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FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND
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Criticism by Genre: The Menippean Tradition in British Dystopian Fiction
(*Erewhon* and *Brave New World*)

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Criticism by Genre: The Menippean Tradition in British Dystopian Fiction

(Erewhon and Brave New World)

By Elena Ilina, B. A. (Hons), M.A.

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postgraduate Studies in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa

University of Ottawa

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395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-59520-6
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-59520-6

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There can be no question . . . of a 'definitive' interpretationCriticism is always a dialogue between the writer and his readers at one point in time

The purpose of criticism must be to illuminate the possibilities and the rewards of this dialogue; to keep it alive by the very recognition, if need be, that the critic is more ephemeral than the authors whom he chooses to serve; that he is one link in a long and unfolding chain which their living influence becomes. A critic may hope, of course, that a reader will find much in what he says to agree with; but to stimulate a personal response measured against his own, to stimulate excited disagreement if need be, is one of the legitimate functions he can claim. (Dyson, *Crazy Fabric* xii)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council whose generous grant allowed me to focus on this work. In this connection, I owe a special debt to Dr. Keith Wilson whose painstaking attention to my SSHRC proposal won me this Award.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Donald Childs, for his support, guidance, patience, and unfailing dependability during the whole course of my work on this thesis. My most heartfelt thanks are to the English Department of the University of Ottawa and to Dr. Irena Makaryk, in particular, for valuable advice and continuing encouragement and support in the course of my studies at the University of Ottawa.

Last, but not least, I thank my husband and my daughter for their love and support.

Criticism by Genre: The Menippean Tradition in British Dystopian Fiction
(*Erewhon* and *Brave New World*)

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A Note on *Erewhon's* Text

All references to Butler's *Erewhon* or *Over the Range* are to the novel's text edited by Hans-Peter Breuer and Daniel F. Howard (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1981). Based on the second July, 1872, publication of *Erewhon*, Breuer's and Howard's edition presents what the editors call "the nineteenth-century version" of the novel and lists all the alterations and revisions Butler made for his 1901 edition in the appendix. The editors thus give readers the unique opportunity to acquaint themselves with *Erewhon's* original 1872 text, to identify the changes Butler made in his later 1901 revised edition, and to judge for themselves whether the writer's outlook underwent any significant changes.

List of Abbreviations

<i>E</i>	<i>Erewhon</i>
<i>ER</i>	<i>Erewhon Revisited</i>
<i>LH</i>	<i>Life and Habit</i>
<i>EON</i>	<i>Evolution, Old and New</i>
<i>NB</i>	<i>Notebooks</i>
<i>BNW</i>	<i>Brave New World</i>
<i>BNWR</i>	<i>Brave New World Revisited</i>
<i>DL</i>	<i>The Devils of Loudun</i>

Abstract

“Criticism by Genre: The Menippean Tradition in British Dystopian Fiction” investigates the origins of distinctive features of the English dystopian novel in the ancient and longstanding tradition of Menippean satire. The study traces this influence in the two novels that are most influential on the twentieth-century dystopian tradition in England: Butler’s *Erewhon* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*. Starting with a critical survey of the main concepts and terms that animate contemporary approaches to dystopian fiction, the study identifies a lacuna in the present understanding of the nature and function of this genre: no one has yet appreciated its descent from Menippean satire. Recognizing the debt *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* owe to the tradition of Menippean satire and to the work of its famous practitioners--Lucian, Thomas More, Voltaire, Diderot, and Swift--the study reassesses the attitudes toward human nature and the human condition that are developed in these novels, especially as these attitudes emerge through the voice of a *fallible* narrator. Identifying an ironic structure within these novels that prevents identification of the narrator’s point of view with that of the author--an ironic structure almost universally ignored in the critical literature on these novels--the study modifies prevailing definitions of the dystopian genre as a whole and corrects prevailing misunderstandings of Butler and Huxley, providing new interpretations of their structural use of irony on the one hand, and of their attitudes toward human nature and the human condition on the other. The study also explores the critically neglected affinities between *Erewhon* and Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Diderot’s *Supplement to Bougainville’s “Voyage”* and *Brave New World*, arguing that the polemics that Butler and Huxley maintain with the work of their famous predecessors allows us to recognize some distinctly dystopian aspects of their novels.

Introduction

The present study attempts to rethink the genre of dystopian fiction by focusing on those aspects of some British dystopian novels which have been either ignored or disregarded by major critical studies of the genre or of its particular representative works. Major contemporary studies tend to regard dystopian fiction as a relatively recent, twentieth-century phenomenon which is mainly characterized by its negative response to numerous optimistic nineteenth-century fictional utopias and their disastrous twentieth-century incarnations in the real-life societies of the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Cuba, and various other countries. The fear of totalitarian nightmare may explain why the canon of dystopian fiction, quantitatively modest in comparison with that of the other literary genres, has generated a wealth of critical books, articles, and dissertations. However, the critical assumptions that underlie major interpretations of dystopian classics show rare consistency. Numerous critical approaches to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* interpret these dystopian classics as severe criticism of the utopian ideal, as a warning against dangerous trends that already manifest themselves in the writers' contemporary societies, or as an expression of fear of totalitarian nightmare. Significantly, these interpretations also manifest the critical tendency to identify the dystopian writer's views and position with those of his protagonist(s) and to assume that the meaning in a dystopian novel is based on a clearly delineated opposition between the oppressive power of the ruling regimes and the helplessness of the individuals subjected to oppression. Above all, these interpretations assume that dystopian novels powerfully articulate the writers' belief in the existence of some immutable core in human nature that can resist social oppression and cultural conditioning and that dystopian texts allow a reconstruction of humanist values that underlie them.

This view of dystopian fiction as primarily social and political criticism of dehumanizing trends in the dystopian writer's contemporary society has been further reinforced by the critical tradition of tracing the origin of the dystopian novel to Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921). The undeniable structural and thematic similarities between Zamyatin's novel and later dystopian classics--the similarities that Orwell claimed to be the first to notice--formed a foundation for developing generic conventions to guide scholars of and commentators on dystopian fiction in their approach to its interpretation. Following Orwell's lead, many critics still maintain that *We* served as a literary generic model for Huxley and Orwell, among others, to imitate.

Clearly, the need to identify the generic conventions common to a literary genre is of paramount importance for a valid interpretation of this genre's constituent members. As E. D. Hirsch claims in his *Validity in Interpretation*, "all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound" and "valid interpretation is always governed by a valid inference about genre" (*Validity* 76, 113). Gary Saul Morson, too, shares Hirsch's position on the importance of correctly identifying the genre of a literary work for its valid interpretation, asserting that "in order to understand an author's intentions regarding a work one must first understand his intentions regarding the *kind* of work he is writing" (59).

However, in tracing the origin of dystopian fiction to Zamyatin's *We*, current dystopian criticism neglects the affinities some dystopian novels display with their ancient models and their earlier literary sources. Above all, dystopian criticism neglects the roots of dystopian fiction in Menippean satire. Far from being an exclusively twentieth-century phenomenon, literary dystopia has its origin in antiquity and its roots can be traced back to Aristophanes and Lucian. In their seminal study *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, the Manuels classify Aristophanes' play *The Parliament of*

Women as an “ancient dystopia” (544), calling our attention to the fact that it “was contemporaneous with Plato’s *Republic*” (6). Similarly, Rudolph emphasizes the dystopian character of some of Lucian’s writings, observing that “dystopia already exists in the Second Century CE” (2). The Manuels, Kumar, Elliott, and Berneri all recognize the dystopian or anti-utopian character of Aristophanes’ or Lucian’s writings, yet, significantly, there appears to be no study that traces this influence and acknowledges the debt modern British dystopian writers owe to the genre’s ancient practitioners. And, even though some scholars observe the connection between dystopian fiction and the ancient genre of Menippean satire, neither this connection, nor its implications for valid interpretations of dystopian classics, have been explored.

Moreover, Huxley’s debt to Zamiatin’s *We* is disputed by those scholars who correctly indicate that Huxley’s earlier novel *Chrome Yellow* outlines both the plan and the foundational principles for the fictional society he describes in his *Brave New World*. In my selection of dystopian novels for this study, I place major emphasis on Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* as an important link in the evolution of the British dystopian novel. A Menippean work that looks back to More’s delightful humour and Swift’s sarcasm and anticipates Huxley’s, Orwell’s, and Burgess’s dark and unforgiving irony, *Erewhon* signals the emergence of a truly dystopian *Weltanschauung* among the score of optimistic nineteenth-century utopias. The generic status of *Erewhon* is far from being settled. Even though the novel is occasionally classified as a dystopia, this classification is, as I intend to argue, misleading.

Huxley both knew and appreciated the work of his predecessor. He wrote a preface to one of the editions of *Erewhon* and spoke understandingly of Butler’s “solitary voice crying--or rather gently and ironically murmuring--in the wilderness of

Victorian zeal” (Introduction xvii). Even though *Brave New World* is not modeled on *Erewhon*, the two novels belong to the same literary tradition.

Generically, *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* share a common origin in Menippean satire and retain its plots (e.g. imaginary voyage) and devices (e.g. utopian defamiliarization or the use of fantastic features in the fictional society to comment on the author’s society of reference); thematically, they share the concern of all major classical dystopias of the twentieth century: disillusionment with the power of human reason and acknowledgement of the human inability to escape one’s social and cultural conditioning; and structurally they share the use of a *fallible* narrator or protagonist and the use of irony as a structural principle.

Major studies of *Erewhon* and *Brave New World*, and of dystopian fiction in general, are intensely content-oriented and rarely go beyond a more or less extensive paraphrase of social arrangements and practices in portrayed fictional societies. Also, many critics of and commentators on *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* base their interpretations of these novels on the assumption that their respective structures of meaning are based on sets of clearly delineated dichotomies. For example, *Erewhon* is often regarded as a plea to renounce dehumanizing technology, whereas *Brave New World* is interpreted as an unequivocal condemnation of totalitarian regimes. These readings, however, can only be maintained if little or no attention is paid to the literary features of these novels, to the elements of different literary genres they incorporate, to the structural irony that undermines the novels’ surface binary oppositions, and to the function of a *fallible* narrator or protagonist. My study, thus, approaches the British dystopian novel from a new and previously unattempted perspective. Despite its narrow focus on Butler’s *Erewhon* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*, it pursues a larger goal of establishing a different framework that can be used for approaching the interpretation of

other dystopian classics, such as Wells's *The Time Machine*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Orwell's *1984*, and Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. I trace the origin of the dystopian novel from the ancient works of Aristophanes, Lucian, and Plato, to the Renaissance practitioner of Menippean Satire, Thomas More, to the Enlightenment *philosophes* Voltaire and Diderot, and to Jonathan Swift. Placing the work of prominent British dystopians--Butler and Huxley--within the ancient, yet constantly renewed tradition of ironic reflection on the limits of human intellect, human nature, and the human predicament--inimical to Menippean satire--allows me to bring into focus those aspects of dystopian fiction which have been disregarded by other critics, but which, in my opinion, constitute the most prominent features of the genre.

Tracing the roots of the British dystopian novel to Menippean satire, I argue that Butler and Huxley use the genre as a vehicle for expressing their profound pessimism and sense of the meaninglessness and futility of human life. This pessimism finds expression in both writers' ironic treatment of values that a utopian writer may see as the foundation of a meaningful human life. These values include trust in human reason; the belief in an infallible authority--religious, social, parental, etc; a vision of desirable alternatives to the existing order; appreciation of familial or romantic attachments; faith in the power and function of art (or work); and last, but not least, the view of the human individual as "the source and agent of conscious action," rather than as a socially and culturally conditioned subject.

From my perspective, major current critical approaches to dystopian fiction are plagued by many shortcomings. Among these shortcomings are: first, the disregard of the roots of dystopian fiction in Menippean Satire and, thus, the disregard of the structural irony and epistemological uncertainty underlying dystopian classics; second, the neglect of the earlier literary models to which my selected novels develop a network

of references and allusions; and third, the erroneous and misleading concept of a constant, positive, life-affirming human nature which, according to major studies of dystopian fiction, informs the dystopian novel. The fourth factor, and the corollary of the above listed three critical omissions undermining valid interpretations of dystopian fiction, concerns the excessive critical focus on dystopian fiction as social and cultural criticism of the writers' contemporary societies and, thus, the excessive focus on the description of organization, arrangements, rituals, and sexual practices in dystopian fictional societies.

Consequently, in this dissertation I focus on the structural aspects of *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* as Menippean satires rather than on the detailed descriptions of arrangements, rituals, and practices in their fictional societies; on the implications of Butler's presentation of his narrator and Huxley's presentation of his protagonists as *fallible*; and on the melancholic and pessimistic worldview which underlies the work of both writers. At the same time, this dissertation also explores the often unstated assumptions which guide critical interpretations of my selected novels and of dystopian fiction in general.

Several scholars' theoretical works inform this study. I draw upon Gary Saul Morson's classification of utopias and meta-utopias, but not on his definition of anti-utopia or dystopia. My emphasis on the importance of identifying a literary work's genre is prompted by Hirsch's seminal study *Validity in Interpretation*; the vital connection between the choice of a literary form for a particular work and the writer's view of the world, or his/her *Weltanschauung*, is suggested by Georg Lukács's theoretical works on genre; my perspective on irony as a structural principle underlying the dystopian novel is suggested by Alexander Dyson's study of major British ironists, *The Crazy Fabric*. I borrow the distinction between the subject and the individual made

by Simon Critchley; and, finally, I draw upon the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's insights into the foundation of human identity in human values.

I retain the use of the term "dystopia" and argue against the critical tendency of using the terms "anti-utopia" and "dystopia" interchangeably. My own preference for the term "dystopia" recognizes the literary features that are both distinctive of dystopian fiction and independent of reference to utopian ideals.

For the purpose of this study I define what I call a "humanist critical approach" to interpreting such dystopias as Butler's *Erewhon* and Huxley's *Brave New World* as approaches that are based on explicit or implicit faith in the human ability to escape the clutches of social and cultural conditioning or faith that human beings are individuals rather than subjects. These approaches are exemplified by Erika Gottlieb's reading of *1984* as a struggle of a "modern Everyman" "for the dignity of the Spirit of Man" (4) and Mary Ann Quinonez's interpretation of dystopian novels as "expressions of a vital humanism." Quinonez firmly states that "[m]any of the assumptions on which the dystopian vision rests are markedly positive"; that when the dystopian writer "indicts certain contemporary ideologies and structures . . . he is voicing . . . a passionate faith in what man can become, an eloquent vision of what it is to be human"; and that behind the writer's "severe judgment . . . are affirmative predications about man and the conditions of his existence" (263). In other words, the humanist critical approaches to interpreting dystopian fiction are marked by a strong critical reluctance to abandon the humanist assumptions that supposedly underlie such fiction and probe the depth of pessimism informing it.

Even though I challenge the humanist approaches to dystopian fiction, I do not use the word "humanist" in a derogatory sense. Likewise, my dissertation does not aim at undermining the validity of numerous critical studies that base their interpretation of

dystopian classics on their membership in the tradition started by Zamiatin's *We*. After all, as Morson points out,

The meaning is not locked in the text, but rather derives from the complex and historically changing relationship between readership, interpretive conventions, and a text which may itself not be fixed. (Morson 167)

It is my intention, however, to indicate that humanist readings of British dystopian fiction ignore its roots in Menippean satire; ignore the references and allusions these works develop to their earlier literary models; and downplay the ironic implications of these novels' structures and disregard the authors' ironic treatment of their narrators or protagonists. At the same time they neglect the concept of human nature underlying these works, and, above all, they refuse to probe the depth of pessimism informing dystopia. I would, therefore, suggest that the interpretive conventions that guide the humanist approaches to interpreting dystopian fiction have outlived their purpose, become obsolete, and, importantly, became an obstacle, preventing new generations of readers from fully appreciating the artistry and complexity of the genre's masterpieces.

Chapter one of my study focuses on major critical approaches to dystopian fiction and on the terminology currently used in dystopian studies. I argue that as a generic term "anti-utopia" is inadequate for a valid interpretation of dystopian masterpieces. Neither should the terms "anti-utopia" and "dystopia" be used interchangeably. My preference for the term "dystopia" is dictated by my desire to counter the prevailing critical focus on dystopias or anti-utopias as vehicles for criticizing utopian ideals and either fictional or real societies that claim to have achieved the utopian ideal.

Chapter two of my study focuses on the debt my selected novels bear to the genre of Menippean satire. Although Northrop Frye recognizes the Menippean character of Butler's *Erewhon*, and places the novel in the same category with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*, he provides no detailed analysis of the Menippean character of the works he assigns to this category (308-9). Moreover, his definition of this genre proves to be both inadequate and misleading: it does not sufficiently articulate the difference between Menippean and classical satire. Consequently, Frye's definition prompts critics to look for clearly delineated dichotomies in these highly ambiguous novels and to privilege one unified reading and interpretation. Admittedly, the task of recognizing the elements of Menippean satire in British dystopian fiction is complicated by the difficulty of properly defining the genre whose founding writer Menippus, "like the Cheshire cat, has faded away to a grin" (Dudley quoted in Holland 45). Nevertheless, studies of the form in antiquity and the Renaissance allow us to identify the genre's prominent and definitive aspects as its irony, its epistemological uncertainty, its seriocomical treatment of its subject matter, and its philosophical universalism.

In **Chapter three** I look at Butler's *Erewhon*, reviewing its scholarly and critical reception and tracing the affinities *Erewhon* and Butler's writings in general bear to the writings of Aristophanes, Lucian, More, and Voltaire. The second part of the Chapter focuses on the critically neglected literary relationship between Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. I argue that *Erewhon*'s parodic and anti-utopian stance with respect to Defoe's *Crusoe* helps to classify Butler's novel as a dystopia. Butler's take on *Robinson Crusoe* both historicizes Defoe's novel and exposes its underlying assumptions as utopian or ideological.

Duane Arthur Rudolph's study of Lucianic parody of earlier Hellenic novels clarifies Butler's generic intentions in *Erewhon* with respect to *Robinson Crusoe*. As Lucian's *True Story* parodies earlier Hellenic novels based on supposedly true accounts of travelers' adventures in order to reveal their fictional character, so Butler's *Erewhon* parodies Defoe's *Crusoe* with the view of questioning the "truth" of the assumptions that the latter novel seeks to legitimize and naturalize. Rudolph's explication of the parodic relationship between Lucian's *True Story* and his literary targets highlights *Erewhon*'s rhetorical position with respect to *Crusoe*'s text, for Butler's derivative text, too, inscribes itself "within the flawed original, as all parody does, so as to divulge the anomaly parading as an original" (22).

In **Chapter four** I review Huxley criticism and focus on the critically neglected relationship between Huxley's *Brave New World* and Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*. *Brave New World*'s affinity with Diderot's *Supplement* clarifies the literary tradition the novel belongs to, establishing its literary and extra-literary context. Embodied in the ironic structure of *Brave New World*, the contrast set by Diderot between savage "natural laws" and civilized artificial ones suggests, as Gary Morson observes, that "the very distinction between laws of nature and civilization may be both untenable and itself a product of civilization." From this perspective, I argue that Huxley did not intend to enforce a binary opposition between the "artificial" and "natural" worlds in his novel, but effectively showed both worlds to be artificial.

Interesting parallels can be drawn not only between the ironic structures of the two works, but also between their reception and interpretation by critics and readers. Of particular interest is the fact--completely unnoticed by other critics, to my knowledge--that Huxley based his novel on the same actual fact on which Diderot based his *Supplement*.

Chapter five of this study looks at the concept of human nature in classical utopian novels. I review the concept of human nature in Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, Voltaire's *Candide*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*, arguing that even though all these works communicate their authors' belief in some immutable core in human nature, none of them sees this core in positive or optimistic terms. As far as human nature is concerned both Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* articulate a clearly dystopian vision.

In this study, when I refer to a valid interpretation or valid interpretations of literary works, I use the word "valid" in its dictionary sense as a synonym for "convincing," "cogent," "sound," or "plausible." I do not suggest that *a* valid interpretation is *the* valid interpretation, or that there is or can be only one correct interpretation of a literary work. At the same time, I follow Hirsch's theoretical assumptions which stipulate that "[v]alidity implies the correspondence of an interpretation to a meaning represented by a text" (10) and that "[a]ll valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the recognition of what an author meant" (126). While Hirsch never states that there can be only one correct mode of a critical engagement with a literary text, he does reserve the word "valid" for those critical engagements with literary texts which focus on authorial intention. Pointing out that "the text has to represent *somebody's* meaning" (3; italics--author's), Hirsch distinguishes between the text's meaning and its significance, defending those critical approaches which recognize "the author's determining will" (68) in literary works. Since we may concede that the writer may not be in full control of the words he or she uses to construct meaning, I look for manifestations of authorial intention in the structure of my selected literary works.

Whenever we formulate our assumptions on any issue of critical importance, we make ourselves widely vulnerable to potentially severe and sometimes largely justified

criticism by other interpreters who do not share our assumptions. It is our common predicament. However, some fundamental differences in critical approaches to literary works are perhaps not meant to be resolved. As Northrop Frye points out, "I am not wholly unaware that at every step of this argument there are extremely complicated philosophical problems which I am incompetent to solve as such" (*Anatomy* 350). This inability to solve these problems does not prevent Frye--nor other major critics, for that matter--from generating significant insights into the literary works he chooses to engage with. Indeed, as it is often the case, many significant insights are generated despite the adopted theoretical perspective rather than due to it. I can only hope that despite the unavoidable shortcomings of my critical assumptions, this study will highlight some aspects of my selected novels which have remained unacknowledged so far.

Chapter 1

Dystopian terminology and major critical approaches to dystopian fiction

In this chapter I look into major current approaches to dystopian fiction, focusing on the definitions of dystopia or anti-utopia adopted by most prominent scholars of and commentators on the genre. I list next my objections to these approaches, indicating that many dystopian classics portray non-egalitarian and technologically backward societies, and thus cannot be regarded as embodiments of a corrupted utopian ideal. Next, I look at those features and aspects of the dystopian genre that I believe are neglected, disregarded, or ignored by major dystopian studies. I argue that the dystopian novel cannot be considered either as a progressive or reactionary genre, and that major current studies of dystopia are marked by notable reluctance and resistance to probe the depth of pessimism that informs the dystopian novel. I turn next to Gary Saul Morson's taxonomy of utopian, anti-utopian, and meta-utopian works. While I find Morson's definitions of utopia and meta-utopia comprehensive and functional, I believe his definitions of anti-utopia (as a parodic anti-genre of utopia) and of dystopia (as a sub-genre of anti-utopia) limit both the function and significance of dystopian fiction by considering it primarily as a negative response to utopian works or to the utopian ideal. At the same time, Morson's definition of utopia and meta-utopia, as well as his attribution of Thomas More's *Utopia* to the latter category of texts, is of paramount importance for my study. I conclude this chapter by listing the most salient features of the dystopian novel and by offering my own definition of literary dystopia.

Although late twentieth-century criticism of dystopian fiction has shown a marked tendency for replacing the term “dystopia” by “anti-utopia,” many scholars and critics are using the terms interchangeably. This is hardly surprising, for even a consistent critical preference of one term over another does not appear to be based on any substantial difference in definitions: both dystopias and anti-utopias are often defined with respect to either the utopian genre or the utopian ideal. Critical approaches may differ in terms of their major focus on either common generic features of anti-utopian or dystopian works or their common thematic interests; in both cases, however, utopia--literary, tractarian, or social--remains the target of and the point of reference for its supposedly opposite genre. The popularity of “anti-utopia” as a critical term merely reflects the major critical emphasis on dystopian works as criticism of utopian thought or the utopian ideal; and “dystopia,” as a critical term, does not involve, as a rule, a different set of criteria governing the attribution of literary works to the genre.

Thus, Krishan Kumar’s preference for the term “anti-utopia” reflects his interest in the genre as “a reaction largely to the socialist utopia of the nineteenth century and certain socialist practices of the twentieth century” (viii). His comprehensive study *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* maintains that utopia and anti-utopia “are ‘contrast concepts’, getting their significance from their mutual differences.” Anti-utopia, as Kumar points out, “is the mirror-image of utopia--but a distorted image, seen in a cracked mirror” (100). Kumar recognizes Huxley’s *Brave New World*, along with Orwell’s *1984*, as “the two most famous anti-utopias of the twentieth century” (103), and includes Butler’s *Erewhon* in the list of works he discusses as anti-utopias (106). However, his emphasis on the main themes and preoccupations of anti-utopias reveals that he is more concerned with the concept of anti-utopia as a reaction to the unfulfilled

promise of intellectual or social utopias than with anti-utopia as a distinct literary genre. Tracing the history of utopia and anti-utopia in a wide variety of its intellectual and social manifestations, Kumar's study does not focus on the specific literary features or generic characteristics of the literary works commonly classified as utopias or anti-utopias. Kumar's critical approach starts with downplaying the ambiguities of literary utopias--as no distinction is made between literary and tractarian utopias--and ends with viewing anti-utopias as merely a fictional response to non-fictional phenomena. In other words, Kumar's significant contribution to utopian thought privileges the content over the form, and thus overlooks the specifically literary features of major dystopian classics. However, the thematic components of a literary work should not be considered in isolation from the literary tradition that shaped it. Their interpretation is often qualified by the work's structure and generic affiliation. Some undeniable parallels to the writer's contemporary reality can perhaps be seen as opportunities for practicing a specific literary genre.

