shapiro Collection. The best sources are “Journal of Kenneth P. Emory, 1929,” Box 8, Group 12, Emory Papers; and “Field Notes of H. L. Shapiro, 1929,” Shapiro Collection.

37 In the 1930s they also argued bitterly over Tuamotu theology, with Stimson claiming that the people were monotheists and Emory asserting their polytheism. A year later Stimson wrote to Shapiro, hoping to “talk over and re-live (a little at least) the days of adventure and romance that I think you and I both enjoyed in spite of the sordidness and the dirt and the Catholics!” J. Frank Stimson to Shapiro, 27 May 1931, Stimson Folder, Box 2. Correspondence 1931–32, Shapiro Papers. Shapiro remarked in a later letter that Polynesia “is becoming synonymous, in these times of depression, with refuge and ease”: 2 Sept. 1932, Shapiro Papers.
the effects of racial miscegenation which may be useful in the United States.” But they would have to await further analysis of the data before any scientific guidance could be offered. For the next few years, Shapiro would be preoccupied instead with further studies of race mixing in Hawaii.38

His experiences in the South Seas tended to disorient and disturb the scientist, putting him into unpredictable and even confusing relations with erstwhile research subjects. The impressionable New Yorker felt his identity shifting from one encounter to the next: he adjusted from scientist to doctor, friend to grave robber, and trader to entertainer. At one moment he would flirt with the women; on another occasion, measure them. Sometimes he disliked these people; then again, they might intrigue and even enthrall him. Ambivalent encounters in this contact zone were changing him as a person, making him think again about the nature of human difference and his potential for sympathy and engagement.

ON THE ZACA

In January 1933 Henry Fairfield Osborn, the formidable president of the American Museum of Natural History, wrote to an old friend in San Francisco, Charles Templeton Crocker, to ask if he was prepared to sponsor a scientific expedition to the South Seas. Osborn and Crocker shared with others in their circle, including Madison Grant and Charles Davenport, a patrician enthusiasm for science and eugenics. Descended from a pioneering Californian family, which became immensely rich through railroads and banking, Crocker was a self-consciously cultivated cosmopolitan with time and money to spare. Cole Porter had encouraged him to dabble in light opera and musicals: one of his Chinese extravaganzas, Fay-Yen-Fah, played in 1925 at the Monte Carlo Opera House, supported by Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russe; another stirred his comrades under the redwoods of the Bohemian Grove one summer.39 A prodigious collector of rare books, he also refounded the California Historical Society, as a sort of family history project. 40 But Crocker soon tired of mere terrestrial distinction. In 1930 he built the Zaca, a 118-foot double-topsail schooner, among the most beautiful boats that ever put to sea.41 Crocker decided to sail the world, accompanied by scientists, collecting natural history specimens

40 Henry R. Wagner, Recollections of Templeton Crocker, Founder of the California Historical Society (Oakland, Calif.: Westgate, 1950). Crocker married a sugar heiress from Hawaii, which may have strengthened his interest in the Pacific—though it was said that he neglected her. His uncle William H. Crocker was president of the board of trustees of the California Academy of Sciences.
41 The Zaca—supposedly a Native American word for “peace”—hosted multiple scientific expeditions during the 1930s. See Templeton Crocker, The Cruise of the “Zaca” (New York: Harper, 1933); and William Beebe, “Zaca” Venture (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1938). The U.S. Navy requisitioned the yacht in 1942. Errol Flynn acquired her in 1945—once even attempting a scientific expedition, which turned into a fiasco—and let Orson Welles use her in The Lady from Shanghai (1948). Owned by an Italian industrialist, the Zaca is now berthed in Monte Carlo. It is worth noting that the Bounty was only 91 feet in length.
for museums in the United States—it would at least give him an excuse for shooting and fishing. Hence Osborn’s request.

