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Recommended Citation
Martinez, David William, "The Placeless in No Place: The Deconstructive Identity of *Homo Sacer* in *Brave New World*" (2009). *ECLS Student Scholarship.*
http://scholar.oxy.edu/ecls_student/13

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The Placeless in No Place:

The Deconstructive Identity of *Homo Sacer* in *Brave New World*

David William Martinez

Senior Comprehensives

19 March 2009

The dynamic relationship between the community and the outsider is fundamental in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* in deconstructing the façade of a paradise into the reality of a socially predestined state. Huxley creates dual utopian worlds with aims of establishing perfect stability and uses the Savage to critique their sacrifices of freedom for order. Through the protagonist's observations and condemnations along with his deviant thoughts and practices, he highlights the dangers of social conformity by opposing its inflexibility. Similar to Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, the Savage suffers from an inclusion into society through his exclusion and the ability to be killed but not sacrificed, separating him from the normal constructs of society. As an exclusive oddity he permanently occupies a state of placelessness in Huxley's utopias by deviating from the social conformity of both the natural world of the Reservation and the artificial one of the World State. This violation threatens the stability of both communities as the Savage's placelessness marks him as the antithesis to order, manifested through his hybrid identity. The compilation of his absence from all communities combined with his resistance to complete isolation or integration designates the Savage as the ultimate outsider, prompting the question of the significance of a character that operates in a permanent state of placelessness yet still remains a focal point to all communities. Huxley's protagonist highlights the utopia's predestined hostility toward the individual by operating in a perpetual state of opposition, leading to his inevitable destruction as a *homo sacer* figure and the deconstruction of Malpais and the World State as utopian communities.

Agamben's *Homo Sacer* constructs the framework for analyzing the Savage in *Brave New World's* utopias by mirroring the protagonist's extraordinary identity and

clarifying its role in his alienation and deconstruction. Translated as the sacred man, an obscure figure in Roman law, *homo sacer* comprises an individual whose inclusion into society originates from exclusion by the ability to be killed but not sacrificed (*Homo Sacer* 72). Designated as the state of exception and the sacred, these collaborative principles reinforce their compliment's structure with the former providing the foundation for the latter. Though *homo sacer's* characteristics initially appear contradictory, they actually yield a specific state of relation between the individual and the community, constructing a paradox whose complex characteristics define a zone of ambiguity with the law.

The first of *homo sacer's* two primary principles, the state of exception refers to an inclusion into society through exclusion. A zone of indifference between what lies inside and outside, it forms when the law approaches its limit or threshold, blurring its barriers (*State of Exception* 23). Portrayed in the relationship between the exception and the rule, the former acts as a kind of exclusion from the latter as it separates itself from the rule. The exception "is not, on account of being excluded, absolutely without relation to the rule. On the contrary, what is excluded in the exception maintains itself in relation to the rule in the form of the rule's suspension. The rule applies to the exception in no longer applying." (*Homo Sacer* 18) Manifested in the circumstances of the outsider, the state of exception characterizes the individual's connection to society through negation, defining its relation to the affirmative by what it is not.

Instituting the state of exception as the foundational framework for the sacred, *homo sacer's* ability to be killed but not sacrificed comprises the second aspect of his identity. This status becomes further complicated by the potential perpetrator's

exemption from punishment as the killing cannot be considered homicide or sacrilege. Therefore, what constitutes the condition where life can be taken without constituting repercussions from either human or divine law? The relation of the ban clarifies this peculiarity as "he who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable" (28). When the law discards both its protection and punishment by abandoning *homo sacer,* he becomes subjected to a state of nature where he may be killed with impunity. The seemingly indisputable natural rights of man then become irrelevant at the point where they can no longer be attributed to a citizen of a state (126). Thus, the withdrawal of the law no longer constitutes homicide in *homo sacer's* death due to the state of nature while simultaneously separating him from the ritualistic legality of sacrifice.

The Savage's extraordinary circumstances coincide with the characteristics of the state of exception and the sacred, designating him as *homo sacer* and alienating him from both Malpais and the World State. An individual devoid of a homogenous identity yet inexplicably linked to all communities, the protagonist's characteristic inclusion through exclusion marks him as an individual in a society without them. Accidently conceived by parents from the World State yet born and raised on the Indian Reservation of Malpais, the Savage becomes the hybrid product of two polar societies; characteristic of both worlds but belonging to neither. The fusion between the natural and technological, a futuristic synthesis of man and beast, he characterizes Agamben's *loup garou*, "the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither." (105) Constituting an extraordinary state of exception

based on location of birth and heritage, the Savage's identity creates a zone of indifference between the two utopias.

