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HUXLEY'S HOPI SOURCES

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For years, Huxley scholars have agreed that the Savage Reservation scenes and John's Indian vocabulary in *Brave New World* ultimately came from the Acoma, Zuni and Hopi Pueblos in New Mexico and Arizona, probably reaching Huxley through D. H. Lawrence. This explanation is speculative and far from accurate. Huxley's journey across America in 1926, two Santa Fe Railway brochures, and ethnographical reports in the London Library provide clear answers to three essential questions.

1. What did Huxley know about the Zuni, and especially the Hopi?
2. When did he know it?
3. How did he know it?

By answering these questions, we can identify Huxley's three encounters with the Hopi which explain how he achieved such specificity and accuracy of detail in depicting the vocabulary, the snake-dance, and the pueblo scenes.

Although Huxley told interviewers in 1961 that he had "never been" to New Mexico before his visit with Frieda Lawrence in 1937, he obviously forgot what he was doing on 10-11 May 1926.¹ After a very busy four days in Los Angeles, enjoying time at the beach with Charlie Chaplin, watching scenes being filmed for a silent

¹ Huxley made his comment in his interview with George Wickes and Ray Frazer, *Writers at Work*, ed. George Plimpton (New York: Viking, 1963), 198.

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movie, and being appalled by the size of servings in a night club, the Huxleys boarded Santa Fe's California Limited at noon, 9 May and arrived at 8:20 Monday morning at the Grand Canyon, a side trip made possible by the Indian Detours plan.² A few days later, he wrote Mary Hutchinson that he had seen America's "two most remarkable phenomena—the Grand Canyon and Charlie Chaplin. Both very splendid."³ He took the bus tour along the Rim, and wrote Robert Nichols that "the Grand Canyon was quite up to specifications."⁴ He and Maria spent the entire day at the Canyon and returned to the main rail line in Williams, Arizona on the 7:35 train. The day had done more than expose Huxley to the landscape of the National Park. It also had introduced him to American Indian culture.

Along with the other tourists, the Huxleys were greeted by a group of Hopi performing welcoming dances. Directly across from the El Tovar Hotel were the Hopi House and usually a resident band of Hopi. The Hopi House was of particular interest to tourists. A three-storey replication of a building at Oraibi on the Hopi Mesas, it was largely staffed by Hopi from Hano-Tewa Pueblo, who could be seen potting, spinning, and weaving. The Indian Detour's booklet pronounced it "almost as good as a trip to the province of Tusayan [the Zuni, Hopi, and Navajo lands in northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico], minus the desert."⁵ In addition to selling their crafts, the Hopi men welcomed each train and staged non-religious dances; as Richard Clemmer notes, more and more people came to expect Hopis as

² I have been able to reconstruct the routing, times of arrival and departure, and other aspects of his trip from railway schedules provided by Maurine McMillen and staff of the Harvey House Museum (Belen, New Mexico), Ellen Halteman and Kathryn Santos of the California State Railroad Museum Library, and Craig Ordner of the Railroad and Heritage Museum (Temple, Texas).

³ *Aldous Huxley: Selected Letters*, ed. James Sexton (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 172.

⁴ *Letter of Aldous Huxley*, ed. Grover Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 268.

⁵ Fred Harvey, *El Tovar: A New Hotel at Grand Canyon of Arizona* (Chicago: Harvey House, 1906), 23.

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part of the “Grand Canyon scene.”⁶ This full day gave Huxley a sense of exotic Indian culture.

Because some in the audience may not know the Hopi, I need to make a few remarks about them. The Hopi are a pueblo tribe now numbering about 10,000 living on a 2.5 million acre reservation in northeastern Arizona. Intensely conservative, highly ritualistic, and very protective of their customs and beliefs, the Hopi live in nine villages high atop mesas, farming the valleys three to six hundred feet below. Their society is matriarchal. After a contentious encounter with Spanish explorers in 1540, they joined the 1680 Pueblo rebellion, slaughtered all Christian men in the pueblos, and were largely left to themselves until the 1850s. They have a rich mythology, a number of highly traditional dances, and a pantheon of some three hundred katsinas or spirits, mostly friendly. Representations of the katsinas are carved from cottonwood tree roots would certainly have been on exhibit in the Hopi House.