The chief purpose of the proposed expedition—or “world jaunt,” as Crocker called it—was the collection of evocative materials for the Pacific Hall under construction at the American Museum. It was still particularly deficient in birds, so one of the museum’s ornithologists, James P. Chapin, and its bird illustrator, F. Lee Jaques, would accompany Crocker, who had generously volunteered to take charge of fish acquisition himself. Shapiro seized the opportunity to return to Polynesia in order to complete his studies of race mixing there, focusing this time on native sex life. Crocker cheerfully agreed to call at the Marquesas, Tuamotus, Mangareva, Pitcairn, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island), returning to San Francisco along the South American coast. At last, Shapiro might go ashore at the fabled Pitcairn Island. Before they departed, Gregory wrote urgently from the Bishop Museum to Shapiro: “I hope you will share the plunder you get.”

On a clear evening in September 1934, the Zaca left its berth at the San Francisco Yacht Club and sailed out through the Golden Gate, heading for Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas. (See Figure 3.) For the next three weeks they rolled heavily south, Chapin and Jaques scanning for birds, Shapiro playing solitaire, reading, scratching on his cello, or looking for whales. The perpetually tanned Crocker mostly sunbathed on deck, though sometimes he worried about engine trouble and fuel levels, or complained about the stench of formaldehyde from the tanks on deck, or took shots at passing tropicbirds and petrels. Nearer the equator, they wore only bathing trunks or pareus. “We could do little but loaf, eat excellently, and bask in the sun till we were brown all over,” Chapin wrote to his superior at the American Museum. In the evenings they listened to classical music on the gramophone as the crew served dinner. Crocker observed “Shapiro reading, writing, or closing his eyes contentedly when music of the proper quality is being played.”

On 6 October the “bold virile cliffs” of Nuku Hiva emerged from the ocean, as grand as Shapiro remembered. Crocker agreed that the island was astounding, but its inhabitants failed to impress. “The apathy of the few natives was quite noticeable after we dropped anchor,” he wrote in his journal. “Scarcely anyone was seen. Several women were seated lazily on the verandah of one of the houses.” Once ashore, Shapiro recognized some old friends and found the ailing Père Simeón Delmas, the unusually learned priest at Taiohae, whom he greatly respected. All the same, he initially felt keen disappointment. “The

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43 James P. Chapin to Frank M. Chapman, 12 Oct. 1934, Folder 1934, Shapiro Papers (Chapin also noted that he had seen few birds, but plenty of rats); and Crocker, “Journal, Eastern Polynesia,” 30 Sept. 1934.


45 As much natural historian as missionary, Delmas had dwelled in the Marquesas since 1886, providing hospitality for travelers such as Robert Louis Stevenson. He spent his later years trying to preserve the local
people seemed for the most part degenerate,” he noted that first day. “These people are the frayed end of a discarded garment and they know it. . . . Sad Marquesas!” Later, at Taipivae, he observed a “bastard remnant, with a miserable existence. Not only have Fayaway and Kory-Kory disappeared but all their throng with them.” Yet it pleased him to see that the number of children had increased since his last visit. “Maybe this bastard population will be able to repopulate the Marquesas,” he wrote. “Certainly it is hopeless to expect again a Polynesian Marquesas—that has gone.” Over the following days, Shapiro chatted with Marquesan women about their sex lives, finding this interaction much easier than when he had tried to measure them a few years earlier. One night the locals put on some dances for him, culled, it seemed, from Tahiti, Hawaii, and Forty-second Street: the anthropologist participated energetically, to his hosts’ satisfaction. Throughout the Marquesas it was much the same for Shapiro this trip: spectacular scenery, language. When Shapiro visited him, he was suffering greatly from elephantiasis. See Siméon Delmas, La religion, ou le paganisme des Marquisiens: d’Après les notes des anciens missionnaires (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1927); and Delmas, Essai d’histoire de la mission des Îles Marquises (Océanie): Depuis les origines jusqu’en 1881 (Paris: Annales des Sacres-Coeurs, 1929).