Unlike Kumar, Gary Saul Morson in *The Boundaries of Genre* makes a distinction between literary and tractarian utopias and between the sets of conventions governing their interpretation. Moreover, his fundamental study makes an attempt to inscribe the theoretical explorations of the utopian genre within a more general theory of literary genres, an attempt that by Morson's admission is almost never undertaken by other commentators on utopian fiction. Morson's preference for the term "anti-utopia" is based on his view that anti-utopias "are anti-generic works that parody utopias as their target genre." Concerned with discovering a complex network of allusions and references that ties utopias and anti-utopias together, Morson explores the similarities in their plots, stressing the parodic intentions of anti-utopias. Morson, however, finds application for the term "dystopia," too, arguing that "in contrast to other anti-utopias

which discredit the possibility of their realization or expose the folly and inadequacy of their proponent's assumptions or logic," dystopias represent a sub-genre or "a type of anti-utopia that discredits utopias by portraying the likely effects of their realization" (115-6).

Morson classifies *Brave New World* as a dystopia, developing "motifs that occurred in [Zamiatin's] *We*" (116). At the same time, he dismisses *Erewhon* either as utopia or dystopia, on the basis of how he uses these terms in his study. Moreover, even *Erewhon*'s inclusion into the category of "anti-utopias" is qualified by Morson's observation that although "such a work may be offered and taken as both social satire and generic parody," Butler's critique is aimed "not at utopias, but at contemporary social evils" (117).

Significantly, Morson traces the conventions that developed in the dystopian subgenre to Zamiatin's *We*, a classic text or an exemplar to which *Brave New World*, and other dystopias such as *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange*, developed a network of allusions and references (115-6). However, this fundamental assumption about the lineage of dystopian works can be challenged by exploring the network of allusions and references that works like *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* establish with their earlier literary models. Although Morson's critical approach explores the generic attributes of utopian/anti-utopian literary works, it is still based on a view of the anti-utopian or dystopian genre as criticism of the utopian ideal. The criticism is carried out through parody as an anti-generic mechanism aimed at exposing and undermining the utopian assumptions.

If Kumar and Morson, following their different critical approaches, clearly prefer the term "anti-utopia" over "dystopia," Kevin Booker, in his *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* and in *Dystopian Literature: A Theory*

and *Research Guide*, retains the use of the latter term. As the title of his first work indicates, Booker approaches dystopian literature as social criticism; nevertheless, despite his use of a different term, he still defines dystopian literature as “specifically that literature which situates itself in direct opposition to utopian thought, warning against the potential negative consequences of arrant utopianism” (*Guide* 3). Booker’s approach to dystopian fiction as social criticism focuses on “literary works that critically examine both existing conditions and the potential abuses that might result from the institution of supposedly utopian alternatives” (*Guide* 3). Booker includes *Erewhon* (*Guide* 103-6) and *Brave New World* (*Guide* 171-5; *Impulse* 47-67) in the dystopian category, and his perceptive analysis of these works generates important insights into their interpretation. However, his classification of these novels as dystopias is not based on any theoretical considerations or literary criteria: Booker explores parallels between dystopian fiction and modern cultural criticism--more specifically with the projects of such influential social and cultural critics as Nietzsche, Freud, Bakhtin, Adorno, Foucault, Althusser, and others (*Guide* 4)--with little or no attention paid to literary features of the dystopian genre. Booker is less interested in establishing common generic features of dystopian works; his list of dystopian works, reflecting his less discriminating approach, is more inclusive.

Another critic who retains the use of the term “dystopia” in her study *Dystopian Fiction East and West: Universe of Terror and Trial*, Erika Gottlieb, unlike Booker, traces common thematic characteristics of dystopian fiction, such as “the destruction of the individual’s private world” (11) or “the deliberate miscarriage of justice” (12), and some of its structural or generic elements, such as the relationship between the dystopian, satiric, and tragic perspectives (13). Gottlieb’s exploration of dystopian classics forcefully articulates the typical critical assumptions about the genre: she views

dystopian literature as criticism or perversion of the utopian ideal, as fear and warning of totalitarian nightmare, as a powerful protest against the dehumanizing trends in the writers' contemporary society; and as political satire. "To a significant extent," writes Gottlieb about the classics of dystopian fiction,

each of these novels makes us ponder how an originally utopian promise was abused, betrayed, or, ironically fulfilled so as to create tragic consequences for humanity. (8)

Stating that "the fear of the emergence of the totalitarian regime is the major component of the dystopian impulse" (8), Gottlieb, like Booker, focuses on the theme of warning in her exploration of dystopian works and, like Morson, relates *Brave New World*, as well as *1984*, to Zamiatin's *We*:

The strategies of Zamiatin, Huxley, and Orwell are . . . significantly the strategies of warning. As readers we are made to contemplate Zamiatin's One State, Huxley's World State and Orwell's Oceania, each a hellscape from which the inhabitants can no longer return, so that we realize what the flaws of our own society may lead to for the next generations unless we try to eradicate these flaws today. (4)

Like many other dystopian scholars, Gottlieb sees Orwell's *1984* as the prototype of the dystopian genre, stressing that

twentieth-century dystopian fiction reveals the underlying structure of a morality play. Orwell's protagonist, a modern Everyman, struggles for his soul against the Bad Angel; he struggles for the dignity of the Spirit of Man against the dehumanizing forces of totalitarian dictatorship. (Gottlieb 4)

And finally, stating that "the overall strategies of the dystopian novel are those of political satire" (13), Gottlieb, again like many other critics, emphasizes the dystopian novel's topicality:

we should recognize the fundamental difference between tragedy and political satire. Unlike tragedy, dystopian satire is not satisfied with asking questions, and the questions it asks are not directly about our place in the universe and the limits of our free will in the face of superhuman forces. Dystopian satire focuses on society, not on the cosmos, and it has a primarily social-political message, a didactic intent to address the Ideal Reader's moral sense and reason as it applies to the protagonist's--and our own place in society and in history. (Gottlieb 15)

By stressing the dystopian novel's reliance on the strategies of political satire, Gottlieb, like Booker, confines the significance of the genre to social criticism.

Another critic who makes a clear distinction between utopia, anti-utopia, and dystopia and who firmly relates dystopia and social criticism is Tom Moylan, whose monograph *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* provides a comprehensive review of many major critical studies of dystopian fiction. Focusing first and foremost on contemporary twentieth-century fiction, Moylan, like many other critics of and commentators on dystopia, asserts that "dystopian narrative is largely the product

of the terrors of the twentieth century” (xi). Even though he fully recognizes the genre’s enduring pessimism, Moylan draws upon Lyman Tower Sargent’s concept of “critical dystopia” and upon Raffaella Baccolini’s study of feminist critical dystopias to foreground dystopia’s transformative potential. In other words, he emphasizes the central role of utopian hope in dystopian narrative, pointing out that it “offers not only astute critiques of the order of things but also extrapolations of the oppositional spaces and possibilities from which the next round of political activism can derive imaginative sustenance and inspiration” (xv).

Significantly, Moylan takes issue with Sargent’s view of recent critical dystopias as representing “a new tendency as a specific form of dystopian narrative.” Unlike Sargent, he insists that “the political and aesthetic roots of ‘critical’ dystopia can be traced back though the dystopian intertext.” Therefore, Moylan maintains that the emergence of recent “critical” dystopias does not suggest “the appearance of an entirely new generic form but rather a significant retrieval and refunctioning of the most progressive possibilities inherent in dystopian narrative” (188).

Nevertheless, Moylan’s study--largely because of its different focus--does not engage in an exploration of “progressive possibilities” inherent in classical late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century dystopias. Moylan mentions Butler’s *Erewhon* when he discusses Kumar’s analysis of Butler’s “protomodernist critique of Victorian society” as a novel which “revises the older satiric tradition” (132). Similarly, he makes several brief references to Huxley’s *Brave New World* when he discusses Sargent’s analysis of Huxley’s “utopian satire” (71) and Adorno’s reading of *Brave New World* “as a negative but compromised response to modern capitalism” (122). Moylan’s own perspective on *Brave New World* emerges when he refers to the novel as “Huxley’s critique of consumer capitalism” (111) and when he compares its dystopian character to

Huxley's "eutopian" *Island*. However, these brief references do not clarify where Moylan detects any "progressive possibilities" in Butler's or Huxley's novels.

While Moylan's fundamental study provides a comprehensive review of the current critical approaches to dystopian fiction, making a significant contribution to our understanding of the genre (in particular, in a useful distinction he makes between different types of dystopian texts), his emphasis on dystopia's "transformative possibility" and on its "horizon of hope," diverts his attention from those aspects of dystopian fiction that contribute to the genre's enduring pessimism. Thus, even though he fully recognizes that "all dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives" (147), his tendency to view dystopian fiction as the writer's response to negative cultural, political, and economic conditions of his or her contemporary society overlooks some important atemporal aspects of classic dystopias.

However, just as the scope and significance of *Erewhon* cannot be reduced to Butler's critique of modern science and technology, so the scope and significance of *Brave New World* cannot be reduced to "Huxley's critique of consumer capitalism." While the transformative potential of classic dystopias can hardly be denied (at least for their readers), an overemphasis, as Hirsch points out in a different context, "is sometimes needed to redress an underemphasis" (69). The overemphasis on dystopia as a vehicle for its writer's cultural, social, and political criticism tends to obscure the reasons for the pessimism that informs the dystopian novel, masking the underemphasis and even misrepresenting sometimes the ideology or *weltanschauung* underlying the writer's work.

The variety of reviewed critical approaches indicates that the tendency to view anti-utopian or dystopian works as discrediting the utopian ideal is strengthened by the critical tradition of 1) tracing the origin of the classics of dystopian fiction to Evgeny

Zamiatin's *We*; 2) of privileging the dystopian novel's narrator's or protagonist's perspective on the presented events and identifying it with the author's; 3) of interpreting the dystopian classics as warnings against the dehumanizing trends already present in the writers' contemporary societies; and, above all, 4) of emphasizing the topicality of these novels and limiting their significance to social criticism or political satire. However, each of these aspects of the critical tradition that defines dystopian fiction is problematic:

1) Huxley's debt to Zamiatin's *We* is disputed by some scholars who justly indicate that many of the ideas embodied in *Brave New World* and many of the practices described in this novel were outlined in Huxley's earlier novel *Chrome Yellow*. At the same time, this short lineage ignores the influence of ancient philosophical, satiric, and Menippean works on the British dystopian tradition; does not take into account the commonality of themes and concerns that this tradition develops from Thomas More onwards; neglects the ironic treatment and re-evaluation by this tradition of major postulates of notable French Enlightenment philosophers (Voltaire and Diderot); and last, but not least, reserves for Butler's *Erewhon* a marginal place in the tradition of British dystopia.

2) Moreover, the view of literary dystopia as anti-utopia or as a distorted image of utopia is problematic. To begin with, utopian and dystopian novels have different emphases and concerns: while utopias traditionally focus on the issues of human justice, equality, and prosperity, dystopias tend to concern themselves with limitations of human reason, the unattainability of human happiness, and deficiencies of human nature. The societies portrayed in numerous dystopias are technologically backward. Also, the entrenched hierarchical structures of fictional societies described in *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* hardly reflect the utopian ideal of a classless society that provides (at least in theory) equal opportunities for its members. From this perspective, Orwell's *Animal*

Farm is one of the few dystopian works that deserves to be classified as an anti-utopia for it clearly depicts the unexpected results of a socialist utopia's realization. The societies portrayed in other dystopian novels are clearly built on different premises. In both of my selected novels, the portrayed societies are unequivocally hierarchical. The social, intellectual, economic, and political inequality that typifies the societies in them, however, does not follow, as in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, from the subsequent corruption of an earlier proclaimed principle of universal equality, but is rather an in-built constitutive principle which is, suggestively, in line with the foundational principle of Plato's *Republic*: "A State is thought by us to be just when the three classes in the state severally did their own business" (125).

3) Furthermore, the view of dystopian fiction as severe criticism of the dystopian writer's contemporary society and as a warning against the dehumanizing trends in it relies heavily on the identification between the dystopian writer's ideas and attitudes and those of his/her narrator or protagonist. On the one hand, this identification appears to be inevitable. Rather than portraying "states that [are] well and wisely governed" (in Thomas More's words), dystopias, unlike utopias, tend to highlight the conflict between an individual and an allegedly well and wisely-governed state. Unlike utopias, which tend to assume that better social conditions guarantee both happiness and prosperity to all individuals, dystopias tend to present the agony of life in an allegedly utopian society from the perspective of an individual human experience. Dystopian fiction often portrays an individual's personal experience of a supposedly utopian bliss.

This focus on individual experience in the dystopian novel is, however, misleading, for at least two reasons. To begin with, the nameless narrator of *Erewhon* and several protagonists of *Brave New World* (John the Savage, Bernard Marx, and arguably Helmholtz Watts and Mustapha Mond) function as both the vehicles and the targets of

their authors' ironic vision. They are portrayed as *fallible* characters who, despite their occasional clear insights into the workings of the systems they severely criticize, are severely limited in both their understanding and in their choice of appropriate responses to the challenges they face.

Consequently, I maintain that neither *Erewhon* nor *Brave New World* (nor other dystopian classics such as *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange*) asserts--as many critics maintain--the uniqueness of individual human beings. Admittedly, the narrators' or protagonists' emotional and intellectual responses turn them into credible models of human subjectivity, yet they individually embody the collective image of humanity and typify human intellectual and emotional responses to the challenges of social change. The individual becomes the centre of attention in the dystopian novel through the author's concentration on the individual as a product of social and cultural conditioning, rather than through such an author's conception of the individual as the site of resistance.

4) And finally, the overwhelming focus in dystopian critical studies on the social arrangements and practices in literary utopias or dystopias sometimes obscures their authors' subtly made comments on human nature and the human predicament. There is no denying that all dystopian texts forcibly comment on and even satirize social, cultural, and political trends of their writer's contemporary societies; nevertheless, the critical focus on the novels' satiric elements obscures their ironic structures and neglects their wider philosophical implications. In their groundbreaking study *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel deplore the critical tendency of placing too much emphasis on utopian writers' criticism of their contemporary societies:

In discussing the urgent requirements of his times, [the utopia-maker] may also lay bare age old, if not eternal, needs of man. Limiting an interpretation to the

immediate environment of the utopian, tying him too closely and mechanically to the precise circumstances and incidents that could have triggered his writing, fails to recognize that he may have something ahistorical to say about love, aggression, the nature of work, the fulfillment of personality. The truly great utopian is a Janus-like creature, time-bound and free of time, place-bound and free of place. His duality should be respected and appreciated. (24)

The same is undeniably true of every great dystopian. The umbrella framework of Menippean satire--as we will see in the next Chapter of this study--provides an ideal medium not only for an artistic engaging in “both open and hidden polemics with the various philosophical, religious, ideological and scientific schools, tendencies and currents of the time” (Morson 5), but also for addressing and ironically re-writing major themes of “age-old, if not eternal” intellectual concerns.

Moreover, the focus on dystopian works as criticism of the writers’ contemporary societies neglects the network of allusions and references these works develop with earlier literary models. And critical discussions of customs and practices of the portrayed dystopian societies as contrary to human values and aspirations ignore the wider literary contexts in which these customs and practices function, missing the authors’ ironic reflections on private values of family, love, or friendship, and public values of justice and equality.

In Chapters 3 and 4 of this study I will look at the debt my selected novels owe to Aristophanes, Lucian, Plato, More, Voltaire, and Diderot. Chapter 5 will examine the dystopian concept of human nature, focusing on various aspects of human nature that underlie some allegedly utopian and undeniably dystopian novels.

Apart from the above listed objections against the overwhelming critical tendency to approach the dystopian novel as an anti-utopian warning of the destructive potential of the trends already present in the writers' contemporary societies, or--more broadly--against the humanist conceptual frameworks adopted for the interpretation of dystopian fiction, there are other, purely semantic problems with the terms "utopia," "anti-utopia," and "dystopia," all of which are often used indiscriminately. Clearly, the obvious difficulty of writing about the utopian/dystopian genres lies in separating the terms as they refer to the literary genres of utopia or dystopia or to a variety of meanings these terms acquired in common parlance. "Dystopia" and "dystopian" are invariably negative terms; whereas "Utopia" and "utopian" are ambiguous terms. Depending on the context of their use, these terms may have both positive and negative connotations. The word "utopian" applied to human dreams or plans characterizes them as "desirable" or as "impossible to realize in practice" simultaneously. The usefulness of the term "anti-utopia" is undermined by the ambiguity inherent in the term it is supposed to negate.

Also, when it comes to defining "utopia" as a literary genre, its definition is far from being settled. Many critical studies do not differentiate between tractarian and social utopias, or even between different types of literary utopias. For instance, Plato's *Republic* and Thomas' More's *Utopia*, the two works that have exercised powerful imaginative hold over generations of utopian/dystopian writers, can only loosely be placed in the same category and, as we will later see, cannot even be unequivocally categorized as utopian. They are widely different generically, different in terms of their focus and philosophic concerns, and, above all, different in their authors' concept of human nature. Generically, More's *Utopia* betrays its indebtedness to the ancient genre of Menippean satire, inheriting the genre's predisposition for irony, ambiguity, and paradox. Plato's *Republic*, on the other hand, uses the rigidified form of a Socratic

dialogue which, as Bakhtin points out, in the final period of Plato's work, "degenerated completely into a question-and-answer form for training neophytes (catechism), being transformed into a simple form for expounding already found, ready-made irrefutable truth" (Bakhtin *Poetics* 110). Furthermore, thematically, More's *Utopia* dramatizes the intellectual's conflict in making the choice between active and contemplative life, whereas Plato's *Republic* unequivocally maintains that the duty of the intellectual is to serve his country. And, finally, even though both Plato and More display dystopian sentiments in their respective concepts of human nature, their respective dystopian concepts generate different visions of their supposedly "ideal" societies. More's negative view of humanity seems to be qualified by *Utopia*'s typically "utopian" premise that better social order and practices make better individuals; Plato's *Republic*, on the other hand, advocates strict control over and suppression of unruly and irredeemably violent individuals who are governed by their passions or appetites.

Yet even when attempts are made to separate literary utopias from tractarian and social utopias and to distinguish between different types of literary utopias, many notable scholars, for instance, Northrop Frye and Gary Saul Morson, still approach dystopian masterpieces from a distinctly humanist perspective, interpreting them on the basis of clearly delineated dichotomies which, in the scholars' opinion, structure the novels' meaning. In his "Varieties of Literary Utopias," Frye distinguishes between "the straight utopia , which visualizes a world state assumed to be ideal," and "the utopian satire or parody, which presents the same type of social goal in terms of slavery, tyranny, or anarchy" ("Varieties 28). Asserting that "[u]topia, in fact and in etymology, is not a place" ("Varieties" 49), Frye sees "utopia" as "a speculative myth," "designed to contain or provide a vision for one's social ideas." As such, utopia is a social conception that "presents an imaginative vision of the *telos* or end at which social life aims" ("Varieties"

25). “The principle of modern utopian satire,” on the other hand, is, according to Frye, the refusal to accept the assumption that to increase man’s control over his environment is also to increase his control over his destiny” (“Varieties” 43).

Notably, the application of the same term “utopia” to “straight utopia” and “satirical utopia” implies--even though Frye does not dwell on this circumstance--the basic identity of the two types’ literary methods and devices, and their common ancestry. The writer’s attitude to technology, or the fear of it, serves for Frye, as for many other scholars of utopia, as the demarcation line which separates straight utopias from their satirical parodies. From this perspective, Frye classifies Huxley’s *Brave New World* (along with Zamiatin’s *We* and Orwell’s *1984*), as a utopian satire, regarding it

as a product of modern technological society, its growing sense that the whole world is destined to the same social fate with no place to hide, and its increasing realization that technology moves toward the control not merely of nature but of the operations of the mind. (“Varieties” 29)

Frye also recognizes this “specifically modern fear, the Frankenstein myth of the enslavement of man by his own technology” (“Varieties” 39), in Butler’s *Erewhon*. Classifying *Erewhon* as “an early example of the contemporary or technological satire” and tracing this “theme back to *Gulliver’s Travels* itself, where the flying island of Laputa demonstrates some of the perils in combining human mechanical ingenuity with human folly and greed,” Frye points out that “the Erewhonians are afraid of machines, and their philosophers have worked out elaborate arguments to prove that machines will eventually take over if not suppressed in time” (“Varieties” 40). At the same time, Frye

maintains that most of *Erewhon* adheres to “another kind of utopian satire,” namely “to the earlier tradition of the mirror-satire.” In this type of utopian satire,

social rituals are seen from the outside, not to make them more consistent but simply to demonstrate their inconsistency, their hypocrisy, or their unreality. Satire of this kind holds up a mirror to society which distorts it, but distorts it consistently. (“Varieties” 39)

Frye supports his attribution of *Erewhon* to this type of mirror-satire by pointing out that the Erewhonians “treat disease as a crime and crime as a disease, but they do so with exactly the same rationalizations that the Victorians use in enforcing the opposite procedure” (“Varieties” 40).

We can see that even though Frye attributes elsewhere *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* to the same literary tradition of Menippean satire (*Anatomy* 308-9) and recognizes a common motif of the fear of technology in both novels, he does not capitalize on generic similarities between them, but attributes Butler’s novel to a different sub-type of utopian satire.

Frye’s analysis of satirical utopias has the obvious merit of pointing out their common ancestry, and their common literary motifs and devices. However, Frye does not recognize the structural irony and does not probe the depth of pessimism that underlies these novels and shapes their interpretation. Notably, he avoids the use of the term “dystopia” altogether. As a devoted humanist, Frye ascribes his own fundamental assumptions about human nature and human desire for freedom and fulfillment to Butler and Huxley and chooses to view *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* (along with other dystopian classics) as satirical rather than ironic works. Satirical works, as I will argue

in my next Chapter, base their criticism of their fictional societies and individuals on a clear set of values and on humanist assumptions about human nature. However, the kind of irony that operates through major dystopian classics questions these very assumptions, undermining the dichotomies that underlie many interpretations of dystopian fiction. Frye's analysis inscribes my selected novels into major literary traditions on the basis of isolated themes and motifs that occur in them, disregarding their internal logic and the structural irony that underlies them.

Gary Saul Morson's classification of literary texts into utopias, anti-utopias, and meta-utopias places more emphasis on the role irony plays in utopian visions and provides clear and convincing guidelines for distinguishing the classes of texts which, depending on the tradition of their interpretation, can be regarded as utopias, anti-utopias, and meta-utopias. To be classified as a utopia, a literary work should satisfy the following three conditions:

- (1) it [should be] written (or presumed to be written) in the tradition of previous utopian literary works;
- (2) it [should depict] (or is taken to depict) an ideal society; and
- (3) regarded as a whole, it [should advocate] (or is taken to advocate) the realization of that society. (74)

(Morson's definition of "utopia" clearly indicates that Plato's *Republic* responds better than More's *Utopia*, as we will see below, to the requirements of the utopian genre. It appears to advocate the establishment of a described society. However, neither *Brave New World* nor *1984*, even though both novels contain unmistakable allusions to Plato's *Republic*, can be seen as a direct criticism of it.)

Morson defines “anti-utopia” as a class of texts that discredits the possibility of realizing utopias or “expose the folly and inadequacy” of utopian proponents’ assumptions or logic. This definition, however, is significantly obscured by his focus on anti-utopias as “anti-generic works that parody utopias as their target genre.” “The distinctiveness of anti-genres,” writes Morson,

lies in the fact that [their] conventions establish a *parodic* relation between the anti-generic work and the works and traditions of another genre, the target genre. (115)

Consequently, the scholar emphasizes the concept of an “anti-genre,” rather than that of “anti-utopia,” as a distinct literary category. An anti-genre work, according to Morson, should be able to claim membership in a tradition of similar works and there should exist a set of conventions (or readers should assume that there exists a set of conventions) to govern its interpretation (115). This definition can be equally applied to all anti-genres that parody their targets.