Abandoned by the regulative decrees of the law and thus exempt from legal execution or divine sacrifice, the Savage exemplifies the sacred through his inevitable suicide. As a final act of defiance he hangs himself, constituting a death that is neither homicide nor sacrifice. His suicide not only constitutes the sacred, but also another state of exception, the ability to designate what may be killed with impunity. By killing himself, the Savage expresses "man's sovereignty over his own existence," creating a threshold of indifference between inclusion and exclusion of the law as it cannot permit or forbid the act (136-7). He not only preserves his ambiguous identity through suicide but also equates himself with the sovereign. The combination of the Savage's state of exception and sacredness designates him as *homo sacer*, separating him from Malpais and the World State while permanently linking him to the two polar communities even after death.

Undermining the rigid stability structures of the dual utopias, the Savage's hybrid identity deconstructs the foundations of Malpais and the World State, targeting their social constructions. Utilizing similar structural principles, the utopias use unalterable identities to create fixed social positions or places, defining the role of the individual as a part of a larger construct. Continuity then becomes the pillar of the two communities as "stability is the foundation on which all else is built…true of all utopias and even anti-utopias…[developing into] places where nothing important ever changes" (Firchow 84). These stagnant constraints require the individual to abandon their creative spirit and right to think and act alone, creating stability in the community through intellectual

standardization (Matter 97). By predestining the lives of its citizens, Malpais and the World State solidify their communities through physical and psychological limits, avoiding the irregularities of the individual in exchange for the pervasiveness of a universal standard.

The emphasis of the body in the fixed identity structures of the dual utopias highlights its importance in the enforcement of stability. A primary target for the sovereign in maintaining continuity, Agamben characterizes the incorporation of the body into the political sphere as "biopolitics, that is, the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power" (*Homo Sacer* 119). Crucial in upholding stability, biopolitics permeates throughout *Brave New World* as the glorification of pain and pleasure become the foundational social structures of Malpais and the World State.

Fortifying its structuralized stability on superstition and pain to reinforce cultural homogeny, the Reservation blends Indian and Christian religions together to form a hybrid of continuity. Establishing a doctrine of sacrifice and labor through physical exertion, the natural world highlights the importance of the body as a structure of permanence. Designating life as a series of rituals requiring the appropriate cause for the desired effect, the sacrifice of the body becomes the primary principle in both the secular and spiritual, exemplified in the fertility ritual. In order to satisfy spiritual superstition regarding physical needs, the participant endures flagellation "for the sake of the pueblo – to make the rain come and the corn grow. And to please Pookong and Jesus" (Huxley 117). Through the necessity of physical pain and ceremonial denial, the Reservation

implements a system of stability based on sacrifice, designating the foundation of life as the endurance of discomfort.

The World State's doctrine counters the pain-oriented society of the natural world with a dogma of pleasure, forming a caste system of social predestination geared toward happiness. Utilizing the technology of genetic manipulation and sleep-instituted propaganda, the community creates a socially predestined state by providing a cohesive system of interdependence and prejudice. Incorporating the biopolitical through the manipulation of its citizen's health and conditioning, the futuristic society solidifies its stability in providing "the secret of happiness and virtue - liking what you've got to do. All [of their] conditioning aims at that: making people like their inescapable social destiny" (16). Anti-social behavior becomes a communal taboo as citizens formulate the standard base of social reinforcement, continually aided by government propaganda. By placating and controlling both the individual and the masses, the World State ensures its duration by attributing its permanence to the consistency of its parts (Firchow 85). Using drugs and recreation to pacify the community, the artificial society grounds its doctrine on happiness through social interaction, disillusioning its citizens with individuality.

With the formation of the two utopias dependent on an immovable identity structure geared toward creating a fixed position or place within the community, the Savage's extraordinary circumstances destabilizes the social construction. An individual connected to all communities but belonging to none, his state of exception requires a position but denies a standard social identity, forcing him to define himself in relation to his exclusion, using the community as a reference point. Separated from the strict social structure of the World State, the Savage establishes his identity by what he is not as he

defines himself first in relation to characteristics connected to the community and then as an exception. Thus, his inclusive exclusion creates a new position of no place, the negated state of placelessness.