46 Shapiro, “Expedition to the Pacific,” 6 Oct. 1934, p. 19; 8 Oct. 1934, p. 23; 7 Oct. 1934, p. 21. Earlier, Jack London observed, “There are more races than there are persons, but it is a wreckage of races at best. . . . The valley of Typee was the abode of death, and the dozen survivors of the tribe were gasping feebly the last painful breaths of the race”: London, Cruise of the “Snark” (cit. n. 10), pp. 163, 167. The Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl later lived a year at Fatu Hiva, searching for isolated primitives, but he was disappointed and the inhabitants resented him. See Thor Heyerdahl, “Turning Back Time in the South Seas,” National Geographic Magazine, 1940, 79:109–136; and Heyerdahl, Fatu-Hiva (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974).
occupied by miserable but informative half-castes, with moments of pleasure and connection. (See Figure 4.)

A week or so later, at Tatakoto in the Tuamotu Archipelago, Shapiro resumed his measuring. He set up a “combination clinic and anthropometric lab,” with the ship’s doctor, George P. Lyman, examining the sick and taking blood samples and Crocker recording the measurements. Shapiro thought the people there rather slender, with bony faces, narrow foreheads, and long, narrow skulls—almost Caucasian, he noted.47 Having efficiently added a few more Tuamotuans to his series, the anthropologist and his colleagues retreated to the Zaca at the end of the day and sailed on to the next atoll. At each stop Shapiro sought to expand the series.

At Hao, where Emory had abandoned him and Stimson five years earlier, a crowd at the

pier met Shapiro, shouting “Hari, Hari.” In his journal he wrote: “My progress was a continual succession of kisses with women and handclasps with men. No one seemed a day older since I left and everyone was so glad to see me that it warmed my heart. Everyone treats me as though I were really a member of [the] family.” But a few old friends had died, and his former house was empty. “This has been a very emotional day,” he concluded, “and I wish I had never come.” However mixed his feelings, the return to Hao constituted a breakthrough of sorts for Shapiro, the moment when he came to engage more sympathetically with his research subjects, to recognize his relatedness to them, though he resisted their full embrace. Indeed, the following day he came back to measure them again and take blood samples. But over the next week Hari moved in with a local family and settled into village life, chatting with his neighbors and listening to them strum guitars in the evenings. He played “Believe Me, if All Those Endearing Young Charms” on his cello but was uncertain if they appreciated it. Their gifts of shells, hats, baskets, meat, and fish touched him. “I have been so completely accepted and trusted that I could get anything I wanted,” Hari wrote. “Coming back as an old friend, as a kind of son to Fariua, everyone has been completely at ease with me and very cordial. For the first time I felt as though I were in the inside of their lives.” When he departed, they serenaded him with a song composed in honor of the Zaca. In his journal, Shapiro wrote that day: “White people so often look like inferior curs among natives.”

For another month, the Zaca continued its voyage through French Polynesia. Shapiro meticulously measured “natives” on Tahiti, Moorea, Rimatara, Rurutu, Raivavae, Rapa, and many other islands and atolls. His tally kept rising. The comments in his journal are revealing. In Tahiti, he “picked them out of their houses, stopped them on the road; and when the bus stopped we grabbed them off the bus.” At Rurutu, he got a native judge “to help round up suspects.” The Raivavaens proved especially reluctant to be measured and bled—Shapiro heard that someone had been there before, taking measurements and calling them savages, but he dismissed this as “absurd” since he was the only one they could mean. The people seemed “irrationally and childishly” uncooperative. At Rapa, he found the women “very sulky looking and shrewish.” They refused to have any blood taken “out of fear and out of stupid contrariness.” But elsewhere he encountered few objections, so long as he donated a photograph at the end of the proceedings. He especially cherished any supposedly pure Polynesians, yet such types appeared exceptionally rare, so he made do, as usual, with mixed-race subjects. Although he kept hoping for “a nice haul of skulls” to supplement the data collected from his living specimens, few became available, much to his chagrin.