If “anti-utopia” as a parodic genre belongs to the type “of double-voiced texts or utterances that clearly indicate which of their conflicting voices is to be regarded as authoritative,” “meta-utopia” as a metaparodic genre, in Morson’s classification, comprises a class of texts designed “so the readers do not know [what voice is authoritative]” (142). Metaparodic texts “remain fundamentally open,” inviting readers “to entertain each of the resulting contradictory interpretations in potentially endless succession” (142). An important corollary of witnessing in a text “the alternation of statement and counterstatement, interpretation and antithetical interpretation” is the readers’ inability to resolve their “hermeneutic perplexity”:

Readers of a metaparody are expected to comprehend the work not as the compromise between book and counterbook, but as their ultimately inconclusive dialectic. (143)

Significantly, Morson attributes Thomas More's *Utopia* and Diderot's *Supplement* to the category of texts he classifies as meta-utopias. Morson's theoretical position allows us to acknowledge the validity of those critical approaches which interpret More's *Utopia* as a "utopia"--a literary work which advocates the realization of a good society (in Morson's classification)--and of those approaches which regard it as a "meta-utopia"--a fundamentally open text exploiting a dialogue between irreconcilable positions. In other words, Morson gives as much weight to the critical tradition which interprets this classic utopian text as a presentation of an ideal society as he gives to those critical approaches which recognize More's *Utopia* as "a play of pure wit" (173).

While I adopt Morson's definitions of utopia and meta-utopia for the purposes of my study, I find that his definitions of anti-utopia and dystopia are inadequate for a valid interpretation of dystopian classics. Morson, like Frye, maintains that anti-utopian fiction leaves the fundamental humanist assumptions concerning human nature unchallenged. Even though he recognizes the epistemological uncertainty of the anti-utopian novel and its tendency to speculate in "categories of ignorance of both causes and values," he still maintains that "when [anti-utopia] affirms the existence of universals of human nature, these universals are, characteristically, humanity's unchanging need for growth, creativity, and change itself" (Morson 121). Nevertheless, the framework Morson develops for the exploration of the parodic relationship between utopian and anti-utopian texts proves to be very useful for my analysis of the parodic

relationship between Butler's *Erewhon* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as for my analysis of the "utopian" premises of Defoe's text that Butler's "anti-utopian" text unmasks (See Chapter 3 of this study).

Morson also makes a very significant observation when he points out that "the 'seriocomic' tone of meta-utopia probably reflects its generic debt to Menippean satire" (Morson, 2003, note 9). The origin of literary utopia in Menippean satire highlights its playful and ironic character. Even though Morson does not specifically address the issue of *Utopia*'s Menippean roots, his attribution of *Utopia*--the fundamental text that started the literary tradition of utopian fiction--to the class of meta-utopias, and his acknowledgment of the generic debt meta-utopia owes to Menippean satire are of paramount importance for my study.

To begin with, the fact that the foundational text of the genre is haunted by doubt, uncertainty, paradox, and irony undermines the binary opposition on which the classification of dystopias as anti-utopian texts rests. Furthermore, the critical tradition of ignoring the structure of More's *Utopia* and of focusing almost exclusively on the arrangements, rituals, and sexual practices in this fictional state has been extended to other utopian and dystopian texts. These texts are examined first and foremost in terms of the idiosyncratic features these fictional societies portray, while their structures as fictional narratives remain largely ignored.

Close examination of the structures of More's *Utopia*, Butler's *Erewhon* and Huxley's *Brave New World* highlights the conflict, or the inconclusive dialectic, that underlies these works and warrants their writers' selection of narrative strategies that are best embodied in this specific literary form. The very "frame within a frame" structure of More's novel, where the description of the supposedly ideal society is confined to the second part of the book, while the first part deals with the ultimately inconclusive

dialectic of the two positions espoused by More as narrator and Hythloday, is itself Menippean. The dialogue between More and Hythloday dramatizes the conflict between an intellectual's clear realization of the futility of public service (the position advanced by Hythloday) and this intellectual's desire to do "a great deal of good to mankind" (17, the position advanced by More-the-narrator). The first part of the book is generally disregarded by utopian critics in favour of a detailed discussion of the customs and practices of More's fictional Utopian society.

Blanchard's study of the Menippean genre in the Renaissance helps to put this conflict between the intellectual's moral compulsion to serve his country with his talents and his clear realization of the futility of such efforts into the context of the intellectual preoccupations of the period. He points out that

The Menippean form's revival can, in fact, be dated with some precision to that moment in the Italian renaissance when the ideal of the *vita activa* began to corrode and to become replaced by the *vita contemplativa*. (14)

In More's *Utopia*, we find a reflection of this movement to orient, to use Charles Taylor's words, the intellectual's life towards the greater good of a contemplative life in a Marvellian garden of intellectual delights away from the former ideal of a meaningful life spent in serving one's country.

The conflict dramatized in *Utopia* highlights further the difference between More's and Plato's utopias. Plato's *Republic* articulates firmly that the intellectual's duty is to serve his country, firmly resisting the temptation to engage in useless intellectual contemplation. Even though neither *Erewhon* nor *Brave New World* re-engages with the concerns dramatized in More's *Utopia*, the two novels dramatize a

different type of conflict, the one brought about by the writers' clear realization of the absence of a credible authority in all spheres of human life--religious, philosophical, moral, or social--and a no less clear realization of the necessity to preserve some kind of authority that could prevent human societies from sliding into anarchy.

The enigma of Butler's *Erewhon* can perhaps be explained by the tension created by the writer's merciless attack on numerous human beliefs, customs, and institutions he ultimately wants to preserve. The dilemma of Huxley's *Brave New World* reveals that the rule of intellectual authority ultimately destroys intellectual life. The meta-utopian or Menippean genre seems to be particularly responsive to the writers' need to find a literary form that could dramatize irresolvable paradoxes. An important distinction between More's vision, on the one hand, and Butler's and Huxley's, on the other hand, lies in the Renaissance writer's faith in the existence of transcendental values, such as religion, public service, family, and creative life. Even though towards its conclusion *Utopia* reveals a dystopian undercurrent in More's thought--the narrator clearly states that there is no hope of ever seeing the utopian ideal realized in practice and raises the issue of human pride as a major obstacle on the way to a better society--More's values are never in question.

Despite the structural affinity between *Utopia*, *Erewhon*, and *Brave New World*, the dystopian sentiment in Butler's and Huxley's novels grows stronger. The inconclusive dialectic of the dystopian novel does not reflect, as does the inconclusive dialectic in More's *Utopia*, the inability to reconcile two mutually exclusive positions with the desired ideal; it reflects the disappearance of the ideal, the absence of hope, and the pessimistic world outlook of the writer. The pessimism marking these dystopias betrays the absence of hope in a world abandoned by God and devoid of transcendental

values, signaling the writers' affinity with the dystopian vision of another Menippean writer, Lucian.

In his *Realism in Our Time*, Lukács raises the fundamental questions of "What determines the style of a given work of art?" and of "How does the intention determine the form?", asserting that "It is the view of the world, the ideology or *weltanschauung* underlying a writer's work, that counts." Lukács further suggests that the writer's "intention," or his attempt to reproduce his view of the world, provides "the formative principle underlying the style of a given piece of writing." Ceasing "to be a formalistic category," the style is rooted in a work's content: "it is the specific form of a specific content" ("Modernism" 760).

Lukács's discussion of the interdependence of form and content suggests that the "content" should not be considered in isolation from the specific form that was chosen by a writer to give expression to his view of the world. Thus, bearing in mind Lukács's view of literary form as "the resolution of the fundamental dissonance of experience" (*Novel* 62), I can offer now the working definition of dystopia that I adopt for the purposes of my study. Broadly, I define dystopia as a literary work that describes a fictional human society to express its author's dark and pessimistic outlook on the human condition and the human predicament. I trace the origin of dystopian fiction to the literary tradition of Menippean satire, arguing that the literary ancestry of the British dystopian novel should be traced back to Lucian and More, rather than to Zamiatin's *We*. I further argue that the philosophical implications of these novels' ironic structures undermine their widely accepted humanist interpretations as, to borrow Gottlieb's terms from her emblematic reading of *1984*, a struggle of a "modern Everyman" "for the dignity of the Spirit of Man" (4). The dystopian artistic vision shaped by the loss of religious faith, the loss of faith in the power of human reason, and the uncomfortable

recognition of the human being's inability to escape his social, cultural, and genetic conditioning, offers no viable ideal or alternative beyond the temporary comfort of intellectual dilettantism (Butler) or intellectual surrender (Huxley). In the face of these losses, Voltaire's vision of "cultivating one's garden" loses its redeeming force for the dystopian hero.

Binary oppositions often assumed between the oppressed majority and the oppressing minority in fictional dystopian societies, and between the conflicting sets of values espoused by the oppressive regime and the protagonist or narrator as a spokesman for the author, are thus imposed on the novels by the tradition of their critical interpretation rather than on the basis of the textual evidence presented by each of them. Furthermore, the very concept of the dystopian genre is often based on this binary opposition, whereas the easily detectable elements of other literary genres suggest that these novels are motivated by concerns that go beyond the social and cultural critique of their respective contemporary societies. The assumptions each writer holds about human nature and the common human predicament dictate his choice of the literary form and his narrative strategy. In this sense the literary medium becomes the literary message.

Chapter 2

Menippean Satire

In this chapter I look into the critically neglected debt that my selected novels owe to the literary seriocomical tradition of Menippean satire. I argue that the generic affinity *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* display to the literary tradition of Menippean satire is of paramount importance for their valid interpretation. The irony, paradox, and epistemological uncertainty that distinguish this genre undermine numerous critical interpretations of these novels based on the clearly delineated dichotomies that I have reviewed above. I start my discussion by outlining some of the reasons accounting for the fact that the connection between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century dystopian classics and Menippean Satire has not been explored. Among these reasons, as I hope to demonstrate throughout this Chapter, is first and foremost our limited knowledge of the form and, thus, the difficulty of defining the genre properly. Other reasons include the influence of Frye's inadequate definition of Menippean satire; the critical tendency to blur the distinction between satire and irony in the practice of the genre; and, above all, the lack of critical emphasis on the distinction between the purpose and function of Menippean satire as it was practised in antiquity by two most illustrious imitators of the Greek Cynic Menippus: Varro and Lucian. This lack of emphasis obscures the influence Lucian's negative and corrosive irony exerted on the modern British practitioners of the genre: Butler and Huxley, among others. Scholars of menippea often display the same reluctance with respect to probing the negativity and pessimism informing some of its works as the scholars of dystopian fiction manifest with respect to abandoning the humanist assumptions that underlie their interpretations of it.

I continue my discussion by offering a brief review of the most illuminating studies of the genre by Bakhtin, Blanchard, Hall, Holland, and Rudolph. Each of these studies focuses on the specific period--antiquity, the Renaissance, and modernity--in which the genre flourished or was adopted or on the specific authors who practiced the genre. Although these scholars highlight some specific aspects of the genre and its development in the history of literature, taken together they provide important and illuminating insights into Butler's and Huxley's practice of the genre. Jennifer Hall makes a useful distinction between the kinds of Menippean satire practiced by Varro and Lucian. While the function of Varro's use of the genre was to awaken the interest of his less educated readers in philosophy, Lucian's aim, according to Hall, was to entertain his readers. Hall, like Bakhtin and Holland, tends to ignore or underplay the sinister and destructive thrust of Lucianic satire. Blanchard and Rudolph, on the other hand, are not averse to acknowledging and stating the wider implications of the epistemological uncertainty that underlies Lucian's work.

The cynical and nihilistic character of Lucian's writings suggests further that the terms "satire" and "irony" cannot be used interchangeably in description of his Menippean works. The kind of irony Lucian deploys is described best by Kierkegaard's definition of irony as "infinite absolute negativity" (276). Unlike the kind of irony Henry James discusses in his *Art of the Novel*, Lucian's irony is not dependent upon an implied value system that the reader is invited to reconstruct.

I look next at Northrop Frye's and Meyer Abrams's definition of Menippean satire, arguing that useful as these definitions are, they are, nevertheless, misleading and inadequate for interpreting *Erewhon*'s and *Brave New World*. I focus on these definitions because, on the one hand, the neglect of the Menippean tradition in the critical approach to these novels appears to be related to the fact that many critics base

their understanding of the genre on these definitions, and because, on the other hand, these definitions also obscure the vital distinction between satire and irony and promote the critical confusion that I note.

I turn next to Dyson's insights into the character of irony deployed by major British ironists, starting with Swift who, in Dyson's phrase, "has been to some degree tutor to all" (xii) of them. Observing that Swift, Butler, and Huxley, along with other great ironists, "are so much more ambivalent than the theorists normally think them," Dyson points out that "nearly all of the classic definitions of 'satire' or 'irony' overlook the deviousness of the writings on which they are supposed to be based" (ix-x). Although Dyson reserves his discussion of irony's metamorphosis to Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, he develops a useful model for exploring the function and intention of Butler's and Huxley's irony in *Erewhon* and *Brave New World*. Dyson appears to be the only scholar who is not averse to looking--with caution though--at the depth of pessimism that informs the work of the British ironists.

I conclude this chapter by looking at the role of the neglect of the Menippean roots of my selected novels in their inadequate interpretation and by highlighting the implications of the acknowledgement of these roots for their valid interpretation.

Concluding his *Scholars' Bedlam*, a study of Menippean satire in the Renaissance, Blanchard deplores the fact that the "vigorous" "heritage of Menippean satire" "is often discounted, obscured, or more simply ignored" (166). This deplorable neglect of the Menippean roots of dystopian and other literary works can, to a certain degree, be

attributed to the difficulty of defining the genre properly. One of “the most elusive genres to define” (Blanchard 11), Menippean satire is, as Holland points out

something of a misnomer. The genre was neither originated by the writer after whom it is named, the Greek Cynic Menippus of Cadara (mid-third century B.C.), nor is it exclusively satirical as satire is commonly understood. (33)

To complicate the difficulties further, no original writings by the alleged founder of the genre, Menippus of Cadara, have survived, and not much is known about his personal life. Holland writes that Menippus was a “slave who had acquired an education and a distaste for speculative philosophy at the same time” (52). This distaste perhaps prompted a strong anti-intellectual thrust for which the genre became mostly known, but the real extent of Menippus’s contribution to the development of the genre remains a matter of conjecture and speculation. Some scholars even believe that Menippus’s works were no longer extant in Lucian’s time (Hall 68). What is known of Menippean satire today is known from the work of Menippus’s two ancient imitators, Terentius Varro of Reate (first century B.C.) and Lucian of Samosata (second century A.D.), as well as from the work of Renaissance Menippean writers, such as Erasmus, Thomas More, Montaigne, and Rabelais. Apparently, Butler and Huxley, two modern practitioners of Menippean satire, absorbed and fused the classical and Renaissance models of menippea by combining the anti-intellectual or rather anti-authoritarian thrust the genre developed in antiquity with a penchant for encyclopedic knowledge, extensive learning, and love for paradox, the genre embraced in the Renaissance.¹

Only Lucian’s Menippean writings have survived to find wide readership to this day. The fate of Varro’s *Saturae Menippeae* is only marginally better than that of

Menippus's literary works. His Menippean satires have survived only in short fragments (Holland 33), which are examined and commented upon by the scholars working in the field. However, the fragmentary character of Varro's work complicates the task of reconstructing the function and meaning of his use of the genre (Hall 69-70). Nevertheless, there appears to be a significant difference between Varro's and Lucian's use of the genre. Even though Varro's *Saturae Menippeae* are known to modern scholars in fragments, Hall appeals to the authority of "Varro's friend and admirer, Cicero," who maintains that "one of the aims of Varro's Menippean Satires [was] to interest the less learned of his countrymen in philosophy" (Hall 100; see also 96). On the strength of Cicero's observations and of textual analysis of Varro's extant works, Hall suggests that

Varro's aims in composing his imitations of Menippus seem to have differed from Lucian's in one respect at least: whereas Lucian's main concern was to entertain an audience, and in so doing he devoted much of his wit to the ridicule of philosophy and philosophers, Varro apparently hoped by means of his Menippean Satires to encourage the Romans of his day to discover an interest in philosophy. (Hall 96)

Although the corrosive and cynical character of Lucian's writings is noted by many scholars, Hall prefers to downplay the sinister implications of his satire by suggesting that the writer's "main concern was to entertain an audience."²

Focusing on the common elements of the genre Varro and Lucian might have drawn from Menippus, Hall singles out the writers' "imaginative treatment of the subject matter, that vein of fantasy which seems to have been characteristic of the Cynic

philosopher from Cadara” (98), and a number of themes and motifs, such as the motif of the philosophers’ quarrel, that occur in both writers’ Menippean texts. Other scholars also note some common elements of the genre. Among the most prominent structural and thematic features that distinguished Menippean satire, as it was practised in antiquity and the Renaissance, Bakhtin, Blanchard, and Holland list the genre’s seriocomic character, its penchant for discussing serious matters in a joking, light-hearted manner, its characteristic looseness of form, its mixture of prose and verse, and its general anti-intellectual thrust.

In his seminal study of the genre, Bakhtin identifies fourteen major characteristics of Menippean satire, among which we find the increased “specific weight of the comic element,” “extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention,” “unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure,” “creation of extraordinary situations,” “philosophical universalism,” “a radical change in the scale of the observed phenomena of life,” “sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations,” “elements of social utopia,” “a widespread use of inserted genres,” and “concern with current and topical issues” (*Poetics* 114-9). To various degrees, all or some of these features can be found in Butler’s *Erewhon* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*, as well as in other dystopian classics such as Orwell’s *1984* and Burgess’s *A Clockwork Orange*.

Bakhtin, as we can see, recognizes that “elements of social utopia” constitute but one aspect of the genre which is entirely subordinated to its practitioner’s wider philosophical concerns. Therefore, when utopian narratives are incorporated into a larger framework of Menippean satire, one should never confine one’s analysis of their fictional societies to an examination--no matter how detailed--of these societies’ social arrangements, rituals and practices. Even in those cases when, as in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, the novel does not include any framing devices (as More’s *Utopia* or Butler’s

Erewhon certainly do), the Menippean character of the work may manifest itself through different structural means.

At the same time, Bakhtin's approach to the genre and, in particular, his attempts to account for Menippean satire's internal coherence by attributing the genre's "inner integrity" to its practitioners' "carnavalesque attitude to life" have been criticized for his "excessive romanticization of popular culture" (Blanchard 26), for his excessive emphasis on "the occupations of the marketplace" and almost exclusive treatment of Menippean satire "in terms of carnival and folk humour" (Holland 90, 91), and for his ignorance of "the simple fact that the Menippean form is often an extremely *learned* form with a necessarily limited audience" (Blanchard 27; emphasis--author's).

If Bakhtin's analysis of the Menippean form does not account for the form's "paradoxical anti-intellectualism," which is, as Blanchard points out, "accessible primarily to intellectuals alone" (27), Blanchard's own study of the form insists that "Menippean satire is a genre both for and about the scholars; it is an immensely learned form that is at the same time paradoxically anti-intellectual" (14). Blanchard, like Bakhtin, notes the formlessness of the Menippean form, its rejection of stable aesthetic categories, and its violation of generic boundaries. Yet at the same time, he describes the Menippean satirist as "nearly always an immensely learned author" who poses uneasily between the role of sage and anti-intellectual iconoclast, a wise fool who is one of literature's most enduring pests" (11-2). Blanchard also stresses "the inescapably irrational posture" of the Menippean artist, "his wholesale dependence upon paradox" which "precludes the establishment of any norm by which the world may be judged, a norm of which the conventional satirist always avails himself" (25). Observing that "the roots of Menippean satire are in Greek literature" (15), the scholar makes a useful distinction between Menippean and Roman verse satire, pointing out that

The ideal norm that is always presupposed in Roman verse satire is conspicuously lacking in Menippean works, and its absence argues for the consideration of these genres as distinct on grounds broader than their formal or stylistic differences. (19)

The absence of the ideal norm, as we will see, is of particular importance for a valid interpretation of *Erewhon* and *Brave New World*.

Like Blanchard, Philip Hoyt Holland stresses the centrality of paradox in Menippean works, pointing out that

The germ of ambivalence is present in the very situation of paradox. . . . Essentially, paradox is no more than the opposition of one opinion or standard to another. It challenges the accepted truths by raising the possibility of another way of looking at them. Its proper force is not that of affirmation or negation but of experiment, of the testing of received ideas. (129)

Focusing in his study on what Isaac Casaubon, the Renaissance classical scholar, calls *spoudogelois*, the Greek word for an oxymoronic term meaning “serious-smiling” or “philosophiam ludentem,” the Latin for a “playing philosophy” (34), Holland, like other scholars of menippea, recognizes the genre’s penchant for discussing serious matters in a light-hearted manner and the looseness of its form. At the same time, the scholar deepens our understanding of the function of Menippean satire by suggesting that the mixture of prose and verse, often taken to be the definitive characteristic of Menippean satire, is “only an incidental feature of it” (33). According to Holland, the genre is not so

much marked by a mixed form, as it is marked by a mixed temperament (34).

Acknowledging the mixed temperament of Menippean writers, the scholar draws our attention to a peculiar mix of melancholy and humour that informs the genre.

However, Holland, like many other critics and scholars, does not trace the symptoms of the Menippean writer's mixed temperament to what may be their underlying reasons. Like Hall, who takes the edge from Lucian's cynical and corrosive satire by insisting that the writer's "main concern was to entertain an audience" (98), Holland insists that the paradoxical mode of presentation of Menippean texts, even forcing readers to think about the nature of their received opinions, never puts into question the underlying system of the author's values. Paradox can accommodate relativity and skepticism, yet "behind the free play of literary recreation . . . there usually lies a firm belief in a transcendent value" (133).

Holland's observations are undeniably true in the context of many Renaissance Menippean texts, such as More's *Utopia*. Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that Lucian's Menippean writings fail to communicate "a firm belief in a transcendent value." Although Holland, along with Blanchard, criticizes Bakhtin's view of menippea as an expression of its author's "carnavalesque attitude to life," his criticism is directed against Bakhtin's tendency to downplay those aspects of menippea which cannot be seen as manifestations of folk culture. Bakhtin's concept of "carnavalesque," however, conveys more than a sense of a Menippean writer's indebtedness to folk culture; it also conveys this writer's undeniably positive and optimistic attitude to life. In this respect, Holland, even though he draws our attention to the mixed temperament of a Menippean writer, focusing on melancholy as its integral part, does not pursue the inevitable implications of the epistemological uncertainty that causes this melancholy in the first place. Blanchard, on the other hand, is not averse to acknowledging that the powerful skepticism of a

Menippean writer ultimately destroys his faith in transcendent values. “Menippean satire,” writes Blanchard,

is comic in its tendency to diagnose *all* human activity as universally mad and foolish, but in its acknowledgement that epistemological certainty is impossible in a world that is predetermined to be absurd it can evoke at the same time responses that come close to tragic sensibility. (25)

Even though Lucian’s Menippean writings do not strike a tragic note, they are strongly marked by a sense of the absurdity of life, of the futility of human action, and of the irrelevance of human effort. Moreover, Lucian’s Menippean texts manifest the absence of transcendental values, implying that dystopia is not only a “post-Christian” genre, as Gottlieb observes, but also a “pre-Christian” one.

The dystopian character of Lucian’s work is fully recognized by Rudolph, who argues “that Lucian’s Menippean model, a fusion of Skepticism and Cynicism (Cynoskepticism), is a rhetorical device of the dystopian edifice” (19). Rudolph further suggests that “Lucianic dystopia is in fact a presence, neither projected onto another landscape nor interested in future e/utopias,” and that “dystopia implies the quotidian existence and reality of the subject, a ‘bad’ reality, creating utopian projects and not vice versa. Significantly, Rudolph reverses the typical critical approach which tends to view dystopia as an anti-utopia, as a reaction against the utopian ideal. Asserting that “[d]ystopia is the presence out of which utopia sprouts and yearns,” Rudolph encourages scholars of and commentators on dystopian fiction to see it “as its own possible point of departure” (1-2)

Rudolph's study directly recognizes the dystopian strain in Lucian's writings and connects it with the writer's practice of Menippean satire. He argues that Lucian's rhetoric is that of "a cognizant dystopian writer" who openly proclaims his "irreverence toward what has been accepted as foundational and true," and, at the same time, "accepts and declares its own rhetorical badness." As a cognizant dystopian writer, Lucian, according to Rudolph, is well aware of the fact that "[r]hetorical duplicity is assumed to be the *modus operandi* of the philosopher or writer, who, while claiming to seek *sophia* in his writing, indulges in rhetorical falsities" (22-3).