With Malpais and the World State striving to attain stability through a fixed identity structure, the Savage's state of exception undermines their efforts as his placelessness challenges the perfection of the utopias' social frameworks. His unique identity creates an ambiguity with the law as his presence inside and outside of community forms a zone of indifference, forming the suspense of order (*Homo Sacer* 18). Constituting a physical as well as theoretical space within the community, the Savage's placelessness in "No Place" exemplifies his unique identity. Separate from all communities, real or imagined, his utopian birth removes him from the constructs of all ordinary communities while his extraordinary upbringing divides him from the utopias, constituting the Savage as the ultimate outsider. This assault on the structural foundations of Malpais and the World State forces them to strengthen their fundamental doctrines, imposing further isolation or integration onto the community.

Introduced to the Reservation through his extraordinary birth, the Savage destabilizes the façade of a natural utopia characteristic of the past by disrupting the racial and cultural homogeny of the community. Begrudged by the intrusion of an outsider, the Indians persecute the protagonist based on his appearance. Frustrated and dejected, the Savage confides in Bernard, "'But they wouldn't let me [perform the fertility ritual]. They disliked me for my complexion. It's always been like that. Always.' Tears stood in the young man's eyes; he was ashamed and turned away." (Huxley 117) The Savage's deviant physical characteristics perpetuate the divide by

contributing to his qualities as an outsider, highlighting his state of exception and the contention his placelessness creates with Malpais. Rather than integrating the Savage into the community, the Indians exclude him from traditional ceremonies as "suddenly, one of the men stepped forward, caught him by the arm, and pulled him out of the ranks…This time the man struck him, pulled his hair. 'Not for you, white-hair!' 'Not for the son of the she-dog,' said one of the other men." (136) Undermined by the racially deviant and traditionally unorthodox characteristics of the Savage, the natural utopia of the Reservation attempts to isolate the threat, removing the deconstructive individual from society.

Migrating from the natural community of Malpais into the artificial utopia of the World State, the Savage undermines the fixed stability structure of the caste system by constructing a new identity outside of its parameters. This persona opposes the fundamental guidelines of the World State, characterized by its motto, "COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, STABILITY" (3). Interlocking the three categories through social predestination and propaganda to strengthen their effect, the artificial utopia uses an immovable identity structure to create a stable community. Communal norms reinforce continuity by discouraging individuality, solidifying the caste system. Thus, the three components of the slogan support one another to form the fundamental principles of the World State. However, the Savage's placelessness opposes these principles by forming a new identity outside of the rigid caste system, promoting individuality outside of social norms. By formulating a new persona outside of the standardized social structure, the protagonist defies the artificial utopia's attempt to integrate him into society.

Threatened by the deconstructive identity of the Savage, the utopias pursue opposite methods of maintaining social unity, instituting policies of isolation and integration. Withdrawing from the Savage, the Reservation excludes him from communal ceremonies, separating him from the culture to negate his hybrid identity. The World State institutes the opposite approach by overwhelming the protagonist with communal activities, introducing him to feely movies and soma orgies in an effort to absorb him into the community and destroy his individuality. Reflecting on the conflicting policies of the two utopias, the Savage realizes, "At Malpais he had suffered because they had shut him out from the communal activities of the pueblo, in civilized London he was suffering because he could never escape from those communal activities, never be quietly alone" (235). His deviation from the conformity of the natural world of Malpais and the artificial society of the World State formulates the tension of his hybrid identity, undermining the stability of each society.

Despite the policies of isolation and integration perpetrated by the utopias, the Savage retains his hybrid identity, maintaining his placelessness in the world. His ideals from the natural world conflict with the social standards of progress from the artificial utopia, alienating him from both societies as he struggles to maintain his duality. Progress and passion become the manifestations of their respective communities, conflicting with their counterparts to form the primary struggle between stability and placelessness.

Disrupted by the intrusion of the Savage and his mother, the Indians persecute them for their notions of progress, targeting disruptive principles which undermine communal values in the Reservation. These attacks primarily focus on Linda's skills and

behavior, reflective of the Savage's developing hybrid identity. Highlighting the confrontation between competing value structures, the protagonist recalls criticism from the community: "Sometimes, too, they laughed at him for being so ragged. When he tore his clothes, Linda did not know how to mend them. In the Other place, she told him people threw away clothes with holes in them and got new ones" (129-30). The World State's glorification of consumption contends with the Reservation's praise of frugality. However, the most striking conflict between communal values occurs when Linda's promiscuity prompts retaliation. Engaging in sexual intercourse with several men in a predominately monogamous society, three women attack Linda: "One of the women was holding her wrists. Another was lying across her legs, so she couldn't kick. The third was hitting her with a whip" (126). The conflict between the World State values imposed on the Savage by his mother and the social standards of the Reservation inevitably lead to the natural utopia's attempt to isolate itself from the outsiders, protecting the community from individuality.