The voyage of the Zaca possessed an ambiguous status in the “racial laboratory” of the Pacific. Although historians of science observe that “European scientists transformed a physical area into a conceptual laboratory,” the Zaca carried its own maritime social world along with the scientists and their instruments. Shapiro and his colleagues found

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48 Ibid., 27 Oct. 1934, p. 49; 5 Nov. 1934, p. 55 (Fariua had “adopted” him in 1929); 5 Nov. 1934, p. 61. Even Jack London had noted that in the South Seas “one is almost driven to the conclusion that the white race flourishes on impurity and corruption”: London, Cruise of the “Snark” (cit. n. 10), p. 169.
themselves adapting to particular maritime hierarchies and demands, their specimens treated as cargo, their schedules subject to weather forecasts, their behavior at sea shaped by the customs of the crew and their own memories of adventure narratives. For Shapiro, the Zaca inevitably followed in the wake of the Bounty and the Snark. It became a site of manly endeavor and virile display, not just a floating laboratory bench. It was a vehicle for challenging nature as much as a means of analyzing racial experiments.51

The view from the Zaca’s decks was quite different from one located more securely on land, especially from the verandah of a researcher’s long-term residence. Self-contained and protected, the ship could give investigators a feeling of distance and autonomy. At the same time, sailing in unknown waters and meeting new people day after day might create a sense of mobility and mutability, as well as apprehension, often provoking concern about volatility and hospitality. The scientists arrived already enmeshed in regional maritime habits and customs, different from those acquired on board and often mysterious to them. Encountering a seaborne anthropologist would subtly alter the accessibility of local inhabitants, shape the character of their offerings to the stranger, and inflect the information they gave. The distinctive trace of these transitory meetings became fixed in the science.52

Personal relations on board ship were almost as difficult to calibrate as those ashore. On the Zaca, Shapiro and Crocker found each other increasingly insufferable. Chapin tried convivially to coax them into conversation, but their animosity proved durable. Brisk and dictatorial, Crocker provoked resentment in Shapiro and the others. “I have never been regarded so suspiciously or treated so unjustly and rudely,” the anthropologist claimed. “Crocker hates us all . . . with a bitter venom which he takes no pains to conceal. . . . We can scarcely make an innocent comment but what he takes a vindictive opposition. At times I have really believed that he were going insane.” “It is curious,” Shapiro observed, “that so introspective a man with ultra-sensitive feelings should be so callous about inflicting torture on others.” The parallels with Bligh and Christian on the Bounty did not escape his notice. He also deplored Crocker’s rudeness to the islanders, which became more evident as they traveled. Crocker’s apparent disdain for clever Jews and dirty natives grated on Shapiro. Crocker himself was lonely and unhappy; his first thought on getting back to San Francisco would be how glad he was “to be among . . . friends again.”53 (See Figure 5.)

Late in December 1934, the Zaca left Mangareva’s remnants of tropical medievalism behind, heading for Pitcairn, some two days’ sail across the “long, measured, dirge-like swell” of the Pacific.54 Scanning the horizon on the second day, Shapiro eventually discerned a faint gray shape, which graduated slowly into a chunky, rugged island, a sort