If we look now at Frye's and Abrams's definitions of Menippean satire, we can see that these definitions leave out of the account important, and even defining, aspects of the genre. Abrams defines Menippean satire as a type of indirect satire which "constitute[s] a miscellaneous form often held together by a loosely constructed narrative." The major feature of this type of satire

is a series of extended dialogues and debates . . . in which a group of loquacious eccentrics, pedants, literary people, and representatives of various professions or philosophical points of view serve to make ludicrous the attitudes and viewpoints they typify by the arguments they urge in their support. (188-9)

Frye defines the genre along similar lines:

The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behaviour. The

Menippean satire thus resembles the confession in its ability to handle abstract ideas and theories, and differs from the novel in its characterization, which is stylized rather than naturalistic, and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent. Here again no sharp boundary lines can be drawn A constant theme in the tradition is the ridicule of the *philosophus gloriosus* already discussed. The novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, but the Menippean satirist sees them as diseases of the intellect, as a kind of maddened pedantry which the *philosophus gloriosus* at once symbolizes and defines. (*Anatomy* 309)

Admittedly, both definitions account for *Erewhon*'s intriguing form and describe well some of the novel's narrative devices. On the other hand, they are too narrow to embrace the novel in its entirety. Significantly, these definitions provide no insight into the underlying Menippean structure of Huxley's *Brave New World* or of other dystopian classics. Undeniably, as Holland suggests, Frye's definition of Menippean satire is "clearly unsatisfactory" and "slight" as a theoretical foundation for the genre (28) and his theory that Menippean satire "views life from a single intellectual perspective . . . needs to be extended beyond the confines of his system" (32). Nevertheless, the authority of Frye's definition of Menippean satire might be at least partly responsible for the fact that Menippean satire's structures and devices are often unrecognized in dystopian fiction. Notably, as we can see, Abrams's and Frye's definitions do not only contribute to the general misconception of the genre, but they also--by the very terms the two scholars use to define it--present Menippean satire, perhaps unintentionally, as an ancient and obsolete framework.

Recalling Blanchard's observation that "the roots of Menippean satire are in Greek literature" (15) and the distinction he makes between Menippean and Roman

verse satire, we can see that both Abrams's and Frye's definitions of the Menippean genre emphasize the word "satire" in the genre's appellation and fail to articulate a clear distinction between Menippean and formal satires. A satiric outlook, as most scholars agree and as Blanchard points out above, requires at least an implied ideal or norm against which the criticized behaviour is measured. The Menippean outlook, as the above reviewed scholarly studies indicate, is often tentative and relies on paradox to stimulate thought rather than to provide solid judgments.

Apparently, it is the overemphasis on the word "satire" in the genre's appellation that has contributed to its misrepresented identity. Holland, as I noted above, draws our attention to the fact that Menippean satire "is not exclusively satirical as satire is commonly understood" (33), but he does not focus on the distinction between "satire" as it "is commonly understood" and its practice in the genre. Neither does he make a distinction between "satire" and "irony" in general and "satire" and "irony" in the genre's practice. However, the view of "irony" as a verbal and literary technique that merely enhances the satiric intentions of a writer is responsible for the confusion between the two concepts and for the shortcomings of the critical practice that blurs the distinction between them.

Notably, the distinction Frye makes between "satire" and "irony" in his *Anatomy of Criticism* concerns different formal strategies pursued by a satirist and an ironist rather than their radically different vision of the world. Frye states that

The chief distinction between irony and satire is that satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured. Sheer invective or name calling . . . is satire in which there is relatively little irony: on the other hand, whenever the reader is

not sure what the author's attitude is or what his own is supposed to be, we have irony with relatively little satire . . . Irony is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author. Satire demands at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognizes as grotesque, and at least an implicit moral standard, the latter being essential in a militant attitude to experience. (*Anatomy* 223)

Defining "satire" as "militant irony," Frye suggests that the difference between the two notions is that of degree rather than substance; his observation that "[i]rony is consistent both with complete realism of content and with the suppression of attitude on the part of the author" still maintains that "irony" cannot function without a moral standard. According to Frye, the ironist's "moral norms are relatively clear" and there are "standards" or values which provide the required yardstick for condemning "the grotesque" and "absurd."

For the Menippean writer, however, irony is a technique used to express his world view rather than a device to enhance meaning through a purely linguistic play. The function of irony in a Menippean text also differs substantially from the function Henry James ascribes to it in his *Art of the Novel*. James maintained that "[t]he strength of applied irony" lies

surely in the sincerities, the lucidities, the utilities that stand behind it. When it's not a campaign, of a sort, on behalf of the something better (better than the obnoxious, the provoking object) that blessedly, as is assumed, *might* be, it's not worth speaking of . . . [Irony] implies and projects the other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain. (222)

This kind of irony relies on the reader's ability to reconstruct the values that lie behind the "pretentious and vain," in James's words, actuality. The Menippean writer's irony, however, is not a technique that invites the reader to reconstruct the value system that lies behind it. This kind of irony is akin to modern skepticism, and it is fueled by a view of the world in which values have disappeared.

This function of irony is fully recognized by Dyson's study of a metamorphosis of Swift's satire in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*. Even though Dyson appears to use the terms "satire" and "irony" interchangeably, ascribing to both techniques the function of serving a moral purpose and of mending the world, he registers the disintegration of this function in the work of the writer who, in Dyson's words, "has been to some degree tutor" to all British ironists (xii). Drawing our attention to the phenomenon of "disappearing positives" in *Gulliver*, Dyson argues that in Book IV, Swift's irony ceases to be a verbal device and becomes a structural principle. Moreover, this irony no longer aims "to instruct and delight," but to express a dark and pessimistic outlook on human nature and the human condition. "In the work of Swift," Dyson writes,

we find, at characteristic moments, that irony takes a leap. It escapes from its supposed or intended purpose and does something not only entirely different from what it set out to do, but even diametrically opposite. . . . It seems, in undergoing its metamorphosis, to bring us closer to Swift's inner vision of man and universe. It ceases to be a functional technique serving a moral purpose, and becomes an embodiment of an attitude to life. (1-2)

Dyson does not trace this phenomenon of disappearing positives in the work of those major British ironists who were directly influenced by their “tutor,” yet he does draw our attention to what he calls “the oddity” of Butler’s satire and to the “ironic traps” of Huxley’s satire and points out that “[i]n *Gulliver*, in *Erewhon*, in *Brave World*, [and] in 1984 a fantasy world is constructed, to carry ironic implications beyond purely verbal manipulation, into the plot and structure of the whole” (xiii). Major interpretations of these novels have been based, as I previously observed, on the assumption of the existence of a solid set of values underlying these works. However, as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the Menippean structure of these novels makes it impossible to state with certainty what these values or positives are. The irony deployed in Butler’s and Huxley’s dystopia is akin to Swift’s irony which “is by no means directed only against things which can be morally changed. Sometimes it is deflected, and turned upon states of mind which might or might not be alterable.” This irony foregoes its widely anticipated function of wonderfully mending the world and “transmutes itself into a savage exploration of the world’s essential unmendability.” This irony, to use Dyson’s insights into Swift’s *Gulliver*, “is turned against certain limitations, or defects . . . in the human predicament that are, by the nature of things, inevitable” (5).

Like Holland who speaks of the mixed temperament of a Menippean author, Dyson relates the kind of irony he registers in the work of Swift to a specific “vision of the universe which particular events are chosen to typify or represent” (x). For this reason, the kind of irony deployed by Swift, Butler, and Huxley responds well to Kierkegaard’s definition of irony as “infinite absolute negativity” (276), as “a standpoint which continually cancels itself” (126). “It is a nothingness,” writes Kierkegaard,

which consumes everything and a something in its deepest root comical. As irony conquers everything by seeing its disproportion to the Idea, so it also succumbs to itself, since it constantly goes beyond itself while remaining in itself. (161)

Implicitly, Kierkegaard recognizes that irony embraces no positives or values, for he defines irony as “infinite” because it negates all rather than “this or that phenomenon” and as “absolute” because “it negates by virtue of a higher which is not” (278). Wayne Booth’s concept of “unstable irony” also describes irony as offering no standpoint which is not constantly undercut by further ironies. Observing that in this kind of ironic examination “no truth, no passion, no political commitment, no moral judgment, will stand up,” Booth, like Kierkegaard and Dyson, relates the use of this type of irony to its practitioner’s negative world view, to his “unqualified cosmic assertion that the universe . . . is absurd” (253).

Resisting the negativity and nihilism inherent in wholly ironic literary works, Booth makes a useful distinction between literature and philosophy, arguing that “we should be able to accept, in novels, plays, and poems, the emotional power and interest of many views which we think untrue” and be able to relate to and appreciate the painful experience of an absurd universe portrayed by “the totally ironic view.” At the same time, Booth points out that we should be able to see such a view as only “one of the possible views on the human condition,” refusing to accept the text’s “implied claim” that the vision it presents “is the whole truth.” However, as Booth concludes,

We can poison our reading experience both by failing to reconstruct when stable ironies are intended and by insisting on literal translation when the whole point is to heighten instabilities. (*Irony* 277)

Booth thus raises two equally important issues in his *Rhetoric of Irony*, condemning the critical tendency of accepting the nihilism and negativity of ironic works as a true and total vision of human experience and the tendency of failing to recognize the character of intended ironies (*Irony* 262-77).

I would underline the fact that while Booth is gravely concerned with neutralizing the harmful effect of “the totally ironic view,” he still maintains that critics should not insist on “literal translation when the whole point is to heighten instabilities.” However, as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, major critical approaches to *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* disregard the novel’s ironic structures and their indebtedness to the genre of Menippean satire. Attempting to impose on these texts a number of clearly delineated dichotomies, certain critics aim at reconstructing in these texts the implied values that supposedly underlie them.

As Menippean writers, however, Butler and Huxley display an acute interest in contemporary scientific, sociological, and psychological theories. Or perhaps their acute interest in science, combined with their interest in philosophy, turns them into Menippean writers. By his own admission, Butler spent almost twenty years writing his evolutionary works, intensely questioning the mechanism underlying the Darwinian approach to evolution. Likewise, Huxley’s encyclopedic erudition manifests itself in his advanced knowledge of biology and psychology, displayed in *Brave New World* and in his other writings. As “immensely learned authors,” both writers manifest the Menippean writer’s “paradoxical anti-intellectualism,” which, as Blanchard points out, is

“accessible primarily to intellectuals alone” (27). *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* also exhibit the synthesis of topical polemics with narrative fiction, juxtaposing topical themes with “more traditionally literary” genres, which is, as Morson indicates, characteristic of Menippean satire (7, 51). At the same time the scope of the polemics conducted by both novels cannot be limited to the specific concerns of the respective periods of their writing. *Erewhon* and *Brave New World*, as I will argue in chapters 3 and 4, address and ironically re-write major themes of “age-old, if not eternal” intellectual concerns, displaying the “philosophical universalism” that Bakhtin lists as one of the defining aspects of the menippea. Furthermore, both works contain elements of meta-utopian or Menippean structure, in which “utopia and its parody enter into an inconclusive dialogue,” and represent texts that are, in Morson’s words, “doubly encoded from the start,” and so susceptible to “contradictory classification” (50).

Marked by epistemological uncertainty and modern skepticism, *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* rely heavily on paradox and display a mixture of humor and seriousness characteristic of the menippea. At the same time, “the elements of social utopia,” which Bakhtin recognizes as one of the characteristic of the menippea, acquire in both novels a distinctly dystopian flavour, as *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* manifest the same disappearance of positives and values that Dyson witnesses in Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*. This absence of positives aligns these literary works, emotionally and temperamentally, with the literary tradition developed by Lucian and Swift, confirming Rudolph’s assertion that “dystopia has a classical history that begins with Lucian” (18). Even though the genre of Menippean satire has not been used exclusively for the expression of dystopian sentiments, its inherent skepticism turns it into a suitable vehicle for the expression of a dystopian *Weltanschauung*. Considering this undeniably strong connection between Menippean satire and dystopia, it is “quite startling,” as

Rudolph observes, that the “links between the dystopian texts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and their predecessors have not been explored” (3).

The reasons for this omission lie, as I have tried to show in this Chapter, in our inadequate knowledge of the Menippean genre, in our lack of differentiation between “satire” and “irony” in Menippean works, and in the fact that neither Butler nor Huxley has yet been studied and appropriately recognized as a Menippean writer. Yet, above all, in my opinion, the reasons for this omission lie in the reluctance of critics and commentators to probe the depth of pessimism informing the writers’ dystopian work. This reluctance itself appears to be grounded in many a critic’s refusal to recognize that the view of the human individual as a source and meaning of his/her action is not compatible with the view of human subjectivity implied by these works. Nevertheless, many critical approaches to *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* still insist that Butler and Huxley defend human individuality rather than mourn the loss of any foundation for belief in it.

Chapter 3

Samuel Butler and *Erewhon*

In that I write at all I am among the
damned.

Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit*

This Chapter looks at *Erewhon*'s scholarly and critical reception; at its network of references and allusions to earlier literary models; at the parodic relationship *Erewhon* maintains with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; and at the Menippean and dystopian aspects of *Erewhon* and of Butler's other writings. I argue that *Erewhon*'s affinity with its earlier literary models and its parodic and anti-utopian stance with respect to Defoe's *Crusoe* help to classify it as a dystopia. I also argue that not only *Erewhon*, but Butler's evolutionary writings, as a whole, are profoundly Menippean works, and that, being prompted by ideological reasons, the writer's claim in his evolutionary writings that he provides "each creature" with a helm to steer towards the goal of bettering itself (*LH* 230) masks his deep-seated awareness of this goal's ultimate undesirability.

3.1 *Erewhon*'s scholarly and critical reception

Against the optimistic utopias of the nineteenth century, *Erewhon* stands eccentric and interesting, modern in its alienation, its rejection of the dominant mystique of the age. (Elliott 129)

“Who is interested in Butler today?” asks Ralf Norrman, the author of a book-length study *Samuel Butler and the Meaning of Chiasmus* (1986), almost apologizing for his choice of so uninspiring an author for his exploration of the literary device of chiasmus. Norrman’s valuable study betrays a typical, if somewhat inexplicable, attitude of many a scholar of Butler’s who devote major studies to his life, character, and art in order to belittle his work and attack his personality. A veritable character assassination, Malcolm Muggeridge’s *The Earnest Atheist* (1936), a work so influential that no student of Butler can avoid mentioning it or engaging in polemics with it, shows little admiration for the writer’s personality or appreciation of his art. And U. C. Knoepfelmacher in his study of *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel* (1965) can hardly conceal his profound dislike for the writer who “inverted, transposed, and transmuted, until obsessed by paradox, he made it the very basis of his ontology” (229). Different in their scholarly pursuits, Norrman’s study of Butler’s literary technique, Muggeridge’s biography, and Knoepfelmacher’s account of Butler’s search for meaningful faith all testify to the three authors’ desire--perhaps quite unconscious--to undermine the power and significance of Butler’s thought through portraying him as a literary opportunist in search of formal literary effects beyond any graspable meaning.

It seems strange that the second half of the twentieth century with its taste for irony, paradox, and uncertainty would so completely ignore the writer whose literary art thrives on these very qualities. The four-volume *Encyclopedia of British Writers* mentions Butler's *Erewhon* in one line in the Introduction; otherwise Butler is conspicuously absent from this reference work that provides an excellent article-length coverage of the art and life of most major and minor British writer. But even those scholars who recognize Butler's genius as a thinker and writer tend to view him as a representative of the Victorian era whose thought can find no application beyond the specific concerns of his times. However, as Harris points out, "Butler's startling Erewhonian doctrine of disease treated as an offence is not without its parallel in modern legislation" (83). And, indeed, examples of diseases treated as crimes, only to be later widely accepted as unquestionable norms, abound in the history of modern jurisprudence, underscoring the modern validity of Butler's epistemological uncertainty. Nor are Butler's speculations on the rights of animals and vegetables in *Erewhon* without their parallels in the agenda of hotly debated contemporary issues. Understandably, Butler's tendency to resolve such contentious issues through appealing to common sense rather than to logically validated, yet arbitrary, categories of "right" and "wrong" questions the very foundation of contemporary political and social debate. By calling our attention to the arbitrariness of the "first premise" in any discourse or in any practice, Butler undermines the strength of logical reasoning and weakens the ties that ensure social cohesion. The critical attempts to confine the significance of Butler's literary art to studies of Victorian social and cultural climates neglect both the powerful intellectual and literary tradition that shaped the writer's work and downplay the disconcerting implications of Butler's thought for our own contemporary ideals and beliefs.

The paradoxical character of Butler's literary work earned the writer a somewhat marginal position during his own lifetime and in our own. Indeed, apart from brief periods of popularity that followed the publications of *Erewhon* in 1872 and of his posthumously published novel *The Way of All Flesh* in 1903, his writings attracted little scholarly attention. Since Butler's works appeared in print, he fared better among his fellow writers than among the critical community. George Bernard Shaw considered him to be "in his own department the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century" (Preface to *Major Barbara*) and Aldous Huxley wrote warmly of him as "one of the most lively of the dead" (Introduction to *Erewhon* xx). Shaw's unflagging admiration fueled the interest in Butler's literary art, and the first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of perhaps the most significant, insightful and sympathetic contributions to Butler studies. John Harris's *Samuel Butler Author of Erewhon: the Man and his Work* (1916), De Lange's *Samuel Butler: Critic and Philosopher* (1925), Clara Stillman's *Samuel Butler: A Mid-Victorian Modern* (1932), and P. N. Furbank's *Samuel Butler (1835-1902)* (1948) are among the early classics of Butler criticism that combine the discussion of Butler's philosophical and evolutionary ideas with perceptive criticism of his works. However, despite these appreciative studies, the overall critical attitude to the writer towards the middle of the century was far from being generous. Furbank states that "the last word upon Butler is at present a wholesale slaughter of his reputation as a character and writer" (5) and that even the critics who profess respect for his literary talent "suggest degrees of folly or inadequacy in Butler" (4). This unwelcome tendency of looking at Butler's literary work through the prism of his alleged personal shortcomings casts a long shadow over the later criticism of the writer. In his *Samuel Butler Revalued* (1981), a study allegedly devoted to securing Butler "a more prominent place than he has had in the last sixty years" (5), Thomas

Jeffers recognizes “[Butler’s] lively subtlety, his persistent questioning, or his earnest religiousness” yet he still feels compelled to point out that his book “is no panegyric” and that “we shouldn’t blink at Butler’s failings as a man and a writer” (6). Tracing the intellectual influence of earlier philosophers and writers on Butler and the writer’s own influence on a number of twentieth-century intellectuals, Jeffers’s study is indicative of Butler criticism of the second half of the twentieth century. This criticism appears to be overwhelmingly concerned with undermining the writer’s ideas (by stressing the unpleasant sides of his character) rather than with appreciation of the literary aspects of his works.

Significantly, the tone of critical engagement with Butler’s literary work has changed recently. The publication in 2007 of a collection of essays edited by James G. Paradis, *Samuel Butler, Victorian Against the Grain: A Critical Overview*, signals a decisive turn in Butler criticism. Pointing out that “[t]he modern critical engagement with Butler’s work remains sketchy” (6) and that “[n]o edition of critical essays has ever been published on Butler” (7), Paradis underscores the need for “a critical overview that places [Butler’s] multifaceted body of work in the cultural framework of the Victorian age” (7). Acknowledging Butler’s profound insights into “the cultural fabric of his times” (3) and lamenting his undeserved neglect, this collection of essays pays serious attention to Butler’s evolutionary works and to the centrality of irony in his writings.

Nevertheless, even though Elinor Shaffer, a contributor to this latest edition of critical essays on Butler’s work, recognizes that “[i]t is one of Butler’s striking contributions that he drew attention to the use of irony in scientific context” (64) and, even more importantly, that “[t]ransgressive projects had to be articulated within the idiom of orthodoxy” (63), her essay, like other essays in this collection, seems to approach Butler’s evolutionary works in a serious vein. Paradis, for example, suggests

that Butler's evolutionary studies "placed evolutionary thinking within a new historical framework . . . and asserted, in a neo-Lamarckian context, the role of memory in shaping the organism" (3). However, as I argue in this study, Butler's evolutionary works were written as imitations of scientific discourse. From this perspective, Butler's irony acquires a scope and significance that remain largely unacknowledged. When Shaffer draws a parallel between Butler's contemporaries' lack of appreciation of "his intense and unrelenting analysis of religious crisis" and our own contemporaries' ignorance of the depth of Butler's "critique of the new Scientific Authorities" (83), she seems to recognize that the subversiveness of the writer's thought transcends the boundary of the historical period in which he lived.

Admittedly, within the critical parameters the editor and the contributors set for themselves, this most recent collection of essays on Butler achieves eminently its goal: the book represents a welcome, timely, and significant contribution to Butler studies. At the same time, its focus on the cultural, social, and intellectual climate of Butler's contemporary England underscores even further the lack of critical studies on Butler as a literary artist, on the literary tradition(s) that shaped his work, and on the character and nature of his irony. There is no essay on *Erewhon* in this collection, and consequently no attempt has been made to inscribe this novel in the Menippean or dystopian tradition. Moreover, since the contributors to *Samuel Butler, Victorian Against the Grain* view Butler's subversive irony as directed against his contemporaries, they, unintentionally perhaps, circumscribe its scope and reach, or, in other words, its significance for our contemporary times. Above all, the need still remains for a critical work that would place Butler's work in a broader literary context by stressing his affinities with writers whose work transcends the historical and cultural contexts of the historical period they lived in.

Indeed, apart from Govind Narain Sharma's 1963 doctoral dissertation "Samuel Butler as Literary Artist," and Klaus Simonsen's *Erzähltechnik und Weltanschauung in Samuel Butlers literarischen Werken Erewhon, Erewhon Revisited und The Way of All Flesh* (1974), there are, to my knowledge, no systematic studies of either the literary form or the narrative strategies of Butler's major works. Sharma's concern that Butler's "literary work has not yet received the full and sustained critical attention it deserves," since "Butler the man has always been found to be more interesting than Butler the writer" (2) is echoed by Simonsen's observation that the earlier critical focus on Butler's personality and on either the progressive or conservative character of his ideas resulted in little attention given to the literary structure or narrative techniques of his works (8). Both scholars recognize the importance of a literary approach to Butler's work. Pointing out that "Butler's literary work is limited in volume," Sharma sets out to demonstrate through a critical study of his work that

Even this small body of work reveals him to be an accomplished and powerful satirist, a master of irony, a highly entertaining and original novelist, who, by his one novel, left a permanent impress on the English novel, and a witty and delightful essayist. (7)

Simonsen's focus on the literary structure and narrative strategies of Butler's major works is even more significant in terms of my own interests, for Simonsen relates the artistic and literary form of Butler's works to the writer's intellectual and social outlook, and to the economic, political, and psychological climate of his contemporary society. The scholar argues that due to an overwhelming focus on Butler's personality and his

intellectual make-up, earlier studies have neglected the multifaceted relationship between literature and society and left unanswered the implicit political function of the aesthetic:

Das Schwergewicht wurde auf die individual-psychologische und geistesgeschichtliche Komponente gelegt, während die vielfältigen Beziehungen zwischen Literatur und Gesellschaft vernachlässigt wurden und vor allem die Frage nach der Funktion des Ästhetischen unbeantwortet blieb. (8)

[The emphasis [in Butler studies] was placed on the individual, psychological, and historical aspects [of his personality and work], whereas the multifaceted relationship between literature and society [as these manifest themselves in his work] was neglected, and, above all, the question of the role of [his] aesthetics remained unanswered.] (paraphrase--mine)

Simonsen maintains that Butler's choice of narrative strategies in his literary works is intimately related not only to his *Weltanschauung*, but also to the social, economic, historical, psychological, and religious issues of his contemporary society and that a detailed examination of these strategies can bring a powerful insight not only into Butler's own intellectual position concerning these issues, but also into how the aesthetic components of Butler's work mediate the connection between the formation of social and individual consciousness.

Ironically, Sharma's approach to identifying *Erewhon*'s genre is based on a comprehensive and valuable analysis of Butler's satirical strategies. Observing that satire in the novel "works at different levels simultaneously," the scholar maintains that

we can only unravel the different strands of Butler's satire "by trying to understand his satiric technique" (81). Sharma distinguishes three levels of growing satiric complexity in the novel: "a direct and simple" first level of satire; a "more indirect and oblique" second level; and "a much more complex" third level of satire. At the first level, the first-person narrator's direct criticism of Erewhonian institutions, customs, and practices betrays "the clear voice of the author," since Butler portrays fictional institutions, customs, and practices as "close imitations" of their Victorian counterparts. At the second level, "conditions in England are indirectly criticized by portraying those in Erewhon as better than they were in England." And at the third level of satire, Butler employs "the most sophisticated ironic device" by inventing a hero through whom he projects the first two kinds of criticism (81). On the strength of this analysis, Sharma concludes that on the basis of *Erewhon*'s "general structure and the pattern of its irony," the novel should be classified as a "satiric utopia" (78).