While the Savage's characteristics of progress inhibit his indoctrination into the Reservation, his passions become the primary manifestation of the conflict with the World State. The sterilization of feelings in the artificial utopia collides with the vibrant emotions of the Savage, creating perplexing and disastrous consequences which disrupt both society and him. Unfamiliar with the uninhibited lifestyle of liberated sexuality and unconditioned to the intense peculiarities of restrained passion, the Savage and Lenina clash idealistically as his chivalry conflicts with her sexual freedom. The incompatibility of opposing forces explodes into a confrontation of identities as naked and rejected, Lenina "suddenly heard the grinding of his teeth. 'What is it?' She almost screamed.

And as though awakened by her cry he caught her by the shoulders and shook her. 'Whore!' he shouted. 'Whore! Imprudent Strumpet!'" (194). Lenina's inability to understand love in a society devoid of the emotion collides with the Savage's expectations of self-denial in a world of indulgence as the breakdown of communication reflects conflicting cultural views.

The contention between the placeless identity of the Savage and the immovable social structure of the World State erupts with the death of Linda as the protagonist attempts to reconcile the poisonous pleasures of society with the temporality of life. Watching his mother die from overconsumption of soma, his passions compel him to impress his ideals onto the World State, confronting its hedonistic ideology. "Dangerous to stability and therefore antagonistic to public good," his passions overwhelm him, highlighting the struggle between his hybrid identity and the dominant World State culture (Matter 97). Instigating an open rebellion against the established social order, the protagonist liberates the hospital workers without their consent as he grabs boxes of soma and throws them out the window, sparking a riot: "'Free, free!' the Savage shouted, and with one hand continued to throw the *soma* into the area while, with the other, he punched the indistinguishable faces of his assailants" (213). The contention between the Savage and the pleasure-oriented society of the World State explodes into a physical conflict, illuminating the underlining struggle between placelessness and stability as the two entities struggle for dominance.

With the Savage's hybrid identity disrupting the stability of Malpais and the World State through its manifestation in progress and passion, the two utopias respond with policies of isolation and integration, contending with the irreconcilable individual

they seek to eliminate. Grounding the natural world of the Reservation in a permanence of pain and superstition while solidifying the artificial society of the World State in a doctrine of predestination and pleasure, the Savage's contention with the communities predestines his suicide as they threaten to destroy his individuality. His dilemma revolves around the problem that "in neither society…does any provision for such a being [as him] exist. Both societies have abolished individuality in order to become either subhumanly bestial or subhumanly mechanical. Both have paid far too high a price for social stability" (Firchow 35). The retention of the Savage's hybrid identity combined with his placelessness forces him into an inevitable confrontation with his opposing elements and society, forming the basis for his demise.

Conflicted by the polarity of his hybrid identity and targeted by the utopias for isolation or integration due to his placelessness, the Savage confronts an inescapable destiny of destruction as his deconstructive persona threatens society and himself. Recognizing the World State's attempt to destroy his individuality, he characterizes his corruption, admitting, "'It poisoned me; I was defiled. And then,' he added, in a lower tone, 'I ate my own wickedness'" (Huxley 241). Attempting to counteract the growing influence of modern civilization, the Savage undergoes a strict purification process as he tries to balance the polar elements of his hybrid identity. Penitence becomes closely linked with death, exemplified as "From time to time he stretched out his arms as though he were on the Cross, and held them thus through long minutes of an ache…in voluntary crucifixion, while he repeated, through clenched teeth… 'Oh forgive me! Oh, make me pure!'" (244). It becomes the Savage's only process in resisting integration as he attempts to preserve his individuality, acknowledging his failure to overcome his own vices.

Threatened by the World State's increasing success in corrupting his identity, the protagonist relies on the less effective purification process in maintaining his duality. Dependent on the violation of one of the Savage's ideals, penitence acts as a reactionary process rather than a precautionary one. Thus, the Savage becomes increasingly integrated into society as he compromises his ideals in preparation for his self-imposed exile for "when it came to pan-glandular biscuits and vitaminized beef-surrogate, he had not been able to resist the shopman's persuasion. Looking at the tins now, he bitterly reproached himself for his weakness. Loathsome civilized stuff!" (246). By continuing to fall deeper into the World State's integration cycle, the Savage's penitence foreshadows his inevitable demise as he struggles to maintain his hybrid identity through a process linked with death.