54 Melville, Typee (cit. n. 1), p. 10. The megalomaniac priest Laval had enslaved the Mangarevans a century earlier, making them construct a grandiose church, palace, and village, based on a French medieval model—all but the church and convent were in ruins by the time the Zaca arrived.
of elevated plateau—vividly green—surrounded by cliffs and crashing waves. Soon, though, it was dusk. “There is a grand yellow-orange moon just rising and the sky is soft with stars,” Shapiro noted, “a lovely night to dream about Pitcairn before the disillusion tomorrow.” The following morning, big wooden whaleboats put out from Bounty Bay to meet the *Zaca*. As burly brown men crowded the yacht, Shapiro observed their wide, heavy faces and beaky noses; they wore ragged, secondhand clothes and spoke English haltingly, with what he thought was a “colonial” accent. After speaking with Parkins Christian, the magistrate—“a fine tall rather distinguished looking man whose somewhat flattened nose and dark skin gave him a half-caste appearance”—it was decided that the anthropologist could stay ashore.55 Before long, Shapiro was holding tight as the whaleboat caught a wave toward the cliffs, hurtling onto a narrow shingle.

Shapiro spent the Christmas period keenly observing the 178 Pitcairners, measuring them when the opportunity arose. It was indubitably an inbred, hybrid population—no scientific training was needed to recognize that. As he measured their bodies, Shapiro observed the descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers closely:

> It was interesting to watch their faces... Parkins, with his dark skin, tall, hard lean figure, very distinguished, masterful and slow speakin’, but with a humorous twinkle which lights up his face, reminiscent of Tahiti. Arthur Young, shorter, with a high beaked nose and a small chin, high bony head, looks like an old time professor. Some of the others like old New England tars. Yet others look like anemic cockneys and a few like half-castes. With a few exceptions, the men are lean and wiry, knobby, big feet, thin wiry legs, and great hairy chests.

The women, however, did not impress Shapiro. They “all seem to have become withered and thin with age, unlike Polynesian women,” he wrote. “On the whole the men are stouter, better looking, and many seem like old salts in their appearance and expression.”

There were some exceptions. Shapiro met the two brothers whom the anatomist Arthur Keith had measured almost twenty years earlier on their visit to London. Although Keith believed that “in both there could be no thought of physical degeneration; in chest and muscle they were splendidly developed”—he did wonder if small skulls accounted for their limited “powers of apprehension.” Shapiro agreed that they seemed a little slow mentally, but then he realized how different they were from the other islanders.

Living among natural abundance, Pitcairners seemed content to dwell in untidy, dirty shacks. Discarded furniture, broken equipment, and pandanus littered the ground around their houses. Chickens wandered through the mess. “The general aspect is not one of scrupulous cleanliness,” Shapiro wryly noted. The food usually was heavy and unappetizing. There was little entertainment, aside from boring Seventh-day Adventist services in the small chapel and regular community meetings. “It would be difficult to estimate the number of morons,” Shapiro wrote, “but a number are not very bright.” The schoolteacher did “not find the scholars very apt or eager.” All the same, the community appeared conspicuously proper and polite—in stark contrast to its origins. But Pitcairners did not strike Shapiro as natural aristocrats. “There is perhaps too much of the touch of shanty whites about these islanders which make them too close to our seamy side to be truly romantic,” the middle-class New Yorker observed with regret. “And yet the kindness is very touching.”

The agreeable Jimmy Chapin developed the best rapport with the islanders, especially those like Lucy Christian who helped him find birds. “Thank you for the merry time you had last night,” she wrote to him on New Year’s Day 1935. “It made me merry too—did you hear me laughing? And I also shouted a happy new year to you and the yacht Zaca. I am sure we will never forget the pleasant time spent with you.” Chapin and Lucy Christian continued to correspond for the following twenty years. “It is not that we have forgotten you in the least that we didn’t write before this,” she told him later in 1935, soon after the expedition departed, “but we feel we are so far beneath you.” During the next few decades she frequently recalled the good old days and the exceptionally fine weather when the Zaca was anchored in Bounty Bay. She often reminded Chapin of their days birding together: “I will never forget the beauties seen in the flowers, leaves and grasses that was magnified.” “Your two friends Harry Shapiro and Lee Jaques are pretty well remembered,” she wrote nearly fifteen years after their visit.