Despite a useful differentiation of the levels of satire operating in *Erewhon*, Sharma makes no distinction between the function of Butler's various satirical strategies. Neither does she make a distinction between "satire" and "irony," tending to use the terms interchangeably. Consequently, *Erewhon*, in Sharma's opinion, establishes clear antithetical oppositions between "mechanism and life," "Hebraism and Hellenism, reason and faith, logic and common sense, duty and pleasure" (97). The assumption that the reader can distinguish "the clear voice of the author" speaking in condemnation or praise allows Sharma to interpret the novel as privileging life, Hellenism, faith, and common sense over mechanism, Hebraism, reason, and logic.

Simonsen's analysis of *Erewhon*'s genre also devotes major attention to Butler's satirical strategies: the scholar makes a clear distinction between the various functions of humour, irony, and satire in the novel. Simonsen, however, does not attribute *Erewhon*

to a specific generic category on the basis of its “general structure and the pattern of its irony.” Focusing on Butler’s use of diverse narrative techniques, he recognizes the strains of various literary genres in the novel’s make-up. Tracing the elements of humour, irony, and satire in *Erewhon*, Simonsen defines “humour” as a reconciliatory form of criticism that is marked by a synthesis between the negative and positive elements in the narrative. He approaches “irony” as a mode of narration that aims to expose the gap between outwardly proclaimed values and empirical reality; and he defines “satire” as an outlook that gives expression to a direct confrontation between the ideal and reality (207). Like Sharma, Simonsen treats “irony” as a verbal and literary strategy aimed at enhancing the writer’s meaning rather than as a structural principle of the whole novel.

Perceptively, Simonsen’s study of Butler’s diverse narrative techniques suggests that various forms of narrative presentation in *Erewhon* form an “Art Montage” and serve the purpose of expressing Butler’s relativism. Commenting on the strong presence of the essayistic narrative mode in *Erewhon*, Simonsen points out that

Der Essay, der die Relativierung in die eigene form hineinnimmt und mit verschiedenen Möglichkeiten spielt, zeigt, daß die Wahrheit nicht fixierbar, sondern subjectiv und relativ ist und einzig aus der Konfrontation gegensätzlicher Anschauungen hervorgehen kann. (207)

[The essay’s form requires relativization and plays with various possibilities in order to show that truth is not fixed but is relative and subjective, and can only emerge in the confrontation of contrary ideas.] (translation--mine)

Simonsen further suggests that depending on the set of criteria used to identify the novel's genre, *Erewhon* can be classified as a utopia, dystopia, satirical romance, fable, and Menippean satire or anatomy. By placing his fictional country in a far-off land, isolating it from the discovered world, insisting, through the narrator, on the truthfulness of his account of it, and by suggesting that Erewhon is, at least in some respects, a better country than the target society of Butler's contemporary England, the writer observes the conventions of the utopian narrative. On the other hand, by stressing the gap between appearance and reality in Erewhon and by undermining the belief that progress can be achieved by means of science and technology, Butler expresses the sentiments that are usually associated with dystopian writers. At the same time, the lack of development in characters, ideas, or action allows one to classify *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited* as satirical romances, or "fables rather than novels":

Erewhon and *Erewhon Revisited* werden daher auch mit Recht als satirical romances, "fables rather than novels" bezeichnet, da es . . . keine echte Entwicklung in den Characteren, Ideen oder in der Rahmenhandlung gibt. (17)

[*Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited* are also rightly referred to as satirical romances, "fables rather than novels," because there is no development in the novels' characters, ideas, or action.] (paraphrase--mine)

And finally, Simonsen notes that Butler's focus in *Erewhon* on moral values, rather than on human psychology, makes it possible to classify the novel as Menippean satire or anatomy:

Zugleich wird wie in der *Menippean satire* oder *anatomy* eine Vision der Welt dargeboten, die die Haltung der Moral mit der der Phantasie verbindet. Den Gattungen der Romanze und der Satire unterliegt ein Interesse am Menschen, das in Moralischer Hinsicht tiefer geht als in psychoklogischer. Es geht um Werte und Grundhaltungen, nicht aber um Individuen, um Sitten und Gewohnheiten, nicht aber um individuelle Entscheidungen. (17)

[At the same time, as in Menippean satire or anatomy, a vision of the world is presented that ties together moral attitudes with fantasy. The genres of romance and satire are governed by an interest in human beings that is deeper in a moral rather than in a psychological sense. The focus is on values and basic attitudes, rather than on individuals, and on customs and habits, rather than on individual decisions.] (translation--mine).

Simonsen's association of Menippean satire with anatomy and of fantasy with satire betrays his indebtedness to Frye. Undeniably the best and most comprehensive study of Butler's literary strategies, Simonsen's work, however, approaches Menippean satire as if it were formal satire. Since a satiric outlook requires an antithesis between the satirized vice or folly and the norm or ideal, Simonsen's interpretation of *Erewhon* as Butler's "satiric attack on all conventionally fixed modes of behaviour" leads him to a logical conclusion that the novel is an expression of the writer's "passionate struggle for individual freedom and self-realization" (226). In other words, even though Simonsen distinguishes between Butler's use of "humour," "irony," and "satire" in *Erewhon*, he maintains that these three formal strategies are aimed at a single goal of bolstering the writer's values.

Similarly, even though his study seeks to demonstrate that Butler's use of various narrative forms expresses the writer's relativism, this variety, in Simonsen's view, becomes for Butler a means of searching for truth and unmasking false values. Simonsen maintains that the writer aims at harmonizing the conflicting views in his novel through the persistent repetition of such leitmotifs as "instinct," "common sense," and "grace." According to Simonsen, Butler makes the opposites meet and reconciles the contraries by asserting that despite the relative character of social norms and conventions, human life and human identity remain the only absolute value to uphold-- "Als absoluter Wert bleiben nur das menschliche Leben und die menschliche Persönlichkeit erhalten" (208). [Only human life and the human personality are preserved [by Butler] as absolute values.] (paraphrase--mine)

Both Sharma's and Simonsen's studies illustrate, to some extent, the risk that Morson associates with the critical failure to recognize the Menippean structure of those literary works which cannot be easily attributed to the main generic categories. Morson points out that a Menippean work, which is "formally anomalous," runs a risk inherent in the genre:

Its heterogeneity will be perceived as chaos . . . its multiple points of view will be seen as incoherence or reduced to singularity, and . . . the network of allusions and repetitions which links its parts will be taken as no more than recurrent concerns. (174)

The above reviewed critical analyses of *Erewhon* attempt, through different means, to reduce the novel to singularity by suggesting a perspective that will harmonize its discordant elements. Clearly, such a unifying perspective can only be based on a value

or values that are privileged and provide the foundation for the novel's explicit or implicit criticism of other, false or insubstantial values. As we have seen, Sharma suggests that *Erewhon* establishes a series of clear antitheses between "mechanism and life," "Hebraism and Hellenism, reason and faith, logic and common sense, duty and pleasure" (97), and Simonsen finds the privileged ground or a unifying perspective for the novel in what he sees as Butler's intention to assert that human life and human identity remain the only absolute values to preserve--"Als absoluter Wert bleiben nur das menschliche Leben und die menschliche Persönlichkeit erhalten" (208) [Only human life and the human personality are preserved [by Butler] as absolute values.] (paraphrase--mine)

Significantly, both scholars do not recognize in full measure the implications of *Erewhon*'s Menippean structure for its generic classification and for its valid interpretation. If Sharma's study does not concern itself with the Menippean ancestry of Butler's novel, Simonsen's work acknowledges that the novel can be regarded as Menippean satire. However, his approach to this genre, as I show above, is based on Frye's definition of the menippea. Moreover, even though, unlike Sharma, who seems to use the terms "satire" and "irony" interchangeably, Simonsen makes a meaningful distinction between Butler's use of humour, satire, and irony in *Erewhon*, his concept of irony does not regard it as "infinite absolute negativity," as a reflection of Butler's pessimistic "vision of man and universe," and as a structural principle underlying the novel. Both studies thus interpret the novel and its genre on the basis of a humanist framework, acknowledging the dystopian aspects of *Erewhon* but attempting to establish clearly delineated dichotomies and to reconstruct the values that lie behind Butler's satire and irony.

However, as I intend to show in sections 4 and 5 of this Chapter, these two harmonizing interpretations of *Erewhon* are not supported either by the novel's antithetical structure or by Butler's humanist vision of human life or identity. Attempts to reduce to singularity the multitude of viewpoints offered by this "formally anomalous" work distort and impoverish the novel's significance. The persistent critical orientation towards the discovery of an ideal in *Erewhon* can perhaps be explained by Butler's solid reputation as one of the finest British satirists. Dyson, however, draws our attention to what he calls "the central oddity about Butler's satire." Pointing out that Butler's "irony is classically satiric," Dyson, at the same time, acknowledges that the writer "is in no normal sense of the word an idealist." Butler, writes Dyson, "feels little disgust for the sinful And the 'sinful' are not defined in any narrowly Victorian way" (116). Even though Dyson does not trace in *Erewhon* the phenomenon of disappearing positives he observes in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels*, his reflections on "the central oddity" of Butler's satire imply the absence of a clearly defined ideal or norm in the novel. And his brief comment to the effect that Butler, in *Erewhon*, constructs a "fantasy world" in which his ironic implications are carried "beyond purely verbal manipulation, into the plot and structure of the whole" (xiii) deserves much closer attention.

3.2 *Erewhon's* Literary Models

When [Milton] uses the convention of invocation, thus bringing the poem into the genre of the spoken word, the significance of the convention is to indicate what tradition his work primarily belongs to and what its closest affinities are with. The purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them. (Frye *Anatomy* 247-248)

In this section of my study I would like to focus, as Frye urges us to do, on some aspects of the literary relationships *Erewhon* maintains with Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*--two works that are often indiscriminately attributed to the utopian genre--and with Aristophanes', Lucian's, Voltaire's, and Swift's dystopian writings. I argue that the thematic, structural, and generic affinities, similarities, or differences between *Erewhon* and its earlier literary models clarify the literary tradition the novel belongs to, highlighting its Menippean roots and revealing its dystopian leanings.

The need to focus on the affinities *Erewhon* develops with earlier utopian and dystopian works stems from the well-recognized critical difficulty of attributing Butler's novel to a specific literary genre. The novel has been variously labeled as a satirical novel, utopia, satiric utopia, utopian satire, romance, fable, satiric dystopia, or dystopia. Recognizing the presence of various generic strains in *Erewhon*, Simonsen, as we have seen in the previous section, attempts to give all of them an equal weight, arguing that

the variety of narrative strategies used in the novel expresses Butler's relativism and serves for him as a means of searching for truth.

Bound by the narrow constraints of inadequate generic definitions of utopia, dystopia, or menippea, and forced to reconcile the conflicting generic evidence *Erewhon* presents, critics often find some creative solutions for their classificatory difficulties. For instance, Adam Bizanz's attempt to classify *Erewhon* as a utopia that absorbed the tradition that runs from Plato to More is complicated by his own open admission of the novel's strangeness, so often commented upon by other scholars. "One disquieting factor which has puzzled critics and scholars alike since the publication of *Erewhon* in 1872," writes Bizanz,

is its motivation, or rather lack of the proper motivation normally anticipated in Utopias that propose to serve as a model for the projection of an "ideal commonwealth." ("EL Dorado Motif" 47)

Bizanz draws our attention to "the profit motif" in *Erewhon* that markedly distinguishes Butler's novel from other classical utopias in which "the existence of gold was never an object of interest pursued by the author (or by his protagonist) while in search of an ideal land, nor was it ever of any consequence to the Utopians themselves" ("EL Dorado Motif" 48). He reconciles *Erewhon*'s "seemingly unconventional scheme," or the novel's interest in the profit motive or economic exploitation, by suggesting that Butler's novel is "a particular variety of utopia, one . . . that was synonymous with a search for gold" ("EL Dorado Motif" 48).

Clearly, *Erewhon*'s attribution to a particular genre and its interpretation are often pre-determined by the critical framework adopted by scholars. Simonsen's creative

solution to *Erewhon*'s generic anomaly is subordinated to his need to interpret the novel from a humanist perspective, whereas Bisanz's interpretation of *Erewhon* seeks to inscribe the novel in the tradition of Utopian thought. Observing that Butler, unlike More whose Utopian models could only be borrowed from the literature of antiquity, "was in a position to review nearly 3000 years of Utopian thought," Bisanz points out that *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited* are a "veritable repository of numerous literary sources, motives, thoughts, and other borrowings and adaptations." The scholar cites Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, "all of which, in one form or other, served as inspirational sources for the rendering of the Erewhonian Utopia." Bisanz also adds Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) and Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* (1596) to the list of works that might have served "as additional models to the construction of [Butler's] own Utopia" ("EL Dorado Motif" 46). One of the rare scholars who traces *Erewhon*'s literary sources, Bisanz tends to focus on the similarities rather than differences between Butler's novel and its "sources," ignoring, for the most part, the ironic stand *Erewhon* takes with respect to many of them.

Moreover, conspicuously absent from the list of authors whose work, in Bisanz's opinion, shaped the Erewhonian utopia and provided the "inspirational sources" for its rendering are two ancient Greek ironists--Aristophanes and Lucian. However, as I intend to argue, our focus on the novel's "closest affinities" with the work of Aristophanes and Lucian can clarify the tradition that *Erewhon* "primarily belongs to," exposing, among other things, the motivation of Butler's "utopia."

In fact, Butler's *Erewhon* shows little affinity with either Plato's *Republic* or Thomas More's *Utopia*. Different as these two classical utopias are in terms of their authors' visions of a perfect society and in terms of their works' "outer" and "inner"

forms--to borrow the distinction Wellek and Warren make between an “outer” or formal shape of a literary work and its “inner” form (in terms of its attitude, tone, and purpose) (231)--both *The Republic* and *Utopia* feature fictional societies which are based on a strong respect for the authority of their guardians or rulers. The class of guardians in Plato’s *Republic* is entitled to respect and obedience in virtue of its superior intellectual and moral qualities; whereas in the less authoritarian *Utopia*, the young respectfully obey the aged, holding the wisdom of old age in deep reverence. Butler’s *Erewhon*, however, is marked by a notable disrespect for all forms of human authority. The writer shows very little respect for old age and even less respect for moral fortitude or intellectual superiority, asserting, in a typical Butlerian reversal, that it is “the young and fair . . . who are the truly old and truly experienced” (LH 244). Butler’s negative attitude to and his profound disbelief in spiritual, moral, and intellectual authorities are part and parcel of a dystopian outlook on human experience.

It appears that the affinity *Erewhon* displays with More’s *Utopia* manifests itself solely in their membership in the same literary tradition of Menippean satire. The motivating conflicts underlying the Menippean structure of both works, however, are profoundly different. If *Utopia*, as I argue in Chapter 2, dramatizes the conflict between the intellectual’s desire to serve his country with his talents and his realization of the futility of this service, or, in other terms, between the rewards of public active life and the rewards of private intellectual pursuits, *Erewhon* dramatizes the conflict between its author’s realization of the absurdity of human institutions, beliefs, and practices and his equally strong realization of the necessity to preserve them. In other words, Butler ridicules the institutions, beliefs, and practices that he ultimately wants to preserve. At the heart of this conflict lies Butler’s vision of human nature which, despite the writer’s strong aversion to authority, aligns him, as I will argue in Chapter 5, with Plato.

The strong emphasis on the fallibility of moral, spiritual, and intellectual authorities in Butler's *Erewhon* suggests that the influences that shaped his work should be traced back to Aristophanes and Lucian rather than to Plato or More. A full-scale study of the influence that the Greek ironists exerted on Butler is beyond the scope of my work. Nevertheless, even a brief examination of the affinities between Butler's *Erewhon* books and some writings of Aristophanes and Lucian highlights some interesting parallels between the writers' thematic interests, their structural strategies, and their outlook on life, human nature and experience. Significantly, enriching our understanding and heightening our appreciation of the Victorian writer's literary art, these emerging affinities clarify Butler's intent and motivation in the composition of his *Erewhonian* and evolutionary books.

Butler and Aristophanes

There seem to be, to my knowledge, no direct references to Aristophanes in Butler's writings. However, in terms of their plot structure, Butler's *Erewhon* books follow the typical plan of Aristophanic comedy in which a protagonist often undertakes seriously some preposterous project, and the play itself becomes an elaboration of the protagonist's success or failure. In *Erewhon*, the narrator undertakes seriously the preposterous plan of turning *Erewhonians* into a source of cheap labour through converting them to Christianity and luring them away from their homeland. Aspiring to the spiritual glory of saving *Erewhonians* for the true religion, he also contemplates seriously the preposterous idea that they are one of the lost ten tribes of Israel. The overwhelming critical focus on the beliefs, rituals, and customs of Butler's fictional country, or on the estranged part of the text, obscures the significance of the novel's

framing--introductory and concluding--chapters for *Erewhon*'s valid interpretation.

The plot of *Erewhon Revisited*, despite this novel's seemingly unsophisticated generic structure of comedy-romance, explores another extraordinary undertaking or idea (even though the narrator himself is unaware of the allegorical implications of his second coming to Erewhon). The sequel to Butler's *Erewhon* is based on the sinister and bitter exploration of the potential consequences of Christ's return to earth.³

Another important feature of Aristophanic comedies is the absence of positive characters: much of the comic effect of his plays depends on the ironic tension and opposition between "the rogues" and "the fools." Therefore, even when Aristophanes grants some of his characters the fulfillment of their grandiose ambition, their achievement is undercut and deflated by the plays' structural irony. As we will see in the next section of this Chapter, the introductory and the concluding chapters of *Erewhon* in which Butler focuses on the character of Chowbok, also known as Rev. William Habakkuk, and the narrator's failed attempts to colonize him, indicate that Butler's novel, like an Aristophanic comedy, features no positive characters. Viewed from this perspective, *Erewhon*'s protagonist's plan to lure Erewhonians into bondage through converting them to Christianity, as well as the overall profit motif that Bisanz finds so disturbing in Butler's "utopia," suggests that Butler in *Erewhon* was not motivated by a vision of "an ideal commonwealth," but followed in the footsteps of a very different literary tradition, the one that exploited the binary and dystopian perception of humanity as consisting of either deluded fools or clever manipulating rogues.

Two plays in particular--Aristophanes' *The Clouds* and *The Birds*--are based on the same structural oppositions that are embodied in the Erewhon books. They are also thematically linked with two areas of Butler's unflagging concern: his distrust of sophistry, faulty logic, and self-serving rhetoric and his dislike of active, dynamic

entrepreneurship. Despite the lack of general agreement among scholars concerning Aristophanes' political allegiances, the proper interpretation of his plays, or his intent in writing them, there seems to be a genuine consensus in acknowledging the anti-intellectual thrust of *The Clouds* and the conservative, anti-reform thrust of *The Birds*. Dover, for instance, notes that

Clouds is, of course, the most elaborate ridicule of intellectual pretensions which has come down to us from antiquity; all kinds of scientific enquiry, represented without exception as futile or immoral or both, are blended in the pretentious, squalid, sly figure of Socrates. (Dover 37)

In *The Clouds*, a former farmer Strepsiades finds himself saddled with the debts incurred by his gambling good-for-nothing son. He decides to enroll in the course of studies supervised by Socrates in the Thinkery of Sophists, hoping that his newly acquired skill of arguing convincingly in favour of an absurd proposition will allow him to overwhelm his creditors in court. Dramatizing Butler's major concern, namely the human propensity to trust unreservedly fraudulent authorities, *Erewhon* presents numerous examples of self-deluded fools or clever manipulating rogues arguing successfully in favour of absurd propositions. Examples of clever manipulation of rhetoric and logic by self-appointed moral authorities or crafty philosophers include the Chapters on "The Views of an Erewhonian Prophet Concerning the Rights of Animals" and on "The Views of an Erewhonian Philosopher Concerning the Rights of Vegetables." The notorious "The Book of the Machines" also illustrates, at one level, the excesses of faulty logic taken to the extreme. Fearing that the machines will ultimately develop a consciousness that would allow them to enslave human beings, Erewhonians (some five hundred years

before the narrator's arrival in Erewhon) decided to ban all the mechanical inventions made within the limit of 271 years (*E* 117, 138).

If Butler's distrust of rhetoric, logic, and reason is widely acknowledged, his dislike of active, dynamic entrepreneurship--the sentiment that manifests his temperamental and perhaps ideological affinity with Aristophanes--does not seem to be duly recognized. In *The Birds*, two entrepreneurial Athenians, Pisthetairos and Eulpides, flee the hustle of the city in search of an idyllic existence in the community of birds and actually succeed--despite their professed intentions--in making the previously care-free birds work tirelessly for their aggrandizement. In his commentary on his translation of *The Birds*, William Arrowsmith points out that structurally the play is based on the opposition illustrated by two Greek words: *πολνπραγμοσύνη* and *άπραγμοσύνη*. The lexical meanings of *πολνπραγμοσύνη* include "officiousness," "meddling," and "activities of the busybody." The word also connotes "a spirit of unsatisfied restlessness; adventurous daring of action and intellect" and expresses "daring, energy, ingenuity, strain, dynamic action, restlessness, ambition for acquisition and conquest, [and] glory in change." These qualities in *The Birds* are opposed to those expressed by the word *άπραγμοσύνη* which denotes "the contented leisure of traditional order and the ritual conservatism of peaceful life" (317).

The opposition between "daring, energy, ingenuity, strain, dynamic action, restlessness, ambition for acquisition and contest, [and] glory in change" and "the contented leisure of traditional order and the ritual conservatism of peaceful life" dramatized in *The Birds* also describes the structure of the plot of *Erewhon*. Like the Birds before they succumb to Pisthetairos's and Eulpides's manipulation, Erewhonians lead happy, contented, and care-free lives, seeming to be in no need of either moral or spiritual instruction. Nevertheless, despite discovering a country which obviously stands

in no need of either economic development or religious reform, the narrator contrives schemes of colonizing this happy and independent people on the ground of bringing them religious salvation: he comes out with an elaborate plan of luring Erewhonians into bondage through promising them “enormous fortunes,” packing them closely in large boats, feeding them “at a very reasonable cost” and lodging them in “the households of religious sugar-growers” where they would receive “the benefit of that instruction whereof they stand so greatly in need” (219). The frenzied and feverish pace of the narrative in the concluding chapter of *Erewhon*, in which the narrator lays out his plan of colonizing Erewhonians, contrasts sharply with an almost dream-like narrative of the estranged chapters of the novel in which the narrator, well provided for financially by the pension the King appoints him, does not deplore his idleness.

The idleness of the Erewhonian narrator,⁴ as the novel’s implicit polemics with *Robinson Crusoe* indicates (see section 3.3 of this Chapter), reflects the social implications of Butler’s evolutionary theory. The writer maintained that skills acquired by an organism during its lifetime can be inherited by its posterity. The organism’s abilities and behaviour, according to Butler, were shaped by its “memory” of the skills mastered by previous generations. Butler’s position on the mechanism of the evolutionary process betrays his deeply-seated, yet constantly understated, belief that not only one’s inclinations and abilities, but one’s social and economic position, too, are inherited rather than achieved. Not only does Butler frustrate his narrator’s grandiose ambition, denying him the realization of his plan, but he creates no character in any of his literary works whose dedication and perseverance in achieving even a worthy goal would change his social or economic status.

Even though we cannot state with absolute certainty that Butler consciously followed Aristophanes’s models or that the writer unconsciously adopted the literary

strategies suggested to him through his reading, we still cannot neglect the affinities in the plot structure or character presentation that Butler's *Erewhon* shows with respect to the well-known comedies of the Greek ironist.⁵ Not only does Butler follow Aristophanes in preserving his plays' binary division of humanity into two equally unattractive and uninspiring categories, but he also betrays similar negative sentiments with respect to attempts to change the existing national status quo or private status through social reform or individual effort. The above noted analogies between the structural and thematic interests of *The Clouds*, *The Birds* and *Erewhon* indicate that Butler's novel can hardly be viewed as "a particular variety of utopia, one . . . that was synonymous with a search for gold."