Leaving Williams at 5:40 Tuesday morning, Huxley had over twelve hours of Spring daylight to see the Arizona and New Mexico landscape and to become acquainted with several Pueblo sites before exiting New Mexico through the Raton tunnels into southeastern Colorado as darkness fell that evening. The Santa Fe routing is particularly interesting. Between Williams and Laguna, Huxley would have been surrounded by buttes, mesas, the lava wastes of Malpais which border the tracks on both sides just east and west of Grants, and miles and miles of usually arid countryside, paradoxically blooming with colorful late spring flowers. He would have seen a variety of Pueblos alongside the Rio San José and the Rio Grande. The route enabled Huxley to pass directly through the Laguna Reservation where the

⁶ Richard O. Clemmer, *Roads in the Sky: The Hopi Indians in a Century of Change* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 137.

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 tracks give a close-up view of the pueblo, the Navajo Canoncito Reservation, then the Pueblos of Isleta, Sandia, San Felipe, and Santo Domingo as the train traveled toward Albuquerque and then north up the Rio Grande valley.⁷

He would have had further opportunity to interact with Indian culture in Albuquerque, because Indians from various pueblos sold their wares to passengers during the wait in Albuquerque where the California Limited stopped for forty minutes. Alongside the station and the splendid Alvarado Hotel, there was an especially designed “Indian House” displaying historic crafts and enabling tourists to see weavers, silversmiths, potters, and basket makers creating their wares. The railway platform was an exciting venue in the 1920s.⁸ Photographs from the era show Cecil B. DeMille, Jack Dempsey, Rudolph Valentino and his Irish wolfhound, Dorothy Gish, Mary Pickford, and many other celebrities taking advantage of the stop. The California Limited was indeed the preferred way of travel between Los Angeles and Chicago, and the Santa Fe line surrounded its passengers all the way with Indian symbols, art, apparel, and eventually guides. Hopi katsinas, sand paintings, even Mimbres designs on the china reminded passengers that they were traveling through a land which had been a state only since 1912. Brochures promised passengers that they would be “nearer to the primitive than anywhere else on the continent,” and emphasized they would be “crossing a land in which foreign people, with foreign speech and foreign ways, offer them spectacles which can be equaled in very few Oriental lands.”⁹

⁷ New Mexico is most certainly Indian country. Today there are nineteen distinctive Pueblo tribes having sovereign nation status, three Apache reservations, a large area of Navajo lands, and a small Ute reservation spilling over from southwestern Colorado. The Pueblo tribes are named so because of their shared architectural style and ancestry.

⁸ This practice still continues when the Amtrak trains make their Albuquerque stop, but the number of vendors has decreased substantially.

⁹ D.H. Thomas, *The Southwestern Indian Detours* (Phoenix, Arizona: Hunter Publishing, 1978), 196.

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As the Huxleys trained across America, we can be positive that Huxley became acquainted with a travel brochure and a booklet on Hopi life, dances, and beliefs because he used information from them in his novel. For example, Bernard Marx's travel from Santa Fe to the Savage Reservation exactly follows the westbound luxury Indian Detours itinerary and shows Huxley's familiarity with the excursions and his interest in them. After spending the first evening in an "excellent" Santa Fe hotel, obviously a fictionalized La Fonda, Bernard and Lenina are piloted in a helicopter the following day by a Gamma octoroon deep into the reservation, taking them over ten of the nineteen New Mexican pueblos: "[Bernard] sleeping was carried over Taos and Tesuque, over Nambé and Picuris and Pojoaque, over Sia and Cochiti, over Laguna and Acoma and the Enchanted Mesa, over Zuni and Cibola and Ojo Caliente, and woke at last to find the machine standing on the ground" in Malpais.¹⁰ Notice that this itinerary clearly places Malpais in Arizona in Hopi lands.

The other brochure had a much further reaching impact on the writing of *Brave New World*. The Passenger Department of the Santa Fe Railway contracted Walter Hough, a respected anthropologist, to write *The Moki Snake Dance*, a sixty-four page booklet, generously illustrated with sixty-six photographs and drawings, and an ethnographically solid discussion of Hopi culture, life, and dances.¹¹ (Moki is the Navajo term for Hopi.) Huxley, of course, never visited the several Hopi settlements, but Hough's booklet gave him a good visual and verbal experience of their world. Specifically, it introduced Huxley to the easily defensible mesa-top pueblos of the Hopi, their Snake Dance which had gradually attracted so much tourist attention that they eventually closed it to outsiders, and the elaborate costumes and

¹⁰ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1946), 124.

¹¹ Walter Hough, *The Moki Snake Dance* (Passenger Department, Santa Fe, 1898). Hough's pamphlet was reprinted a number of times between 1903 and 1992. Avanyu Publishing (Albuquerque, New Mexico) has published a reprint (1992) with a very good introduction by Joseph Traugott.