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59 Lucy Christian to Chapin, 1 Jan. 1935, Box 35, Shapiro Papers. Chapin later reflected: “I knew [Pitcairn’s] birds were few, and scarcely suspected the far deeper appeal of its human inhabitants”: James P. Chapin, “Through Southern Polynesia,” Natural History, 1936, 47:287–308, on p. 292. By the time they left, “these fine people had won our deepest respect and sympathy” (p. 293).
60 Christian to Chapin, 30 Mar. 1935 (emphasis in original), 31 Mar. 1937, 15 Jan. 1948, Box 35, Shapiro
In contrast, the haughty Crocker felt little affinity with the islanders, whom he regarded as ugly and importunate. He was indignant when they treated him like a mere “tourist.” When he tried playing Beethoven on the gramophone, it made no impression and they requested religious music instead. “They commenced singing, interminable religious songs as they always do on the slightest provocation.” Their bodies also repelled him. “There are two noticeable characteristics of these Pitcairn islanders,” Crocker wrote, “their hideous feet and an almost total lack of front teeth.” He disliked the way they “swarmed” all over the ship.61 And yet, even Crocker eventually came to admire their lower-class modesty and hospitality. (See Figure 6 and frontispiece.)

At times, Shapiro wondered about the value of the islanders for genetic studies. “I am afraid that too much admixture from stray sources and sub rosa promiscuity on the island has botched the record.” He distrusted their formal genealogical reckoning. Fortunately, ancient Mary Ann McCoy, blind and stooped, felt obliged to tell him family secrets, revealing affairs and illegitimacies, to ensure scientific accuracy. She lamented the illicit promiscuity of the islanders. But Shapiro still harbored doubts about his data. “In a group five or six generations removed from the original cross with genealogical histories over-complex for so small a series and with characters largely multiple factor in origin,”

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he wrote to Emory, “it is a waste of time to attempt classic genetic methods.” Instead, he would simply describe and evaluate the mixed group.

After completing a “full sweep of everyone at Pitcairn,” Shapiro rejoined the Zaca. As he left, the Pitcairners sang the “Star Spangled Banner,” various doleful hymns, and their goodbye song. The yacht weighed anchor and sailed on to Rapa Nui (Easter Island), where Shapiro took more measurements, rummaged for skulls, and made a cast of one of the statues for the museum. By the time they reached South America, he had decided to jump ship and make his own way back to New York. “The calm of the islands from this distance,” he wrote a few months later to Emory, “has become altogether a mirage that never really existed.”

CONCLUSION: OCEANIC VISIONS

“The biological experiment that blind circumstances have created on Pitcairn,” Shapiro wrote later in 1935, “offers a rare opportunity for the investigation of the laws of heredity.” In The Heritage of the “Bounty” he described vividly the encounter of English mutineers and Tahitian maidens, expatiating on how isolation had preserved the results of their union. Pitcairn constituted the perfect laboratory for the study of race mixing, since the parental groups were distinctive, genealogical records were available (and could be corrected if necessary), and the hybrids suffered no social stigma. In this popular book, Shapiro combined his measurements of his subjects’ bodies in order to represent the “hypothetical Pitcairn Islander.” He noted evidence of “hybrid vigor,” finding that the islanders exceeded both parental stocks in average height. Their heads were long, like those of Tahitians, though less wide; skin and hair color was darker than normal among the English; and noses and lips seemed intermediate. Bad teeth doubtless were an English attribute. These hybrids also demonstrated normal intelligence. “On the whole the features of the islanders are definitely English,” Shapiro concluded, “but familiarity reveals a number of individuals who favor the Tahitian side.”