Interestingly Aristophanes, like Butler, has been often regarded as a conservative and a "staunch believer in the 'good old ways,'" skeptical of the potential "of any institutional arrangement to bring about a better world" (The Manuels 101). Sharma, for instance, states that Butler "was at heart a conservative who fully realized [the] value [of the institutions of his country] and remained deeply attached to them to the end" (Sharma "Artist" 2). However, Berneri's perception of Aristophanes' attitude to issues which are also the focus of Butler's concern allows us to draw a better analogy. Arguing against G. Lowes Dickinson's position that views Aristophanes as a reactionary and the defender of "instinctive life . . . of the old religion, the old habits and the old traditions," Berneri concludes that

One feels more inclined to believe that Aristophanes only defended the old institutions when he was afraid that the new ones, put forward by authoritarian philosophers, would be worse than the old. (Berneri 50)

This insight into the motivation behind Aristophanes's defense of old institutions allows us to draw another important analogy between the two ironists. Butler, like Aristophanes, is often seen as the champion of instinctive life and the defender of the old religion, the old habits, and the old tradition. Knoepfelmacher maintains that the evolution of Butler's personal views on religion was typical of the overall moral and intellectual climate of the second half of the nineteenth century. "What had begun as a disparagement of the old religion," writes Knoepfelmacher, "ended in the 1870's and 1880's as a conservative clinging to its remains" (7). However, considering Butler's scathing criticism of the institutions of his country (and, especially, of religion), his deep attachment to them appears doubtful. Admittedly, Butler's prefatory statements to his *Erewhon* books, as well as some of his much quoted pronouncements, appear to express his respect for religion, tradition, and the wisdom of the past. Taken at face value these statements give credence to Sharma's view, shared by many Butler scholars, that the writer was "led by his conservative instincts to a renewed faith in the institutions of his country, a faith for which he [sought] justification in his own version of the theory of evolution" ("Conservatism" 14). This view, however, endows the writer's work and his personality with profound seriousness which, in my view, is incompatible with the Menippean character of his *Erewhon* books and of his evolutionary writings. The affinity of Butler's *Erewhon* with Aristophanes's work displays the novel's dystopian leanings. To establish the Menippean roots of Butler's work we have to look at his indebtedness to Lucian.

Since there appears to be no direct references to Aristophanes in Butler's writings, I have to admit that the analogies I drew in the previous section of this chapter between the two ironists' work have been largely conjectural. Butler's familiarity with Lucian, on the other hand, can be easily demonstrated: the writer uses, in paraphrase, two quotations from Lucian's *Icaromenippus* as epigraphs to his *Life and Habit*. Butler's allusions to Lucian's *Icaromenippus*, however, do not merely highlight the commonality of the two writers' concerns or establish the context for Butler's evolutionary work. The writer's indebtedness to the Greek ironist manifests itself, above all, in his use--in *Erewhon*, *Life and Habit*, and, arguably, in his other evolutionary writings--of typically Lucianic parody as a literary strategy which aims at undermining those religious beliefs, philosophical doctrines, and speculative theories that aspire to the status of absolute truth. Our awareness of the parodic strategies Butler pursues in *Erewhon* and in *Life and Habit*, and of the seriocomic character of most of his work, invites, inevitably, the conclusion that neither Butler's literary works nor his evolutionary writings should be taken, indiscriminately, as expressions of his firmly held beliefs and assertions of his strong values. Moreover, our realization that *Erewhon* and *Life and Habit* belong to the same generic tradition of Menippean satire challenges those approaches to *Erewhon*'s interpretation that regard the novel as tentative exploration of the theories the writer will fully--and supposedly "earnestly"--develop in his evolutionary works.⁶

At the same time, in addition to using Lucian's parodic strategies, Butler also develops in *Erewhon* some typically Lucianic, Menippean, and dystopian motifs of the transitoriness and brevity of life, of the ultimate futility of intellectual pursuits, and of the philosophers' quarrel. Therefore, strong parallels that can be drawn between Lucian and

Butler--their use of common literary strategies and of common typically Menippean motifs-- provide valuable insights into the *kind* of works *Erewhon* and *Life and Habit* are and establish Butler as a Menippean and dystopian writer.^{7,8}

In this section of my study, I look first at Rudolph's explication of the parodic strategies Lucian employs in his *True Story* to expose the fictional status of those Hellenic novels which aspired to pass off their fictional accounts of imaginary travels as truthful descriptions of real travelers' actual experiences. Drawing an analogy between Lucian's and Butler's literary strategies, I suggest that in *Erewhon*, Butler, too, uses the same parodic strategies to the same end of exposing the "fictionality" of many commonly accepted beliefs and the absurdity of numerous common practices based on them. Like Lucian, Butler aims at undermining the authority of individuals and institutions that promote or advocate these unsubstantiated beliefs. I discuss next the significance of Butler's use of quotations from Lucian's *Icaromenippus*, of the openly ironic tone of his writing, and of his significant pronouncements on the nature of truth. I argue that in *Life and Habit*, as in *Erewhon*, Butler again employs the same parodic strategies to undermine, this time, the authority of scientific discourse. And finally, to lend support to my position that for Butler, as for Lucian, Menippean satire serves as a vehicle for expressing his dystopian outlook on human life, on the human condition, and on the nature of human experience, I look at the writer's use in *Erewhon* of the typically Lucianic and Menippean themes and motifs of the philosophers' quarrel, of the transitoriness of life, and of the ultimate futility of human efforts and aspirations. Highlighting some dystopian aspects of the two writers treatment of these Menippean themes, I argue that Lucian's and Butler's irony--as Kierkegaard defines it--"negates by virtue of a higher which is not," or, in other words, that their Menippean writings express their "dark and pessimistic outlook on human nature and the human condition."

In utopian and science fiction studies, Lucian's *True Story* is often referred to as an example of an ancient utopia, as a model for Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and as the first literary work to feature an imaginary and fantastic space flight. Regrettably, in tracing the origin of modern utopian or science fiction novels to Lucian's *True Story*, many scholars focus almost exclusively on the book's content, disregarding its form and the author's motivation in writing it. However, as the Manuels point out, *A True Story* was written as a parody of those earlier Hellenistic novels which attempted to pass off their fictional accounts of fantastic travels as genuine records of real-life travel experience (103). A "tall-tale travelogue" written "to end all tall-tale travelogues" (Casson 13), Lucian's *True Story* presents a first-person account of fantastic travels through a narrator who openly admits that he tells all sorts of lies with an absolutely straight face: "The one and only truth you'll hear from me," admits Lucian's narrator, "is that I *am* lying" (15). Significantly, Lucian includes in his tall-tale travelogue numerous comic allusions to all "noted poets, historians, and philosophers of old who have written so many fabulous tall stories" (Casson 14) in order to destabilize these stories' unquestioned and almost universally accepted status as "truth." Aiming at a "parodic re-evaluation and rejection of the veracity of preceding accounts of human journeys foiled by the gods," Lucian's *True Story* generates, as Rudolph explains, a derivative text that "focuses on unmasking lies, while claiming that it too is creating an original." Being "vocal about the mendacity that founded it," this derivative text "permits an unraveling of the original, foundational text from within its own specious/mendacious parameters" (Rudolph 21).

Rudolph's explication of the discursive strategies Lucian pursues in his best known work *True Story* allows us to gain a clear insight into the heart of Butler's literary

method and into his motivation in writing *Erewhon* and *Life and Habit*. Even though we cannot state with absolute certainty that the Victorian writer's use of Lucian's parodic strategies constitutes a case of his deliberate and conscious borrowing of the Greek ironist's literary techniques, Butler, undeniably, like Lucian, uses these strategies to the same end of undermining the validity of his targeted works: the foundational texts of the Christian religion and of contemporary Victorian science (above all, evolutionary theory). And even though, unlike Lucian's narrator, Butler's narrator is not explicitly vocal about the mendacity that founds his work, the contrast in *Erewhon* between the realism of the framing--introductory and concluding--chapters and the fantasy of the novel's middle part suggests that the "veracity" of its realistic chapters is deeply suspect. On the other hand, in *Life and Habit*, as I will argue below, Butler provides both direct and indirect clues to reveal the mendacity that founded that work. Thus, in general, Butler's strategies for undermining the authority and validity of various discourses--literary, religious, philosophical, or scientific--bear striking resemblance to those employed by Lucian in *True Story*.

I will be arguing in the next section of this chapter that in *Erewhon*, Butler pursues a similar goal of exposing the fictionality of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* by parodying *Crusoe*'s investment in passing off a fictional account of an imaginary experience as an actual fact. But Butler also uses the same parodic strategies in his treatment of some of *Erewhon*'s most significant themes. Providing graphic illustrations of his literary techniques, the novel's Chapters on "The World of the Unborn," "The Book of the Machines," "The Views of an Erewhonian Prophet Concerning the Rights of Animals," and "The Views of an Erewhonian Philosopher Concerning the Rights of Vegetables" reveal Butler's attitude to many "fabulous tall stories" that either aspired to serve or actually served as the foundation of his contemporaries' practices and beliefs.

In all *Erewhon*'s Chapters listed above Butler exposes the lies behind various discourses which aspire to the status of absolute truths.

Erewhon's mythology of "The World of the Unborn," for instance, exposes the fictionality of many Christians' unsubstantiated and rarely questioned beliefs in life after death. Erewhonians maintain that before human beings are actually born, they exist as "pure and simple" souls in the world of the unborn where they have "no actual bodies," but where they live "in a sort of gaseous yet more or less anthropomorphic existence, like that of a ghost." Being "extremely numerous, far more so than mankind," the unborn lead an uneventful life: they experience no "extremes of good or ill fortune" and they never die unless they decide to leave their world "by suicide" and be born (160). The Erewhonian legend of the pre-natal souls' "gaseous yet more or less anthropomorphic existence" in the World of the Unborn targets, parodies, and re-writes ironically the Christian belief in the ostensibly equally mythical world of the heavenly after-life, in which immortal human souls will be able to escape the final annihilation caused by their bodies' physical death. The blatant and unmistakable absurdity of Erewhonian beliefs in life before birth draws attention to the absurdity of often unquestioned and unsubstantiated, yet long-held, beliefs in life after death. In this way, Butler creates the mythology of the World of the Unborn as a derivative of the myth he targets, and his "original" account of the Erewhonian myth serves to unmask the lies of the targeted myth.

This literary strategy of revealing indirectly the absurdity of unquestioned beliefs and highlighting their fictional status by presenting a deliberately outrageous account of beliefs and practices that are based on equally absurd and unprovable premises underlies *Erewhon*'s most famous and best known reversal: the Erewhonian practice of treating diseases as crimes and crimes as diseases. Far from being a gratuitous exercise in

ingenious reversal, Butler's "derivative" account of Erewhonians' absurd practices of condemning sick people to prison terms calls attention to the equally arbitrary foundation of many of his contemporary (or our contemporary) legal practices. The absurd and ridiculous actions Erewhonians undertake on the advice and authority of their straighteners, prophets, or philosophers also draw attention to numerous non-fictional beliefs and practices that Butler's contemporaries (and their predecessors) embraced and followed under the instruction and guidance of fraudulent self-imposed authorities. Similarly, the outrageous and false analogies Butler draws in "The Book of the Machines" serve the purpose of discrediting attempts to reach significant conclusions, in science or technology, through logical reasoning that starts from false premises.

If in *Erewhon* Butler uses Lucian's parodic strategies to generate several derivative accounts of Erewhonians' outrageous and absurd beliefs and practices, he uses these strategies in *Life and Habit* to write the whole book as a parody of scientific discourse. The seriocomic character of this work, however, does not seem to be recognized by Butler's scholars and critics who tend to endow Butler's evolutionary writings with an earnestness which is quite incompatible with the writer's motivation and purpose in writing them. The Menippean character of *Life and Habit* manifests itself, first and foremost, in the writer's choice and strategic placement of two quotations from Lucian's *Icaromenippus* to introduce his pseudoscientific work, but it also manifests itself in the loaded irony of the work's significant passages and in Butler's frequently reiterated pronouncements on the nature of truth.

The two quotations from Lucian that Butler uses as epigraphs to his *Life and Habit* make little sense for the reader unfamiliar with the context and content of *Icaromenippus*:

“We are all terribly afraid of them.”--*Paraphrase*

Lucian, *Icaromenippus*, 30.

and

“Lay it well, therefore, before Jupiter, that if he will not bring these men of science to their proper bearings, I can stay here no longer.”

“It shall be done,” I answered.--*Paraphrase*

Lucian, *Icaromenippus*, 21, 22.

Significantly, as we can see, Butler indicates the exact passages in *Icaromenippus* from which these quotations are taken, greatly simplifying the reader's task of establishing the context for his work and of comparing Lucian's text in direct translation with Butler's paraphrase. In this way, Butler slyly invites his most perceptive readers to complete the task of reconstructing the book's meaning on their own. Therefore, to appreciate fully the significance of Butler's allusions to *Icaromenippus* for his work's valid interpretation, we should first identify the context out of which Lucian's quotations are taken, note the fact that Butler provides these quotations in paraphrase rather than in direct translation, and observe that he reverses the order in which they appear in Lucian's text. Finally, we should relate the content of Lucian's work to Butler's own concerns.

Icaromenippus, whose full title is *Icaromenippus, an Aerial Expedition*, is set as a comic dialogue between Menippus and a Friend. In this dialogue, Menippus not only relates to his friend the adventures of his flight to heaven, but he also explains his reasons for this unusual undertaking. “Possessed with curiosity about heavens,”

Menippus has found the philosophers' "accounts" of heavenly life "conflicting."

Frustrated by the inability of men of science to come to any agreement concerning vital issues for humanity and "tired of being logically rent in twain" (139), Menippus decides to fly to heaven and confront Zeus to find out the truth. To avoid the plight of Icarus, Menippus attaches to his shoulders "the eagle's right and the vulture's left wing" (131). Flapping the eagle's wing to sharpen his eyesight, Menippus observes from the height of his flight the daily business of his fellow human beings, reporting it, as we will see below, in a typically dystopian vein.

On his way to Olympus, Menippus stops at the Moon where he meets Selene and undertakes to bring her "simple message of entreaty to Zeus"(137). Selene, being "tired to death" by "being slandered" by the "impertinent curiosity" of philosophers about her, threatens to leave her post unless Zeus undertakes to

pulverize the physicists, muzzle the logicians, raze the Porch, burn the Academy, and put an end to strolling in the Lyceum.

Menippus promises Selene that he "will remember" her errand and resumes his "upward flight to Heaven" (138). It is this passage that Butler alludes to in his second epigraph to *Life and Habit*, without directly explicating its context or its significance for his own work.

Butler's paraphrase of the first quotation he takes from Lucian appears to be a summary of the passage out of which the sentence is taken rather than its direct translation. In the passage Butler takes his paraphrase from, Zeus attacks philosophers (whom he earlier describes as a "class which has recently become conspicuous among men") as "idle, quarrelsome, vain, irritable, lickerish, silly, puffed up, arrogant, and, in

Homeric phrase, vain cumberers of the earth.” “Quite undeterred by their own characters,” the philosophers, says Zeus,

scorn the human and travesty the divine; they gather a company of guileless youth, and feed them with solemn chatter upon Virtue and quibbling verbal puzzles; in their pupil’s presence they are all for fortitude and temperance, and have no words bad enough for wealth and pleasure: when they are by themselves, there is no limit to their gluttony, their lechery, their licking of dirty pence. But the head and front of their offence is this: they neither work themselves nor help others’ work; they are useless drones,

Of no avail in council nor in war;

Which notwithstanding, they censure others; they store up poisoned words, they con invectives, they heap their neighbours with reproaches; their highest honours are for him who shall be loudest and most overbearing and boldest in abuse.

(*Icaromenippus* 142-3)

Leaving aside for the moment the obvious issue of Butler’s use of Lucian’s and, in general, of common Menippean motifs of the philosophers’ quarrel, of their fraudulent authority, and of their moral deficiencies, I would like to focus on the context these two quotations establish for Butler’s *Life and Habit*. Our knowledge of Lucian’s text clarifies the meaning of the pronoun “them” in the first quotation, making it clear that Butler refers to the class of scientists who, like Lucian’s class of philosophers, “has recently become conspicuous among men.” Moreover, the writer’s paraphrase of Menippus’s words “I will remember” as “It shall be done” and his use of the first-person pronoun “I” (“I answered”) suggest that in *Life and Habit* Butler undertakes a strong

personal commitment to bring “these men of science” to “their proper bearings.” And above all, Butler’s use of the first-person pronoun “I” in the context he establishes for his work indicates that the writer intends to fulfill his promise by assuming Menippus’s role and function.

Consequently, the fact that Butler announces on the first page of his work that he steps into the discursive space of Lucian’s Menippus does not only establish the context for *Life and Habit* and identify the target of the writer’s attacks; it also provides insights into his strategies, establishing the *kind* of work it really is. Butler’s allusions to Lucian and to the character of Menippus suggest that despite the surface seriousness of his text, it is ultimately comic and humorous in its nature and intent. Written in a seriocomic mode, as Menippean works usually are, *Life and Habit* offers what appears to be an alternative account of the Darwinian mechanism of evolution *in jest* rather than seriously. Imitating and parodying scientific discourse, *Life and Habit*, in fact, undermines the validity of this discourse’s claims of discovering and presenting an absolute truth.

The seriocomic and parodic character of *Life and Habit* also manifests itself in the loaded irony of the work’s most significant and revealing passages. Butler reveals the mendacity that founded his text by providing clear examples in the text of unmistakably false analogies he draws “to support” his case. Consider, for instance, the following passage from *Life and Habit* in which Butler, in support of his theory of instinct as memory, develops a triple false analogy between the development of social customs, mechanical inventions, and human instincts. “[E]very instinct,” Butler writes,

must have passed through the laboriously intelligent stages through which human civilizations and *mechanical inventions* are now passing; and he who would study

the origin of an instinct with its development, partial transmission, further growth, further transmission, approach to more unreflecting stability, and finally, its perfection as an unerring and unerringly transmitted instinct, must look to laws, customs, *and machinery* as his best instructors. Customs and machines are instincts and organs now in process of development; they will assuredly one day reach the unconscious state of equilibrium which we observe in the structures and instincts of bees and ants, and an approach to which may be found among some savage nations. We may reflect, however, not without pleasure, that this condition--true millennium--is still distant. Nevertheless the ants and bees seem happy; perhaps more happy than when so many social questions were in as hot discussion among them, as other, and not dissimilar ones, will one day be amongst ourselves. (162)

The significance of the above quoted passage does not lie solely in its illustration of the blatant absurdity of drawing analogies between developments in such disparate areas of human practice as social customs, laws, and technology. In this passage, Butler also allows his readers to glimpse the logical outcome of his own theory of instinct as transmitted memory. The gradual process of working towards developing “the unconscious state of equilibrium” typical of the communities of ants and bees will effectively, one day, turn human societies into similar communities of ant-like or bee-like operators who will perform instinctively their memorized functions. Butler is fully aware that for his most perceptive readers, the prospect of a future in which human societies will be organized as beehives or anthills can hardly be attractive. For this reason, the writer points out, ironically, that “We may reflect . . . not without pleasure, that this condition--true millennium--is still distant.” The loaded irony of this passage--

Butler's portrayal of the ultimate goal of humanity, of its "true millennium," as an unconscious state in which human intellect will play no part, as well as his clear awareness of the undesirability of reaching this state--undermines the "academic" strength of Butler's theories of instinct as memory. This irony, and the blatant absurdness of the analogies Butler draws upon in his "logical" reasoning, also indicate that the writer consciously developed his theories in pseudoscientific fashion, aiming at unmasking the "lies" of his target--the Darwinian account of the evolutionary mechanism--by generating an "original" account of his own parodic fashioning.

Clearly then, *Life and Habit* only appears to argue in "true faith" that the Darwinian evolutionary mechanism of random and fortuitous selection of species' defining characteristics is both inadequate for describing the process of evolution and inferior to the Lamarckian mechanism which maintains that a species' characteristics emerge in the process of adaptation to the changing environmental conditions. In fact, adopting Lucian's parodic strategies, Butler spins a derivative of the Darwinian "original" account of the evolutionary mechanism, exposing the "original's" lies and unraveling "the original, foundational text from its own specious/mendacious parameters."

Moreover, an unequivocal commitment to a single viewpoint on the mechanism of evolution or on any other debatable issue would be incompatible with Butler's general approach to the basis of human knowledge or to the conclusions reached through the process of intellectual reasoning. The writer maintains that every assumption in our knowledge of ourselves or of the universe is entirely "impossible until we [have] got an incontrovertible first premise." "[T]ill we have got this," writes Butler, "we think in vicious circles, and contradictions in terms, and miracles, and impossibilities, every moment of our lives" (*CE* 150). The same logic leads Butler to draw an analogy

between human knowledge and human property and to insist that our claims to ownership of property or truth are equally baseless. Echoing Proudhon, the writer states in *Erewhon* through his narrator that “property is robbery” (190), since every claim to ownership or knowledge is based on some sort of a fraud. We can attribute the narrator’s statement to Butler, since the writer re-iterates the same ideas in his *Notebooks*, asserting that very few people who study our ideas would deny that they “are baseless, or rotten at the roots.” “No title to property, no idea and no living form (which is the embodiment of idea),” says Butler, “is indefeasible if search be made far enough” (314). We also find a slightly different expression of the same idea in Butler’s *Life and Habit*:

Do what one may, and no matter how scientific one may be, one cannot attain absolute truth. The question is rather, how do people like to have their error? [*sic*] than, will they go without any error at all? All truth and no error cannot be given by the scientist more than by the artist; each has to sacrifice truth in one way or another; and even if perfect truth could be given, it is doubtful whether it would not resolve itself into unconsciousness pure and simple, consciousness being, as it were, the clash of small conflicting perceptions, without which there is neither intelligence nor recollection possible. (247)

Significantly, the persistence with which Butler insists on the provisional and arbitrary character of human knowledge and beliefs suggests that his literary and evolutionary works can hardly be interpreted within rigid frameworks of clearly delineated dichotomies. But Butler also provides more direct clues for exposing the mendacity of his account in *Life and Habit*. He instructs his most perceptive readers at the beginning of *Life and Habit* not to take his book at its face value (“ . . . let no unwary reader do me

the injustice of believing in me”), insisting that in that he writes at all he is “among the damned” (*LH* 35); and he also openly admits at the end of the book that in trying to “deceive others,” he might “have fallen victim to [his] own falsehood” (*LH* 250).

Our awareness of the seriocomic and Menippean character of *Life and Habit* undermines, as I suggest above, those critical approaches to Butler’s novels or evolutionary writings which are based on the assumption that these writings exemplify the writer’s firmly held beliefs in human progress or perfectibility. In *Erewhon* and in *Life and Habit* Butler pursues within the generic framework of Menippean satire the same parodic strategies aimed at undermining the claims to truth and validity of these works’ target texts.

Having reviewed Butler’s use of Lucian’s parodic strategies, we can now look at Butler’s treatment in *Erewhon* of the typically Lucianic and Menippean motifs of the philosophers’ quarrel, of the transitoriness and ultimate futility of life, and of the ultimate futility of genuine human aspirations. The analogies that can be drawn between the two writers’ treatment of these Menippean themes allow us to highlight not only the similarities, but also the differences between Lucian’s and Butler’s approaches to them. Butler’s attacks on fraudulent authorities have, as we will see, a significantly different focus; his attacks on logical reasoning and the “fictionality” of scientific discourse betray his fascination with both logic and science; and his variations on the Menippean theme of the futility of human life reveal the critically overlooked tragic dimension of his dystopian vision.

Apparently, the themes of the philosophers’ quarrel (as well as attacks on philosophers’ fraudulent claims to possession of truth), of the transitoriness and brevity of human life, and of the futility of intellectual pursuits belong to the common stock of themes which Lucian borrowed from the Cynic Menippus of Cadara. Since Menippus’s

writings have not survived, Hall refers to the authority of Marcus Aurelius whose commentary on Menippus's life and writings places Menippus in the same category with other Cynics who mocked "the brief and transient life of mankind," mocked "those who wasted their lives in the pursuit of fruitless knowledge," and "so wrote books 'against the physicists and mathematicians and grammarians' . . . and attacked other philosophers" (78).

In line with the Menippean tradition, Butler, like Lucian, "wrote books 'against the physicists and mathematicians and grammarians' . . . and attacked other philosophers." He undeniably shared Lucian's low opinion of philosophers and, in general, of "men of science." Lucian's merciless attacks brand his contemporary intellectuals as "idle, quarrelsome, vain, irritable, lickerish, silly, puffed up, arrogant, and, in Homeric phrase, vain cumberers of the earth." The case Butler brings in *Erewhon* (and later in *Erewhon Revisited*) against his contemporary "men of science" stands largely on the same ground: they are found guilty of hypocrisy, of intemperance, of deliberately misleading the young and the old alike, and of claiming the possession of powers and knowledge they lack. At the same time, Butler broadens the scope of his attacks: his targets include all individuals or institutions that aspire to the position of authority on the basis of their alleged superior knowledge. The writer thus follows the Menippean tradition by providing in *Erewhon* examples of the inability of all professionals to come to an agreement on the vital issues of their professions and by highlighting the uncertain character of truth and knowledge.