Troubled by the increasing integration of his hybrid identity into the World State's culture, the protagonist purifies his constitution through penitence, forcing his inevitable suicide to maintain his placelessness. Awakening after a night of drugs and sex, the Savage, "Stupefied by soma, and exhausted by a long-drawn frenzy of sensuality…lay for a moment, blinking in owlish incomprehension at the light; then suddenly remembered – everything" (258-9). Failing to prevent the corruption of civilization from continuing to defile his ideals, he confronts his inadequacies and the inevitability that he will become further integrated, destroying his duality. Facing the destruction of his hybrid identity, the Savage hangs himself, reconstituting his individuality through the sovereign decision by separating himself from the social order and redefining his placelessness through another state of exception.

By reaffirming his individuality, he undermines the fixed social structure of the artificial utopia as the preservation of his hybrid identity deconstructs the stability of the community. The World State's inability to integrate the Savage into society demonstrates its imperfection in controlling and eliminating individuals, compromising a fundamental principle in utopian societies. Furthermore, by enacting the sovereign decision through suicide, the Savage defies the political structure of the World State, usurping a position of power equal to the ruler as "At the extreme limits of the order, the sovereign and *homo sacer* present two symmetrical figures that have the same structure and are correlative" (*Homo Sacer* 84). By maintaining his individuality through suicide to constitute the sovereign decision, the Savage invalidates the sacrifices of the artificial utopia by uprooting its stability structure and political power.

Though the protagonist's death occurs in the wilderness of the World State, his suicide also constitutes a deconstruction of the natural utopia of Malpais as the protagonist becomes a token figure of the Reservation. With the Indians adopting a policy of cultural isolation to combat the Savage's placelessness, the natural world's racial stability structure becomes uprooted when the Savage dies as a manifestation of the community, defying its homogeny. The lighthouse becomes an appropriated Indian Reservation, fulfilling the Warden's predictions: "There is no escape from a Savage Reservation…Those, I repeat, who are born in the Reservation are destined to die there" (Huxley 102). By failing to separate the Savage from the community before his death, Malpais suffers from a corruption of its racial and cultural homogeny, deconstructing its foundations as a utopia by undermining its stability.

A unique phenomenon that threatens the stability of the utopias regardless of location, the Savage fulfills the imperative role of the ultimate outsider in Huxley's novel. Paramount to the deconstruction of the two communities, the protagonist's placeless identity succeeds where other deviants have failed. The World State has already created a method for handling the crisis of individuality within the caste system by shipping off citizens to islands (Walsh 96). Through abroad, these individuals still operate within the social order in an alternate tier of the caste system. By consigning him to the role of the ultimate outsider, the protagonist becomes the embodiment of a universal *homo sacer*, operating in a state of exception with all communities in *Brave New World*.

Exposed to the escalating threat of isolation or integration due to his resistance to social conformity, he straddles the line between masochism and madness as he struggles to redefine himself in the midst of ever-changing circumstances. Operating in a permanent placeless state, the Savage becomes a focal point in Malpais and the World State, contending with the polarity of his own internal characteristics as well as the conflicting ideologies of his location. "Because he hovers between the two societies, - one that rejects him and the other that he rejects – he is that unique phenomenon in both the Fordian and Indian worlds: the man who is utterly alone. (Firchow 27-28) His reconstitution of his individuality and hybrid identity through his suicide deconstructs the stability structures of the utopias, negating their sacrifices for success.

Deconstructing the stability structures of Malpais and the World State, the Savage embodies the characteristics of an ultimate outsider, devoid of any relation to the community but the state of exception. Similar to Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, the

protagonist operates in a perpetual zone of indifference with society through the sacred. His inclusive exclusion designates him a placeless position in the rigid social structure of the utopias, highlighting his hybrid identity which undermines the communities' stability. Defying the Reservations cultural isolation and the World State's social integration, the Savage's passions and notions of progress conflict with both the polar communities and his own ideals. Unable to maintain his duality through masochistic purification, the Savage hangs himself, reconstituting individuality through the sovereign decision. His inability to be isolated or integrated into the social order undermines the stability structures of the utopias, threatening the foundations of their constructions and negating their sacrifices for success. In formulating the Savage as an individual devoid of a homogenous national identity, Huxley creates a hybrid capable of deconstructing the utopias of Malpais and the World State while exemplifying the larger opposition between the community and the outsider.

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