Even though the Pitcairners claimed descent from distinct racial groups, Shapiro told a reporter from the New York Times, they were “strong, husky, above average in stature and intelligent.” He found them charming and hospitable, a people living under a form of communism, with no use for money. “While judgments on physical good looks differ with varying tastes,” he continued, “I should say the average Pitcairn Islander is pleasing to the eyes.” The following day, a report in the Times extolled the

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63 Shapiro to Emory, 6 Mar. 1935, Folder 1935, Shapiro Papers. The cast was Shapiro’s idea, but Crocker did most of the work. It now stands in the Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples in the American Museum of Natural History.
64 Shapiro to Emory, 17 Mar. 1935, Folder 1935, Shapiro Papers. Roy Chapman Andrews wrote to Crocker to tell him “this was one of the most successful expeditions that the Museum has ever had”: 26 Apr. 1935, Box 9, Crocker Collection, California Academy of Sciences Archives, San Francisco.
65 Shapiro, Heritage of the “Bounty” (cit. n. 5), pp. 217, 221, 222, 232, 225, 254. The lack of variability among mixed-race individuals echoed Herskovits’ findings, though this was not mentioned.
island as a “kind of laboratory in which nature may be watched as she performs the miracle of welding alien types into an anthropological unit and thus illuminates the dark subject of our own racial status.” One reviewer of The Heritage of the “Bounty” argued analogically that “Pitcairn Island, its people and its development, but represent the world brought down to simplest elements.” For another, though, Shapiro’s narrative was just a “first-rate travel book of the very finest sort.” E. S. Craighill Handy, the anthropologist of the Marquesas, observed that “the Pitcairners have had the good fortune to be registered in the annals of science and history by a scientist whose sympathetic nature responded to theirs so genuinely.”

Back in New York, Shapiro was shocked at the racial policies of Nazi Germany, especially the yoking of anthropological science to technologies of extermination. The racial harmony of the Pacific now offered a strange and distant counterpoint to European prejudice. In October 1935 Shapiro approached Hooton, enjoining his former advisor to issue a public statement condemning race science and disassociating physical anthropologists from Nazi excesses. Although still committed to racial classification, Hooton was pleased to help. Boas told Shapiro he was “delighted” that an unimpeachable authority like Hooton was prepared to write a manifesto opposing scientific racism. Moreover, he agreed with Shapiro that, as Jews, they should not append their names to it. Hooton wrote to Boas to assure him that he was “entirely friendly” to him and “in complete sympathy” with his motives—but at the same time he was anxious to have Boas “refrain from entering the arena in regard to the Jewish question.” To his colleagues’ surprise, the amiably misanthropic Hooton would take on that responsibility.

Although he continued to assert the scientific validity of race, describing it as a vague “biological aggregate,” Hooton argued forcefully against racial prejudice. In particular, he denied any association of psychological or cultural attributes with physical form. Moreover, he pointed out that no pure races exist. “The present races of man have intermingled and inbred for thousands of years,” he wrote, “so that their genealogical lines have become inextricably confused.” In addition, he explicitly exonerated racial admixture, much to Shapiro’s satisfaction. “Hybrids exhibit a wide range of combinations of features and blends inherited from both parental races, but no degeneracy.” Hooton omitted from the final statement some of the incendiary text of his first draft: “The educated public,” he had thundered, “is advised to disregard and reject all racial propaganda purveyed by scheming politicians, by social agitators whether proletarian or pretended aristocratic, and by pseudo-scientists and journalists who exploit race prejudice and class hatred for pecuniary motives.” Shapiro optimistically supported the effort to moderate the language. “It is a

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67 Franz Boas, quoted in Shapiro to Earnest Hooton, 22 Oct. 1935, Folder 1935, Shapiro Papers. Boas also later wrote to Hooton (31 Mar. 1936), telling him that “being of Jewish descent I thought it best to keep in the background entirely”: Franz Boas to Hooton, Box 3, E. A. Hooton Papers, 995-1, Peabody Museum Archives, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as Hooton Papers). It is unclear whether the initiative came from Shapiro or Boas, but certainly it was Shapiro who approached Hooton.