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hairdos of the people. Hough promised his readers “a popular account of that unparalleled dramatic pagan ceremony . . . with incidental mention of [Hopi] life and customs,”¹² and his booklet delivers what travelers would have found exotic—photographs of sentimentalized naked children, unmarried Hopi girls with their squash blossom hairdos, pueblo sites, priests in ceremonial regalia, donkeys, and many shots of the Snake Dance. Hough tantalizes his reader by mentioning "swarthy priests," "mysterious rites, "rhythmic movements and tragic gestures of the dancers," and ceremonies which "make the blood curdle."¹³

When Huxley told his interviewers that “I had to do an enormous amount of reading up on New Mexico [for *Brave New World*], because I’d never been there. I read all sorts of Smithsonian reports on the place and then did the best I could to imagine it,”¹⁴ he takes us to the second and crucial moment when he engaged the Hopi in the Annual Reports of the Ethnographical Division of the Smithsonian Museum, especially Volumes Thirteen, Sixteen, and Nineteen. [I might note that the Smithsonian had published a cumulative index of the Reports in 1931, a great help to anyone.] Moving from the 1926 encounters to the 1931 encounters is like jumping from an introductory algebra text to an advanced calculus text. When Huxley turned, as he said he did, to the holdings of the London Library, he was soon reading the technical Annual Reports of the Smithsonian in which trained, professional anthropologists documented their studies of various Pueblo tribes’ languages, religions, diets, myths, and general culture. Huxley would have been particularly attracted by the work of Matilda Coxe Stevenson, Frank Hamilton Cushing, and Jesse Walter Fewkes whose reports gave thorough, scholarly discussions often of

¹² Hough, 1.

¹³ Hough, 3, 4, 15, and 8.

¹⁴ Wickes and Frazer, 198.

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considerable length and detail, illustrations through photographs and lithographs, numerous schematic drawings of floor and village plans, and copious notes. Nearby on the shelves, Huxley found Cushing's *Zuni Folk Tales* from which he took every Indian name, every Indian myth, and every Indian word which appears in *Brave New World*.¹⁵ Professor Margaret Sloan and I independently discovered this borrowing though we reached different conclusions as to how Huxley used the materials.¹⁶ Cushing had come to the Zuni on a three-month assignment from the Smithsonian in 1879 and stayed for four and a half years, became completely fluent in Zuni, and was initiated into the Priesthood of the Bow, the highest warrior group of the Zuni.

A far more substantial contribution was made by Fewkes's "Tusayan Snake Ceremonies," "Tusayan Migration Traditions," "Notes on Tusayan, Snake, and Flute Ceremonies," and perhaps his groundbreaking studies of katsinas. These essays expand, document, and fully explore and interpret most points made in Hough's brochure, and—perhaps the most important point—include M. Wright Gill's hand-tinted lithograph of the Snake Dance which translates Fewkes's black-and-white descriptions into vibrant, active, representational illustrations, for the first time giving Huxley an essential look at the Hopi in full ceremonial dress and action.¹⁷ Gill's lithograph details the pendant foxskin, the red kilt with the black-and-white zigzags of snakes and lightning, the white armlets, the heavy necklaces, and the prominent turkey-feather headdresses. This lithograph gave Huxley all the pertinent information

¹⁵ Frank Hamilton Cushing, *Zuni Folk Tales* (New York, Alfred P. Knopf, 1931).

¹⁶ See Margaret F. Sloan, "Frank Hamilton Cushing: A Source for Huxley's *Brave Old World*," *Aldous Huxley Annual*, 3 (2003), 129-53. I feel relatively certain that Professor Sloan and I felt that we were making a discovery of quite new materials; as so often with the study of Huxley, we were writing footnotes to earlier works. Peter Firchow had usefully pointed out *Zuni Folk Tales* and suggested its significance in his *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World"* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Bucknell University Press, 1984), 73-74. Sloan's approach suggests she was searching for sources of characters, settings, and actions. I approached the book searching for definite identification of the Zuni words.

¹⁷ Jesse Walter Fewkes, "Notes on Tusayan, Snake, and Flute Ceremonies," *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, D.C., 1900), 19:976-77.

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he needed about regalia, colors, and choreography. Fewkes had become intrigued with the Hopi upon meeting some at a railway station and earned a scholarly reputation with reports on his field trips of 1891, 1893, 1896, 1897, and 1900.