However, despite the similarities of Lucian's and Butler's low opinion of the knowledge and moral fiber of their contemporary philosophers and "men of science," the purpose and character of the two ironists' attacks on them are significantly different. Lucian, as Tackaberry points out, "seems to reject scientific studies altogether": he

assumes in *Icaromenippus*--and in his other writings--“the position of extreme skepticism” and treats “with equal derision the speculations” of all ancient philosophers, ridiculing “the confidence with which scientists pronounce upon matters debatable and uncertain, and dogmatize about the nature of the heavenly bodies, the creation of the universe, and the nature of the gods” (Tackaberry 51). Similarly, Butler’s attacks on philosophers, scientists, professionals, prophets, or clergymen who aspire to use the propositions of their faith or trade as unshakable truth to justify their authority are equally motivated by his recognition of the inability of intellectuals of any persuasion to come to an agreement on any debatable issue and by understanding that no branch of religious, philosophical, or scholarly studies is based on a solid foundation of incontrovertible first premises. On the other hand, unlike Lucian, Butler shows--in *Erewhon* and in his evolutionary writings--a paradoxical ambivalence toward knowledge and learning, an ambivalence which was typical, as Blanchard points out, for the Renaissance practitioners of Menippean satire. His writings clearly display his fascination with the world of science and with the apparatus of logical reasoning adopted by scientists.

Yet even more significantly, the focus of Butler’s attacks on intellectuals in *Erewhon* shifts to reflect first and foremost the writer’s major concern with the general human tendency to trust unreservedly self-appointed and fraudulent authorities. The position of extreme skepticism still manifests itself powerfully in Butler’s writings; however, his goal in *Erewhon* is to mock not only those who attempt to fool others but also those who allow themselves to be fooled.

Consequently, in *Erewhon*, Butler’s attacks on the vices of “men of science” and, in general, on the vices of people in positions of authority lack the edge and bite of Lucian’s direct invective. For example, Butler treats the “vices” of Erewhonian

straighteners with more humour than indignation. "The office of the straightener," writes Butler

requires long and special training. It stands to reason that he who would cure a moral ailment must be practically acquainted with it in all its bearings. The student of the profession of straighteners is required to set apart certain seasons for the practice of each vice in turn, as a religious duty. These seasons are called "fasts," and are continued by the student until he finds that he really can subdue all the more usual vices in his own person, and hence can advise his patients from the results of his own experience.

Those who intend to be specialists, rather than general practitioners, devote themselves more particularly to the branch in which their practice will mainly lie. Some students have been obliged to continue their exercises during their whole lives, and some devoted men have actually died as martyrs to the drink, or gluttony, or whatever branch of vice they may have chosen for their special study. (232-3)

In *Erewhon*, the fear of "men of science" does not constitute Butler's major concern, and his attacks on them are tempered by the writer's acceptance of human "vices" as ubiquitous in human nature. The emphasis in this novel is placed on the propensity of human individuals not to think for themselves, but to believe and follow blindly the preposterous injunctions of fraudulent authorities. Butler describes Erewhonians as

a meek and long suffering people, easily led by the nose, and quick to offer common sense at the shrine of logic, when a philosopher arises among them, who

carries them away through his reputation for special learning, or by convincing them that their existing institutions are not based on the strictest principles of morality. (255)

The writer illustrates the absurd consequences of misplaced trust in fraudulent authorities in *Erewhon*'s Chapter on "The Views of an Erewhonian Prophet Concerning the Rights of Animals" in which a prophet who claims "inspiration by unseen power" convinces Erewhonians to give up eating meat; and in the Chapter on "The Views of an Erewhonian Philosopher concerning the Rights of Vegetables" in which a Professor of Botany attempts to force Erewhonians to give up eating vegetables too.

Significantly, Butler's pre-occupation with the incurable tendency of human beings not to think for themselves highlights his fundamental assumptions about human nature. Even though the writer advocates the value of common sense over the ubiquitous human desire to do the right thing, he has little faith in seeing his precepts consistently followed. The Chapter on "The Views of an Erewhonian Prophet Concerning the Rights of Animals" describes how Erewhonians, "after several hundred years of wandering in the wilderness of philosophy," finally reach "the conclusions that common sense had long since arrived at" and repeal "the acts forbidding the use of meat." However, this rare example of Erewhonians' recognition of their mistake has not cured them, once and forever, of their excessive trust in self-proclaimed authorities. Butler concludes his verdict on human nature by pointing out that

so deeply engrained in the human heart is the desire to believe that some people really do know what they say they know, and can thus save them from the trouble of thinking for themselves, that in a short time would-be philosophers and

faddists became more powerful than ever, and gradually led their countrymen to accept all these absurd views . . . (269)

The humorous and conciliatory tone of Butler's revelations of human follies contrasts sharply with Lucian's vicious attacks on human stupidity. The stylistic differences in Lucian's and Butler's attacks on "men of science," or broadly speaking, intellectuals and professionals, and humanity in general can perhaps be explained by their different focus: if Lucian aimed at entertaining his readers by making them laugh--perhaps, in many cases undeservedly--at the expense of those intellectuals who were intensely thinking of the nature and purpose of human existence, Butler aimed in *Erewhon* at liberating his readers from the bondage of their erroneous beliefs. Yet the clarity of this message in Butler's novel has been obscured by the ambiguity of the writer's purpose: he condemns the absurd character of many of his contemporaries' practices and beliefs and insists, at the same time, that these practices and beliefs should be preserved.

However, by the time Butler comes to write *Life and Habit* and, subsequently, *Erewhon Revisited*, the writer's tolerant attitude to the human foibles of "men of science" yields to his ever-present fear of their growing influence and power. In Lucian's words, Butler recognizes in scientists the "class which has recently become conspicuous among men," and in *Erewhon Revisited* Butler resorts to Lucian's language of direct invective, losing the subtlety of his tolerant irony and, occasionally, even his humour. The writer still uses irony to illustrate the moral corruption and intellectual unscrupulousness of Hanky, the Royal Professor of Worldly Wisdom, and Panky, the Royal Professor of Unworldly Wisdom, by their self-serving behaviour. But he also brands the likes of Hanky as "plausible, unscrupulous, heartless scoundrel[s]" and as "doctrinaires and faddists," described as "eager to step into the church's shoes," as "as

corrupt as the church, and more exacting,” and as more dangerous,” since they would “if they could . . . interfere in every concern of our lives” (*ER* 221).

As we can see from the above cited examples, Butler’s concern in *Erewhon* with the Lucianic and Menippean emphasis on the personal vices of professionals, clergy, or intellectuals who aspire to the position of authority yields to his concern with the general human folly of trusting these self-proclaimed authorities. In Butler’s opinion, Erewhonians, or the writer’s contemporary countrymen, or even human beings in general, are inclined to place their trust in and to follow the ridiculous and baseless injunctions of the self-appointed authorities merely to avoid thinking for themselves.

If Butler treats the “vices” and moral shortcomings of Erewhonian bankers (both musical and ordinary), doctors, straighteners, scientists, prophets, and philosophers with more humour than indignation, his variations on the Menippean themes of the transient and brief character of human life and the futility of human aspirations strike a note of pessimism and melancholy, unmatched, in their poignancy, by Lucian’s variations on the same themes. *Erewhon*’s Chapter on “The World of the Unborn” illustrates not only the writer’s use of Lucianic parodic strategies to undermine the unsubstantiated and absurd, from Butler’s perspective, beliefs in the reality of the after-life, but it also (along with *Erewhon*’s Chapter on “Birth Formulae”) provides the space for the writer’s expression of a dystopian outlook on human life and the human predicament. On the one hand, Butler’s reflections on the brevity, confusion, and disorientedness of human life seem to echo the sentiments Lucian conveys through his protagonist in *Icaromenippus*. From the height of his aerial flight, Menippus reports that

the life of man is just . . . a discordant performance; not only are the voices jangled, but the steps are not uniform, the motions not concerted, the objects not

agreed upon--until the impresario dismisses them one by one from the stage, with a 'not wanted.' Then they are all alike, and quiet enough, confounding no longer their undisciplined rival strength. But as long as the show lasts in its marvelous diversity, there is plenty of food for laughter in its vagaries.

(*Icaromenippus* 136)

The bleak view on human life Lucian expresses in this passage is captured most poignantly in the opening paragraph of *Erewhon*'s Chapter on "The World of the Unborn." "The Erewhonians say," writes Butler,

that we are drawn through life backwards; or again, that we go onwards into the future as into a dark corridor. Time walks besides us and flings back shutters as we advance; but the light thus given often dazzles us, and deepens the darkness which is in front. We can see but little at a time, and heed that little far less than our apprehension of what we shall see next; ever peering curiously through the glare of the present into the gloom of the future, we presage the leading lines of that which is before us, by faintly reflected lights from dull mirrors that are behind, and stumble on as we may till the trap door opens beneath us and we are gone. (159)

Even though the two writers metaphorically express their thoughts on human life through developing different conceits--of actors dismissed by "the impresario" one by one from the stage and of unwilling humans drawn backwards through the dark corridor of life till they fall through the suddenly opened trap door--they both convey the sense of confusion and meaninglessness of human life, the lack of human control over it, and the

inevitability of death. In other words, the two above quoted passages from Lucian and Butler demonstrate that the two writers view human life and the human predicament in equally pessimistic terms.

On the other hand, the tone in which Butler expresses his pessimism is marked by a melancholy which is completely absent in Lucian's mocking laughter. The last sentence of the above quoted passage from Lucian corrupts the seriousness and compromises the depth of the Greek ironist's reflections. By stating that "there is plenty of food for laughter in [human life's] vagaries" "as long as the show lasts in its marvelous diversity," Lucian denies the tragic dimension of human life by laughing at the tragic. Also, the device of making his statements through the fictional character of Menippus effectively distances both the author and the reader from the unpleasant implications of Menippus's observations. In Lucian's *Icaromenippus*, the vagaries of human life and death become merely a subject for aesthetic contemplation. In contrast, even though Butler too creates a double distance between himself and his text by reporting Erewhonian beliefs through his narrator, his persistent use of the first-person plural pronoun "we" effectively turns the reader into the main actor of the drama he describes. In this way, Butler powerfully communicates to his readers that the "absurd" Erewhonian beliefs reflect the unpleasant truth of our common human condition. Both writers tread a thin line between the ridiculous and the tragic, but Lucian takes the edge off of the tragic by making it ridiculous, whereas Butler masks his tragic vision behind the veneer of his laughter.

Despite the above noted differences in Lucian's and Butler's variations of the same theme of the transience and brevity of human life, their vision of the human predicament remains decidedly dystopian. We cannot ascribe the sentiments expressed by Lucian and Butler in the two compared passages merely to an occasional and rare

literary exercise on the conventional Menippean theme of the transitoriness of life.

Lucian's temper as a whole, as Tackaberry points out, "remains decidedly negative" (14), and his writings provide numerous examples of his disparaging view of human life and of the irrelevance of human achievement. Similarly, the underlying and often undetected rhetoric of Butler's writings runs counter to his often quoted prefatory statements in which he defends himself against accusations of pessimism and insists on his positive vision of human life and progress.

Another example of the two writers' recourse to the Menippean theme of the insignificance and ultimate futility of human achievement is provided by their metaphorical representation of human societies as gigantic anthills. Placing his fictional Menippus high above the earth, Lucian, in *Icaromenippus*, allows his protagonist to communicate through the cosmic irony of scale the insignificance of individual lives and of human communities by comparing the observed city to a huge anthill. "You must often have seen the community of ants," relates Menippus to his friend:

some going abroad, others coming back to town. One is a scavenger, another a bustling porter loaded with a bit of bean-pod or half a wheat grain. They no doubt have, on their modest myrmecic scale, their architects and politicians, their magistrates, and composers, and philosophers. At any rate, what men and cities suggested to me was just so many anthills. If you think the similitude too disparaging, look into the Thessalian legends, and you will find that the most warlike tribe there was the Myrmidons, or ants turned men. (*Icaromenippus* 137)

Notably, Lucian's allusion to the Thessalian legends of "the Myrmidons, or ants turned men," provides an example of the Menippean literary strategy that became known as

paradoxical encomium in which lavish praise will be bestowed on an unworthy object to further stress ironically its insignificance.

The strategy of paradoxical encomium can also be detected in the earlier quoted passage from Butler's *Life and Habit* in which the Victorian writer, like his Greek predecessor, represents human society metaphorically as a community of ants or bees. However, once again, as the previous examples of the two writers' treatment of the common Menippean themes of the philosophers' quarrel and of the brevity of human life have shown, Lucian's and Butler's variations on the conventional literary metaphor have a different focus. Unlike Lucian, Butler uses the image of humanity as a giant anthill or beehive not to emphasize the insignificance of human life and effort in a vast and boundless universe, but to represent this insignificance as a state devoutly to be wished for. In other words, Butler complicates Lucian's irony by suggesting that the present state of human communities falls short of the "desirable" order and ease of life in anthills or beehives and that the goal of achieving this order moves humanity further toward their "true millennium."

At the same time, the dystopian character of Lucian's and Butler's vision of human life and the human predicament manifests itself not only in the markedly negative and pessimistic tone underlying their treatment of common Menippean themes, but also in the fact that their irony allows no reconstruction of its underlying system of values. Significantly, the Menippean themes which provided the vehicle for the writers' expression of their dystopian sentiments belong, as Halls observes, referring to the authority of Marcus Aurelius, to the common stock of topics discoursed upon by Cynic philosophers. Yet, Cynic philosophers, as Marcus Aurelius indicates, focused on the theme of the human inability to know the truth, as well as on the theme of the brevity and transience of human life, to preach "the usual Cynic doctrine" of "the indifference to

worldly goods, freedom from vain ambitions, self-sufficiency, [and] the pursuit of virtue as the only true road to happiness” (reported in Hall 78). Neither Lucian’s nor Butler’s writings, however, place high value on the pursuit of virtue or of any other positive goal. Their irony becomes, to use Dyson’s phrase, “a tome of urbane amusement, assuming the right to be amused, but offering very few precise positives behind the right.”

The absence of a transcendental goal in Lucian’s and Butler’s writings or their disbelief in a meaningful *telos* at which individual or social life aims either manifests--in Lucian’s case--or betrays--in Butler’s case--their dystopian outlook. The absence of an ideal in Lucian’s writings has been recognized by the Manuels who point out that neither Lucian nor Aristophanes “hold[s] before mankind a lofty or a transcendental goal” (100). The absence of an ideal in Butler’s work has largely remained undetected, partly because the writer misled his readers and partly because his scholars failed to recognize the Menippean character of either his literary or pseudoscientific work. However, as we have seen, the “lofty and transcendental goal” Butler envisages for humanity in his *Life and Habit* can hardly provide the basis or foundation for the system of values that the writer’s irony should allow us to reconstruct.

My comparison of some major Menippean themes in Lucian’s and Butler’s works strongly suggests that the Victorian writer shared the Greek ironist’s attitudes to life and learning and used the latter’s parodic strategies to undermine the fraudulent claims of various authorities to possess truth. On the other hand, despite the strong similarities of their outlook on human life and the human predicament, their visions of them are not identical. Unlike Lucian, who unambiguously communicates in his writings the “foolishness of embarking on any philosophy at all, since none of them can be proved not to be wrong” (Reardon xxix), Butler displays his strong fascination with the world of

science and thought. With Lucian, Butler laughs at the pretensions of the “learned”; unlike Lucian, however, Butler recognizes the tragic side of life over which an individual has no control. Lucian’s mocking tone does not reach the pitch of poignancy and anguish that mark some passages in Butler’s *Erewhon*. And finally, with Lucian, Butler ridicules the futility of human efforts and aspirations in a world over which the individual has no control. However, the Greek ironist does not seem to deplore the futility of his own literary endeavours. Butler, on the other hand, does not exclude his own or other artists’ work from the overall range of human activities he considers useless and purposeless. His poignant admission that because he writes at all he is “among the damned” illustrates one of the most significant aspects of the modern dystopian outlook: the dystopian writer’s lack of faith in the ability of art to provide a source of transcendent meaning and value in human life.

Butler and Voltaire

If parallels drawn between Lucian’s and Butler’s Menippean work have highlighted the Victorian ironist’s use, for distinctly dystopian purposes, of the Greek ironist’s parodic strategies, a comparison between Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759) and Butler’s *Erewhon* highlights the presence in the latter novel of two other distinctly dystopian characteristics. One major dystopian aspect of *Erewhon*, rendered conspicuous through the novel’s comparison with *Candide*, involves the ending of the novel’s estranged plot. The fate of Butler’s narrator, who in his attempts to leave Erewhon will be running to what he is running from, will shape later dystopian novels both thematically and structurally, indicating the impossibility of escape from dystopian reality. The other no less important dystopian aspect of *Erewhon*, revealed by this comparison, concerns

Butler's refusal, as I have pointed out above, to see creative work or art as a transcendental value. This refusal will assume various forms and expressions in later dystopian novels; yet, the dystopian temperament will be invariably marked by a sense of the irrelevance and futility of the writer's own creative work.

Commonly attributed to the literary genre of *conte philosophique*, *Candide*, in fact, displays many affinities with the works of the Menippean and dystopian genres. Nevertheless, its significance for Butler's *Erewhon* or for later twentieth-century dystopian novels has not been duly recognized. Admittedly, neither Butler nor other British dystopian writers used *Candide* as a model. The significance of *Candide* for British dystopian novels lies in these writers' persistent engagement with Voltaire's major themes and, in particular, with the novel's famous moral injunction: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin." Significantly, Butler's and other British dystopian writers' refusal to embrace this statement as a valuable directive for positioning human lives, to use Charles Taylor's phrase, with respect to the good, marks the disappearance of positives in their practice of Menippean satire, turning this genre into a vehicle for the expression of their dystopian sentiments.

In this section of my study I focus on contrasting Voltaire's and Butler's different treatment of some common Menippean themes and motifs in *Candide* and *Erewhon*, to highlight the dystopian aspects of Butler's vision as these manifest themselves in his novel. Parallels drawn between the two novels reveal that even though *Erewhon* retains a Menippean framework, Butler uses the genre as a vehicle for articulating his distinctly dystopian worldview.

That Butler--a well-educated man of letters--must have been familiar with Voltaire's *Candide* is an assumption that we can perhaps safely make without calling for more substantial evidence in support of this claim. Nevertheless, this more substantial

evidence appears to exist. Adam Bisanz, in his study of the El Dorado motif in literature, has discovered some interesting similarities in the description of the fictional geography of Erewhon and El Dorado in Voltaire's *Candide*, pointing out that the two writers' "Utopias are singularly located in a valley surrounded by inaccessible and steep mountains" (46). Observing that "none of the classical sites selected for an 'ideal state' were to be pictured in a secret valley surrounded by inaccessible steep mountains," Bisanz suggests that "it does not seem plausible that Butler, while otherwise following traditional Utopian patterns, would have digressed from his chosen path had he not been aware of the two literary precedents established by Raleigh and Voltaire" ("El Dorado" 50). To support his conclusion, Bisanz draws upon the textual analogies he discovers between the physical description of Erewhon's and El Dorado's mountains and rivers, as well as upon some common features in the two novels' plots. For example, Bisanz points out that, like Candide and his valet Cacambo, *Erewhon*'s narrator uses a native guide to conduct him "to his preconceived destination," and that even the mode of departure of Candide and Butler's narrator from El Dorado and Erewhon is "almost identical" ("El Dorado" 53, 56).

Since his study, as I have pointed out earlier, aims at classifying *Erewhon* as a utopia, Bisanz tends to focus on the similarities rather than the differences between Voltaire's and Butler's novels. However, the similarities in the fictional geographical locations of El Dorado and Erewhon may suggest that Butler was familiar with Voltaire's *Candide* or even "borrowed" for his own novel some details of El Dorado's description. Yet these similarities cannot support the claim that Butler and Voltaire had a similar purpose in creating their fictional utopias. On the contrary, as we will see, Voltaire and Butler used similar literary techniques for radically different purposes.

The difference in the two writers' intent becomes particularly striking if we consider that both novels are written in the literary tradition of Menippean satire. Indeed, Butler's *Erewhon*--like some later British dystopian novels--retains strong generic, structural, and thematic aspects of Menippean satire. Like Voltaire's *Candide*, Butler's *Erewhon* addresses serious philosophical and existential issues in a seriocomic manner. Like *Candide*, *Erewhon* subjects to merciless attacks philosophers' attempts to explain the world through logical reasoning; and like *Candide*, *Erewhon* displays generic heterogeneity. *Candide* includes within its larger generic frame of Menippean satire a description of the perfect, ideal, or utopian country of El Dorado. Likewise, the description of Butler's imaginary "utopia" is inserted in the middle of the novel's realistic introductory and concluding chapters. And, in accordance with the tradition of Menippean utopian texts, neither Voltaire's El Dorado nor Butler's *Erewhon* serves the purpose of providing a blueprint or a model to be followed or emulated by the writers' contemporary societies.

Nevertheless, in *Erewhon*, Butler's fictional "utopia" serves a different function. Voltaire's vision of a perfect El Dorado, like More's Menippean *Utopia*, serves the purpose of highlighting the contrast or the unbridgeable gap between the writer's vision of the ideal life and the reality of the human world. In *Erewhon*, however, Menippean satire no longer functions as a vehicle for criticizing the inadequacies of human nature and for contrasting the desired ideal with an undesirable reality; it becomes a vehicle for portraying an undesirable society and for articulating the hopelessness of the human condition.

This difference is especially significant in view of the fact that Voltaire's worldview and, in particular, his assumptions concerning human nature, as we will see in Chapter 5 of this study, are no less dystopian than Butler's. However, Voltaire's vision

of the human condition and the human predicament, as this vision emerges in his *Candide*, is by no means hopelessly pessimistic. Sheltering his protagonists from the folly and madness of the world, Voltaire, at the end of *Candide*, envisions a space for them--both geographical and psychological--in which his characters can meaningfully position their lives, to use Charles Taylor's phrase, with respect to the good. Following Voltaire's famous injunction, "Il faut cultiver notre jardin," *Candide*'s main characters avoid involvement in destructive wars or profitless philosophical reasoning by focusing on their immediate tasks of providing for their daily sustenance. This possibility of leading a satisfactory life in the world, which Voltaire clearly presents as unmendable, reveals the reconstructable positives behind the writer's savage and unforgiving irony.

Butler, on the other hand, denies *Erewhon*'s narrator a space--geographical and psychological--in which the latter could have meaningfully positioned himself with respect to the good. The disappearance of positives in *Erewhon* indicates that Butler's irony, unlike Voltaire's, allows no reconstruction of values that are supposed to stand behind it. Butler's dystopian worldview and the pessimism of his vision of the human predicament manifest themselves in the differences in his own and Voltaire's descriptions of the political, cultural, and social environment fostered in their imaginary societies, in the differences in their protagonists' modes and circumstances of departure from these societies, and, above all, in the differences in the two societies' attitudes to science and technology or, on a more general and universal plane, to human inventiveness and creativity.

Indeed, despite the similarities in the description of El Dorado's and Erewhon's geographical location, the two countries' political and social arrangements are widely different. Preserving the "innocence and happiness" of its inhabitants, El Dorado's social structure features no parliaments, courts of law, or prisons. The inhabitants of this

country “are strangers to lawsuits” (*Candide* 43, 45). *Erewhon*, on the other hand, not only retains the social structure of Butler’s contemporary England, but also exaggerates the shortcomings of the system by hyperbolizing its deficiencies.

Furthermore, the differences in the two writers’ portrayal of their respective imaginary countries’ attitudes to science, technology, and innovation are even more striking. While *Candide* admires in El Dorado “a gallery two thousand feet long and filled with instruments employed in mathematics and physics” (45), *Erewhon*’s narrator beholds in a local museum a sight which, by his own admission, astonishes him more than anything that he has yet seen. “Filled with cases containing all manner of curiosities--such as skeletons, stuffed birds and animals, carvings in stone,” the Erewhonian museum was largely “occupied by broken machinery of all descriptions.” The narrator’s description of the museum’s exhibits conveys a sense of desolation and neglect:

The larger specimens had a case to themselves, and tickets with writing on them in a character which I could not understand. There were fragments of steam engines, all broken and rusted; among them I saw a cylinder and piston, a broken fly-wheel, and part of a crank, which was laid on the ground by their side. Again, there was a very old carriage whose wheels in spite of rust and decay, I could see, had been designed originally for iron rails. Indeed there were fragments of a great many of our own most advanced inventions; but they all seemed to be several hundred years old, and to be placed where they were, not for instruction, but curiosity. As I said before, all were marred and broken. (89-90)

This image of broken and rusted machinery contrasts as sharply with the magnificence of El Dorado's "palace of sciences" as the "most agreeable music" with which Candide and Cacambo are met in Voltaire's utopia (*Candide* 43) contrasts with Erewhonian music, which, by the narrator's admission, "was hideous to a European ear" (*E* 131).