68 Hooton to Boas, 28 Mar. 1936, 3 Apr. 1936, Franz Boas Papers, B B61, Series I, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter cited as Boas Papers). Hooton and Shapiro also asked for their names to be removed from the advisory board of the American Eugenics Society at about this time.
clear, forceful and absolutely balanced statement,” he told Hooton. “I am personally deeply grateful . . . I hated asking you.” 69 But most other physical anthropologists were reluctant to endorse even a qualified declaration. “They are unwilling to sign,” Hooton wrote to Boas, “because they do not wish to enter the arena of controversy and are unwilling to accept the responsibility of attaching their names to anything that may be interpreted as propaganda.” 70 Yet some had shown overt hostility to antiracist objectives. Regrettably, then, Hooton decided to publish the statement in *Science* under his sole authorship. 71

Political events in Europe were prompting many physical anthropologists in the United States to challenge the racist assumptions woven into their science, but some, like Boas and Shapiro, had found faults in the fabric of racial thought long before they were impelled to action. 72 In the Pacific, Shapiro had already come to appreciate racial hybridity and plasticity, observing complex processes of racial formation and development, discounting simple human typologies. He learned to accept and value human biological difference, which seemed to him separable from the equally appealing cultural variation he observed. In intellectual terms, one might argue that Shapiro was fulfilling the Boasian agenda in physical anthropology, pursuing a nominalist and statistical approach to race formation, studying human variation, hybridity, and malleability in the South Seas. 73 But this disavowal of the typological conception of race was predicated on matters at once more personal and more fundamental. In his Pacific fieldwork, Shapiro often found himself sympathetically engaged with his research subjects, relating to some of them, intimate with others. His contact with Marquesans made him sad and nostalgic; in the Tuamotus he rediscovered a sort of family; and on Pitcairn the islanders touched him with their generosity and hospitality. Such moments of contact, recognition, and sympathy may have been evanescent, but their accumulated impact was disconcerting and critical. Perhaps Shapiro’s Jewish heritage, and his sense of himself as a socially liminal figure at Harvard and the American Museum, made him unusually receptive to these other marginal people and promoted rapport with so-called misfits and hybrids, even as it turned him against

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70 Hooton to Boas, 28 Mar. 1936, Box 3, Hooton Papers. Tozzer and the Smithsonian anthropologist Alès Hrdlička were prepared to sign the statement without amendment; see Alfred Tozzer to Boas, 2 Nov. 1936, Boas Papers. As Hooton later mentioned to Boas: “Anthropologists, at any rate, I have found to be very touchy.” Hooton to Boas, 30 Oct. 1937, Boas Papers.
71 Earnest A. Hooton, “Plain Statements about Race,” *Science*, 1936, 83:511–513. Hooton altered the wording of his earlier drafts, adding some praise of nonracialist eugenics. But he also referred to use of “the specious excuse of racial difference” in social policy (p. 512). Moreover, he noted that “each racial type runs the gamut from idiots and criminals to geniuses and statesmen” (p. 513). American scientists as a group did not publicly condemn racism until 1938, when the American Anthropological Association passed a resolution to that effect, following the “Scientists’ Manifesto” of the same year. Shapiro became an outspaken opponent of racism in science, though not of all uses of race concepts, during World War II and later. See H. L. Shapiro, “Anthropology’s Contribution to Inter-racial Understanding,” *ibid.*, 1944, 99:373–376.
73 This challenges the claim of George W. Stocking, Jr., that the impact of Boas’s thinking on physical anthropology was “limited.” See his seminal “The Critique of Racial Formalism,” in *Race, Culture, and Evolution* (cit. n. 26), pp. 161–194, on p. 189.
proud Anglo-Saxons like Templeton Crocker. Thus in 1935, when he returned to New York and grimly faced the atrocities in Europe, he could still conjure up the mirage of the Pacific, still hear the roar of the surf and imagine a vision of oceanic racelessness. He kept rubbing his eyes, wondering if it could be true.