The third encounter remains speculative at this moment. There are suggestions that when he was through with the Annual Reports and *Zuni Folk Tales*, Huxley may have read further in John Gregory Bourke's 1884 *The Snake Dance of the Moquis*, Erna Fergusson's 1931 *Dancing Gods*, and Edward S. Curtis's *The North American Indians*. The tone and illustrations of the Bourke book would have attracted a novelist. Bourke was an archetypal soldier-adventurer with some considerable literary talent and a keen eye for detail. He was also an imperious intruder into the Indian world and at least once was bodily thrown out of a kiva which he had invaded. His record of his 1881 visit to the Hopi villages still has a charm missing from most of the other discussions, largely because of his vibrant, lively personality. Bourke's description of the Snake Dance is identical in detail to Hough's, except for his adjectives: "The spectacle was an astonishing one, and one felt at once bewildered and horrified at this long column of weird figures, naked in all excepting the snake-painted cotton kilts and red buckskin moccasins, bodies a dark greenish-brown, relieved only by the broad white armlets and the bright yellowish-gray of the fox skins dangling behind them, long elfin locks brushed straight back from the head, tufted with scarlet parrot or woodpecker feathers, faces painted black, as with a mask of charcoal, from brow to upper lip, where the ghastly white of kaolin began, and continued down over chin and neck, the crowning point being the deadly reptiles borne in mouth and hand, which imparted to the drama the lurid tinge of a

nightmare.”¹⁸ Erna Fergusson’s *Dancing Gods*, intended for the general reader, is a popularized description of various tribal dances throughout New Mexico and Arizona, ranging from the Mescalero Apache in southeastern New Mexico to the Navajo in northeastern Arizona. She pays particular attention to the Zuni, the Hopi, and the Navajo. She personally witnessed all the dances she describes but also draws heavily on Fewkes and Cushing. Unlike most of the other sources, Fergusson provides a brief discussion of the 1680 Pueblo rebellion led by Popé, and, like Bourke, she frequently mentions the dirt and squalor in the Hopi villages which assaulted her just as it does Lenina. She comments, “The Hopi, dirty at home, dirty in his person, careless of everything which the white man considers of greatest importance”; she sleeps on the rooftops rather than in the houses to escape “that persistent unsanitary smell so typical of Hopi houses” and the “hot thick stench of unwashed people.”¹⁹

Lacking evidence of any kind at present, we will probably never know if Huxley was familiar with Edward Sheriff Curtis’s monumental twenty-volume photographic record of North American Indians, particularly with Volumes 12 (1922) and 17 (1926) devoted to the Hopi and Zuni/Tiwa/Keres respectively.²⁰ We do know, however, that photographs from Volume 12 were reprinted in the Hough pamphlet and elsewhere, particularly his famous photographs of Walpi and the Snake Dance

With this background of the three important moments in the evolution of the Indian materials, let us turn to specific examples in Chapters Seven and Eight of *Brave New World*. Each year in August, a Hopi priest announces the advent of the nine-day ritual of the Snake Dance. During the next four days, the Snake Priests hunt

¹⁸ John Gregory Bourke, *The Snake Dance of the Moquis of Arizona* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884), 162-63.

¹⁹ Erna Fergusson, *Dancing Gods: Indian Ceremonials of New Mexico and Arizona* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1931), 121, 129, and 132.

²⁰ Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian: The Complete Portfolios*, ed. Hans Christian Adam (Cologne: Taschen, 2003).

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in the cardinal directions to gather fifty to sixty snakes. These snakes are taken to the kiva where they are sung to, ritually washed, dried in sand, and prepared for their role in the ceremony. The ninth day, they are taken to the *kisi*. The next morning, ceremony becomes spectacle.

After the morning Snake Race involving athletic young men, the Antelope priests enter the small plaza, followed by the Snake Priests. After various chants, a “carrier” selects a snake, places its neck in his mouth, and dances four times around the plaza. He is accompanied by the “holder” or “hugger,” another Snake Priest who puts his right arm on the “carrier’s” shoulders and strokes the snake with eagle features in his left hand. A “gatherer” collects each snake after it has been danced. Women sprinkle sacred cornmeal on them, then, at a signal, the dancers grab several snakes in their hands, run from the plaza to the base of the mesa, and release them, charging them to carry prayers for rain to the Snake Mother Goddess. The dancers return to the mesa, drink an emetic, and vomit until they are purged and purified—an act duplicated by Huxley’s John twice in the novel.

Consider the glimpses of this ceremony that Lenina Crowne and Bernard Marx see when they arrive near the end of the ritual. As they look on, “one of [the dancers] was holding a feather brush, the other carried, in either hand, what looked at a distance like three or four pieces of thick rope. One of the ropes writhed uneasily, and suddenly Lenina saw that they were snakes.”²¹ Elsewhere in the scene, the narrator tells us, “then suddenly the leader of the dancers broke out of the line, ran to a big wooden chest which was standing at one end of the square, raised the lid and pulled out a pair of black snakes. A great yell went up from the crowd, and all the other dancers ran towards him with outstretched hands. He tossed the snakes to the

²¹ *Brave New World*, 127.

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first-comers, then dipped back into the chest for more.”²² They also view the last act when “the dancers rushed forward, picked up the snakes and ran out of the square. Men, women, children, all the crowd ran after them.”²³ Huxley’s description of the Snake Dancers is very specific and surprisingly accurate. Lenina and Bernard see the Snake Priests thus: “their faces inhuman with daubings of scarlet, black and ochre. . . Their black hair was braided with fox fur and red flannel. Cloaks of turkey feathers fluttered from their shoulders’ huge feather diadems exploded gaudily round their heads. [The Spanish reported that the Zuni and Hopi had “herds” of turkeys.] With every step [the dancers] took came the clink and rattle of their silver bracelets, their heavy necklaces of bone and turquoise beads.”²⁴ Several pueblos have been suggested as the inspiration for the pueblo Lenina and Bernard visit, but they do not actually resemble the topography Huxley describes. Except for Acoma pueblo, only the Hopi pueblos are built high on mesas. Hough and Fewkes provided photographs of Walpi and three other Hopi pueblos, all of which are situated atop narrow, easily defended mesas, several hundred feet above the valleys the Hopi farm, all of which have stepped buildings, some in ill repair, and all reached by steep rocky paths. The mesa access to Walpi is relatively narrow, and Walpi itself resembles a large ship rising from the desert. Hough turned to the same image when he commented, “perched upon high, warm-tinted sandstone mesas, narrow like the decks of great Atlantic liners, are their clustered dwellings.”²⁵ The pueblos oddly awaken memories of the Acropolis. Huxley’s description picks up all the details he saw in the photographs: “The mesa was like a ship becalmed in a strait of lion-coloured dust. . . On the prow of that stone ship in the centre of the strait, and seemingly a part of it, a shaped and

²² *Brave New World*, 133.

²³ *Brave New World*, 135.

²⁴ *Brave New World*, 127.

²⁵ Hough, 19.

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geometrical outcrop of the naked rock, stood the pueblo of Malpais. Block above block, each story smaller than the one below . . . and on three sides the precipices fell sheer into the plain.”²⁶

The evidence that Huxley drew heavily on the works of Hough, Cushing, and Fewkes is overwhelming and necessitates a rewriting of our sense of how Huxley acquired his information about and knowledge of the Hopi which he then transformed into Chapters Seven and Eight of *Brave New World*. Some of you are probably waiting for me to mention D. H. Lawrence. I strongly feel that when it comes to the pueblo, the Snake Priests, and the Snake Dance, we have to have to dismiss Lawrence. His description of the Snake Dance he witnessed in August 1924 is marred by a number of erroneous observations, inaccurate descriptions, and heavy misinterpretations.²⁷ His general outline of the dance and the tone he imparts to the occasion well might have impressed Huxley, but Lawrence’s novel, *The Plumed Serpent*, which some have erroneously named as direct source, contains nothing in its eleven mentions of dances that could have influenced Huxley.²⁸

After studying the manuscript of *Brave New World*, Jerome Meckier suggested that Huxley may well have begun writing his novel with the Savage Reservation chapters. I think we can confidently say that at whatever point he began writing them and deciding what to use from his reading, he did so only after a considerable amount of research in books we can now identify.

²⁶ *Brave New World*, 107.

²⁷ D. H. Lawrence, *Mornings in Mexico* (London: Martin Secker, 1937).

²⁸ Huxley once called *The Plumed Serpent* "a mass of contradictions" and confessed that at times "one doesn't know what he's getting at" (Wickes and Frazer, 2009). The key scenes of Indian dances in the novel occur in Chapter 7, 9, 13, 17, 21, and 22. Nothing in the scenes resembles Huxley's depiction of the Snake Dances, the Savage Reservation, or the Hopi pueblo itself. See my full discussion in my *Wandering into Brave New World* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, forthcoming in 2013).