(The narrator's observations concerning the state of rust and decay of "advanced inventions" in Erewhon and the hideousness of Erewhonian music suggest that Butler carefully places in his text numerous subversive comments that reveal the ambiguity of his literary and generic intent. From this perspective, contrary to the assumptions of many Butler scholars, Erewhon's ban on mechanical inventions and machinery--for which the novel became mostly known--can hardly be regarded as the writer's plea against dehumanizing technology. Butler's motives appear to be more complex.)

The two protagonists' different modes of departure from Erewhon and El Dorado contrast further the mechanical backwardness of Erewhon in comparison with El Dorado's advanced and innovative technology. When Candide decides to leave El Dorado, the king's three thousand engineers are able to construct for him a machine that conveys Candide safely from the height of ten thousand feet--the height of the mountains surrounding the country (*Candide* 46). When *Erewhon's* narrator decides to leave Erewhon, he obtains the king's permission to enlist the help of "antiquarians" whose knowledge of ancient techniques "for the production of lighter gases" can help him to build a balloon. Since the narrator cannot leave the country of his own free will, he has to trick the king and exploit the superstitions of the queen: they allow the narrator to ascend in the balloon to facilitate his communication with the air god in order to prevail on him and stop the drought in the country (209). At the same time, convinced that the

balloon “will collapse immediately” and that the narrator will fall and break his neck, the king grants his permission, secretly hoping to get rid of the narrator.

Moreover, the opposite directions of *Candide*’s and *Erewhon*’s protagonists’ departures--up (for *Erewhon*’s narrator) and down (for *Candide* and *Cacambo*)--point to the truly dystopian nature of *Erewhonian* society and to different visions underlying Voltaire’s and Butler’s “utopias”: while *Candide* descends from the heights of *El Dorado*, *Erewhon*’s narrator ascends in a balloon to escape. (The upward trend of the narrator’s escape, however, is compromised by the very nature of Butler’s “utopia.” Since *Erewhon* represents an inverted image of Butler’s contemporary England, the narrator is escaping to the very country he is escaping from.)

From this perspective, Bisanz’s suggestion that the mode of departure of *Erewhon*’s protagonist, even though it “takes place under less amicable circumstances and not in a hoist but in a balloon,” is “almost identical” to that of *Candide* and *Cacambo* (“*El Dorado*” 56) overlooks important differences in the function of Voltaire’s ideal and Butler’s ambiguous countries. Clearly, Voltaire’s and Butler’s treatment of similar episodes in their novels’ plots reveals significant differences in the function their imaginary utopias are called to play. While the difference between a hoist and a balloon is indeed of little importance, the differences between the circumstances of the two protagonists’ departures and between the directions in which they go are significant. The comparison between *El Dorado*’s and *Erewhon*’s attitudes to innovation and technology highlights further the dystopian or negative aspects of Butler’s estranged society.

The dystopian aspects of Butler’s vision are further emphasized by the motives compelling his protagonist to leave *Erewhon* and by the circumstances surrounding his departure. While the motives compelling Voltaire’s protagonists to leave *El Dorado*

reveal the Enlightenment writer's dystopian assumption about human nature, the motives compelling Erewhon's protagonist to leave reveal Butler's dystopian vision of the human predicament. Candide and Cacambo--"the two happy ones" who "decide to be no longer so"--leave an ideal and perfect state of El Dorado of their own free will, hoping that "the pebbles of El Dorado"--gold, emeralds, and rubies that lie like dirt on the ground--will make them rich. The prospect "of making a figure in their own country, and of boasting of what they have seen in their travels" (46), devalues the peacefulness and contentment of their life in El Dorado where they will remain forever "upon a footing with the rest" (46). *Erewhon's* narrator, on the other hand, attempts to flee a country which is neither ideal nor perfect. He starts planning his escape after "one of the cashiers of the Musical Banks" hints that the narrator "was to be prosecuted in a criminal court ostensibly for measles, but really for having owned a watch, and attempted the reintroduction of machinery" (*E* 208). Being fully at the mercy of the king's will and of the country's absurd customs and beliefs, the narrator has to escape in fear for his life. Therefore, Candide's and Cacambo's departure from the perfect state of El Dorado illustrates that the shortcomings of human nature, namely Voltaire's protagonists' vain desire to be wealthier than and socially superior to their countrymen, are responsible for the absence of perfect societies in the real world. Butler's narrator's attempted departure from Erewhon, on the other hand, along with his return to the very same country he was fleeing from, illustrate that human beings are trapped by societies from which there is no exit or no escape. Like Voltaire, whose account of his protagonists' adventures illustrates his vision of human nature, Butler uses the account of his narrator's (mis)adventures to illustrate the common fate of humanity. The writer deliberately provides no name for his narrator in *Erewhon* so as to suggest his universal status and condition as an everyman.

Yet the most important difference between Voltaire's and Butler's accounts of their protagonists' departures from El Dorado and Erewhon lies in the circumstances surrounding them. Unlike *Erewhon*'s narrator, Candide and Cacambo are free to leave the country of their own free will. The king of El Dorado claims that he has "no right to detain strangers." "It is a tyranny," he goes on to say, "which neither our manners nor our laws permit. All men are free" (46). *Erewhon*'s narrator, on the other hand, senses very early during his stay in Erewhon that "there was something about [his] hosts which told [him] that they had got [him] and meant to keep [him], in spite of all their goodness" (84). Placed in prison, constantly watched, and transported to the metropolis blindfolded to prevent his escape, the narrator is constantly reminded "to consider [himself] a prisoner" (90). When he contemplates the possibility of escape, he reminds himself that

the king had himself told me that I was to consider myself a prisoner on parole, and that the first sign of my endeavouring to escape would cause me to be sent to one of the hospitals for incurables. (173)

The irony of the narrator's status as "a prisoner on parole" underscores further the intent and purpose of Butler's novel. In fact, the narrator neither enters nor exits the fictional country of Erewhon. Since *Erewhon* is an estranged account of Butler's contemporary England, the protagonist, to use Patrick Parrinder's phrase, "is already there" (1).

Parrinder considers *Erewhon*'s narrator's difficulties in leaving the country to be a sign of Erewhon's dystopian status: "A society," he points out, "cannot be truly dystopian if travelers can come and go freely" (1). By the same token, a society cannot be truly dystopian if its citizens can freely pursue their professional or intellectual interests. Erewhon's technological backwardness does not merely affect the narrator's

mode of escape; more significantly, the different states of technological sophistication in El Dorado and Erewhon reflect Voltaire's and Butler's different attitude to human inventiveness, creativity, and work. The freedom to innovate and invent enjoyed by El Dorado's engineers is for Voltaire an important condition of a perfect state. In the less than perfect conditions of real states, work becomes for *Candide*'s protagonists a way of leading a good life. At the end of the novel, its major characters become dissatisfied with the idleness of their lives, finding that "when they did not dispute time hung . . . heavily upon their hands." Cunegonde even suggests that it might perhaps be better "to be ravished a hundred times by negro pirates," to be whipped, hanged, and dissected, and "to go through all the miseries" than "to have nothing to do." And philosopher Martin comes to the conclusion "that man was born to live either in a state of distracting inquietude or of lethargic disgust" (85). But after they start cultivating their garden--each in his or her own way--Martin concludes that work "is the only way to make life tolerable," and Pangloss asserts "that man was not born to be idle" (87). Labour preserves the novel's characters "from three great evils--weariness, vice, and want" (86). *Candide*, thus, contains a moral injunction for the reader on how to live a good life.

The broken state of obsolete machinery in Erewhon and the clandestine status of Erewhonian "antiquarians" do not merely suggest that in Butler's "utopia" innovation and creativity are not given free reign. Unlike Voltaire, Butler does not pursue in *Erewhon* the connection between idleness and "vice," and despite the lip-service he pays to labour as a means of overcoming "want," neither Erewhon's narrator nor other significant characters of his literary works are profitably employed. As a rule, they live on inheritance--or pension, as *Erewhon*'s narrator does--and do not have to toil for their sustenance. Nor do they complain about their idle status.

Erewhon does recommend, implicitly, that the novels' readers overcome "weariness" by immersing themselves in work; however, Butler's variations on Voltairian themes of cultivating one's garden strike a truly melancholic note. In *Erewhon*'s account of the "World of the Unborn" myth, the magistrate of the unborn advises the pre-natal souls, foolish enough to want to be born, to immerse themselves in work in their future lives to recall the lost happiness of the never-been-born state:

Fly--fly--if you can remember the advice--to the haven of your present and immediate duty, taking shelter incessantly in the work which you have in hand . . . and this, if you will imprint it deeply upon your every faculty, will be most likely to bring you safely and honourably home through the trials that are before you. (163)

Even if Butler seems to advocate in this passage the value of work, the sentiments and the outlook on human life and the human predicament expressed in "The World of the Unborn" undermine the value of life. Butler transforms the poised wisdom of Voltaire's dictum into a melancholic reflection and nostalgic longing after the lost happiness that, ironically, has never existed. The pessimism of Butler's outlook on human life and the human condition also finds expression in the magistrate's portrayal of the uncertainty and precariousness of the born condition. Attempting to thwart the unborn's desire to be born, the magistrate portrays not only the trials of the born condition and the prospects of inevitable suffering and inevitable death, but also the uncertainty of knowing whether one will be born to be "rich or poor, kind or unkind, healthy or diseased." "Remember," the magistrate instructs the unborn,

that there never yet was a man of forty who would not come back into the world of unborn if he could do so with decency and honour. Being in the world he will as a general rule stay till he is forced to go; but do you think that he would consent to be born again, and re-live his life, if he had the offer of doing so?
(163)

This poignant statement captures the major difference between the dystopian outlooks expressed by Voltaire in *Candide* and Butler in *Erewhon*. Despite its openly pessimistic portrayal of human nature, Voltaire's novel never articulates the thought that life is not worth living. The optimistic side of *Candide* is further underscored by the novel's denial of death: its drowned, burnt, and hanged protagonists turn out to be miraculously alive at the end of the novel and ready to absorb life's--or Voltaire's--lesson of the necessity of cultivating one's garden. In *Erewhon*, on the other hand, the finality of death and the insignificance of human efforts and aspirations is the major themes of its chapter on "The World of the Unborn."⁹ The hopelessness and pessimism expressed in *Erewhon* differ from the dystopian sentiments expressed in *Candide*. Voltaire's novel, as I suggest above, provides a space--geographical and psychological--for its protagonists where they can shelter themselves from the senseless violence and cruelty of the outside world. Butler's *Erewhon*, on the other hand, maintains that human misery is caused by circumstances from which there is no escape. The novel, thus, does not instruct the reader on how to live a good life, but suggests, instead, how to tolerate the pain of the born condition.

To a significant extent, Butler's pessimism can be attributed to the little value he attributes to human inventiveness and creativity. By denying creative work the status of a transcendental value in human life, Butler plants in his intellectual garden the seeds of

doubt and resignation that will later grow stronger roots in Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *1984*, and Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. The connection Voltaire makes in *Candide* between work and creativity acquires further significance in view of the fact that the writer's famous injunction "Il faut cultiver notre jardin" has been rarely taken by writers, or artists in general, as a call to forego the pleasures of intellectual pursuits and focus instead on growing vegetables for daily sustenance. Rather, the injunction has been taken metaphorically to recommend an ideal of life aimed at satisfying intellectual rather than merely physical hunger. Like Marvell's garden, Voltaire's "jardin" became a symbol of spiritual satisfaction found in an artist's creative activity.

While it may be hard to establish whether Butler's dystopian outlook conditions his views on the futility of work and creativity, or, on the contrary, the little value he places on creative artistic efforts shapes his dystopian outlook, the close connection between the denial of value to artistic expression and the pessimism of his *Weltanschauung* is beyond any doubt. And it is also beyond doubt that this connection manifests itself in the work of major British dystopian writers. When life and art turn into life and habit, Voltaire's dictum loses its appeal for the dystopian writer.¹⁰

The contrast between Voltaire's and Butler's practice of Menippean satire in *Candide* and *Erewhon* signals the shift in the genre's use by its later twentieth-century dystopian practitioners. The writers' different treatment of similar elements of plot in *Candide* and *Erewhon* also highlights those aspects of Butler's novel that became major constitutive features of major twentieth-century British dystopian novels. By denying his narrator the possibility of leaving Erewhon openly and freely, by suggesting ironically that the narrator's clandestine escape effectively returns him to the same country, and by refusing to position his narrator with respect to the good, Butler

anticipates some major structural and thematic features of the twentieth-century British dystopia--especially the canonical dystopian masterpieces by Huxley, Orwell, and Burgess that I mention above.

Butler and Swift

The affinity between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* was noted as early as 1872, the year when *Erewhon* was first published. On May 18, *The Illustrated London News* reported that the introductory chapters of *Erewhon* are "as interesting as *Robinson Crusoe*; the remaining parts have more affinity to *Gulliver's Travels*" (quoted in Bekker 111). Contemporary criticism, too, stresses the connection between the two novels: Dyson's assertion that it "scarcely needs to be said" "[t]hat *Erewhon* is closely modeled on *Gulliver's Travels*" (112) is echoed by Sharma's observation that "*Erewhon* has been described as the closest thing in English literature to *Gulliver's Travels*" (Sharma "Artist" 32). Focusing on the novels' protagonists, Adam Bisanz has summed up the critical consensus by stating that "the literary kinship between Gulliver and George Higgs--the Erewhonian traveler--appears to be so evident as to render any necessity of substantiating it a questionable effort" ("Swiftian Patterns" 313).

The above listed connections made between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* indicate that critical attention has been mainly directed at what René Wellek and Austin Warren call the "outer form" of the two novels: at their common use of the imaginary travel plot and at the visible similarities in the two narrators' travel experiences. Adam Bisanz, for example, in his study of "Swiftian Patterns of Narrative in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*," painstakingly lists every (or almost every) sentence in Butler's novel which either alludes to or mimics the corresponding sentence or travel episode in Swift's

Gulliver. However, even though Bisanz's study provides important insights into Butler's literary strategies (to be addressed in my next section), it makes no important inferences about *Gulliver's* or *Erewhon's* genre. In other words, his study does not inscribe either of these novels in the dystopian tradition. Similarly, other critical studies find merely superficial similarities between the two novels, emphasizing Swift's and Butler's similar use of the genre of the imaginary voyage related in a matter-of-fact-tone by a first-person narrator who constantly claims what Darko Suvin calls "travelogue exactness." Yet, these similarities do not exhaust the whole range of significant generic connections between the two novels. Most importantly, these approaches do not reveal the dystopian aspects of either novel. Admittedly, Frye points out the generic connection between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon*, but Frye avoids the use of the term "dystopia," classifying both novels as satirical utopias. Significantly, Frye, like many other scholars, does not focus on the role of the novels' narrators and, although his analysis allows him to inscribe Swift's and Butler's novels in the same literary tradition that gave birth to *Brave New World* and *1984*, he does not acknowledge either Swift's or Butler's ironic stance in respect of their narrators and, consequently, does not probe the depth of their pessimism. Therefore, the significant affinities between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* in terms of their "inner form," which Austin and Warren explicate as a literary work's "attitude, tone, purpose" (231), and, above all, the implications of these affinities for the novels' "valid interpretation" remain largely unexplored.

On the other hand, the pessimism informing *Gulliver's Travels* and the ambiguous role of the novel's narrator have been pointed out by Dyson, who claims that in the fourth book of *Gulliver*, Swift "openly abandon[s] his positives" (1-2), and by Denis Donaghue, who argues that "the mischief" of *Gulliver's Travels* is not "postponed till the fourth voyage," but, in fact, "begins with Swift's presentation of Gulliver

himself" (3). "The mischief" of Butler's *Erewhon* and the phenomenon of abandoned positives in this novel, however, have not been openly acknowledged. Dyson, as we will see below, makes valuable connections between the two novels, pointing out that in *Erewhon*, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, "a fantasy world is constructed, to carry ironic implications beyond purely verbal manipulation, into the plot and structure of the whole" (xiii). Yet, because of a different focus of his study, Dyson does not recognize either novel's ironic structure or either writer's abandoned positives as constituent features of dystopian fiction.

In this section of my dissertation, I argue that, contrary to Bisanz's assertion, the "literary kinship" between Gulliver and the Erewhonian narrator is not so self-evident as to make explicit study of it "a questionable effort." In fact, such a study can help us identify the elements of dystopian structure in both novels. Admittedly, several scholars have recognized the generic affinity between *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon*, as well as aspects of dystopian fiction that they share; yet these scholars, for the most part, classify *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* as satires or dystopias on the basis of what Frye calls "the fear of the machine" motif. However, literary works should not be classified on the basis of their common themes and motifs isolated from their total structure.

Focusing on the role of the protagonists-narrators and the function of the estranged worlds in Swift's and Butler's novels, I argue that in *Erewhon*, Butler follows Swift's dramatic model of offering an account of an imaginary country from the perspective of a first-person narrator (and the novel's protagonist) who serves both as a vehicle for and the target of his irony. The dramatic irony in both writers' presentations of their protagonists highlights the narrators' inability to recognize the limits of their perspectives and transcend the limits of their social and cultural conditioning. The juxtaposition of two equally undesirable worlds suggests the inescapability of their

conditioning, communicating Swift's and Butler's pessimistic concept of human nature and their hopeless vision of the human predicament. Significantly, this ironic presentation of narrators and/or protagonists as *fallible* and of two juxtaposed fictional worlds as equally undesirable and inescapable will become major constitutive features of the British dystopian novel.

These ironic constitutive aspects of British dystopian fiction tend to be critically disregarded because of the predominantly humanist approaches to the interpretation of the genre's masterpieces. Critical approaches which emphasize the role of the protagonist in dystopian fiction tend to identify the protagonist's criticism with the author's; approaches emphasizing the satirical function of this fiction tend to read it as a warning against the dehumanizing trends in the author's contemporary society. However, irrespective of the critical focus, major interpretations of dystopian masterpieces are almost invariably based on the assumption of the writer's positive view of human nature and his belief in some essential human characteristics that are threatened by imperfect human societies. The critical reluctance to probe the depth of pessimism informing dystopian fiction--and *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon*, in particular--manifests itself in interpretations that privilege the novels' "outer form," their thematic content," and the narrator or protagonist's perspective on the events and societies described in them over these novels' "inner form" and their structural irony.

Thus, many scholars concur with Susan Valentine in recognizing that "the role of the protagonist is . . . fundamental to the classification of the dystopian novel as a genre" (Valentine 81). However, accurate appreciation of the importance of this role is often prevented by the mistaken belief that the dystopian protagonist serves as a mouthpiece for his author. This identification of the writer with his narrator and/or protagonist predisposes dystopian scholars to base their approaches to dystopian fiction on the

assumption of the dystopian writer's faith in the existence of an essential human nature that will resist authoritarian attempts to enslave it. Critical studies of dystopian fiction often interpret the protagonist's failure to adapt to the inhuman regime as a sign of the dystopian writer's resolute condemnation of dystopian societies, of his sympathy and compassion toward his dystopian hero, of his support of the hero's attitudes and opinions, and of his identification with his protagonist. The dystopian novel, from this perspective, dramatizes an irreconcilable conflict between the constitutive and essential needs of the dystopian protagonist's individuality and human nature, on the one hand, and the tendencies of collectivism forcing the dystopian hero to renounce his individuality, on the other.

Gorman Beauchamp suggests, for example, that "[e]very dystopia . . . must have at least one such rebel, a man or woman . . . who maintains a sense of his own identity and worth despite a massive inquisitorial effort to extinguish his heresy" ("Primitivism" 94); Quinonez claims that dystopian novels share their writers' "propositions about man," namely their strong insistence that each human being "is a distinct individual possessing characteristics which are peculiar to him." The dystopian novelist, argues Quinonez, strongly insists that "[t]he identity of the individual . . . is inextricably bound up with difference, with self-consciousness, and with a measure of freedom in choice and action (265). And Valentine asserts that "the protagonist's personal response to the existing power struggle . . . inevitably involves the deconstruction of the present state of reality; [and] thus, reveals the dystopian nature of the society at issue" (28).

Understandably, from this perspective, neither *Gulliver's Travels* nor *Erewhon* can be classified as a dystopian novel. Neither novel dramatizes a conflict between an individual and an authoritarian or totalitarian regime or society. In fact, neither novel portrays such a society. However, as I argue in this study, the criteria for classifying

Gulliver's Travels, *Erewhon*, and other classics such as *Brave New World*, 1984, and *A Clockwork Orange* as dystopian novels are largely independent of the specific arrangements, customs, rituals, or beliefs characterizing each imaginary society. What makes these novels dystopian, apart from their common generic roots in Menippean satire, is their use of structural irony as a vehicle for communicating their pessimistic and negative vision of human nature and the human predicament. This negative vision finds one of its most powerful expressions in the dystopian writers' portrayal of their protagonists' inability to escape the limits of their cultural and social conditioning rather than the limits or boundaries of an oppressive regime.

Even though many scholars of dystopian fiction have recognized its preoccupation with questioning traditional understandings of the human individual, major humanist interpretations of dystopian classics still depend on the erroneous, from my perspective, belief that dystopian writers uphold in their novels humanist concepts of human nature. The critical interpretations of *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* which recognize these novels as satires or dystopias have been equally based on the same, often implicit, assumptions about the writers' vision of human nature, their relationship to their narrators and/or protagonists, and their resistance to the emerging dehumanizing trends in their contemporary societies. Frye, for example, places Butler's *Erewhon* in the same category as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, classifying the two novels as Menippean satires in his *Anatomy of Criticism* and as satirical utopias in his essay on "Varieties of Literary Utopias." Significantly, even though Frye himself avoids the use of the term "dystopia" and does not explore the function of protagonists-narrators in either novel, his interpretation of *Erewhon* as a dramatization of "the fear of the machine" motif underlies other scholars' attribution of this novel to the dystopian genre. Even more significant is the fact that Frye's approach to *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon*, despite his different

focus, is based implicitly, as we will see below, on the same assumptions about human nature that operate throughout major humanist interpretations of these novels.

Distinguishing satirical utopia from “the straight utopia, which visualizes a world state assumed to be ideal” (“Varieties” 28), Frye subdivides utopian satire into two types: one “which is a product of a specifically modern fear, the Frankenstein myth of enslavement of man by his own technology,” and “another kind of utopian satire . . . in which social rituals are seen from the outside . . . simply to demonstrate their inconsistency, their hypocrisy, or their unreality” (“Varieties” 39). Frye recognizes both strains of utopian satire in *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Erewhon*, pointing out that “[t]he Lilliputian society is essentially the society of Swift’s England, with its rituals looked at satirically,” and that “most of *Erewhon* adheres to the earlier tradition of the mirror-satire.” But he also suggests that *Erewhon* is

an early example of the contemporary or technological satire: the Erewhonians are afraid of machines, and their philosophers have worked out elaborate arguments to prove that machines will eventually take over if not suppressed in time.

Frye traces this theme “of the enslavement of man by his own technology” back to *Gulliver’s Travels* “where the flying island of Laputa demonstrates some of the perils in combining human mechanical ingenuity with human folly and greed” (“Varieties” 40).

However, both approaches that Frye uses to classify *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Erewhon* as satirical utopias are problematic. The Menippean structure of both novels subordinates the content and themes expressed in Part III of *Gulliver* and Chapters on “The Book of the Machines” in *Erewhon* to the logic of the whole. In *Erewhon*, “The

Book of the Machines” Chapters serve primarily, as I show through demonstrating the use of similar logical traps by Lucian and Butler, to illustrate the perils of false analogies taken to their logical extremes. For this reason, the attribution of *Erewhon*, along with *Gulliver’s Travels* and other classics of dystopian fiction, to the genre of satirical utopia as an expression “of a specifically modern fear, the Frankenstein myth of enslavement of man by his own technology,” hardly does justice to the novel’s internal logic and motivation. As I argued before, the views and opinions expressed by the fictitious writer of “The Book of the Machines” in *Erewhon* cannot be attributed to Butler himself. Therefore, the novel cannot be classified as a dystopia on the basis of Butler’s alleged condemnation of the supposedly dehumanizing potential of technology portrayed in it. This is also true of other dystopian classics in which the “the fear of the machine” motif merely provides one part--however important a part--of the background against which the work delivers its message. When significant literary works are classified generically on the basis of isolated themes and motifs that occur in these works, it is easy to disregard their inexorable internal logic.

Similarly, Frye’s attribution of *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Erewhon* to his second strain of satirical utopia which holds up a distorting mirror to society to demonstrate the inconsistency, hypocrisy, and unreality of its social rituals neglects to take into account the *fallible* character of the novels’ narrators and, thus, the novels’ ironic rather than satiric structure. Creating the impression that Swift and Butler focus on the inadequacy of social rituals or beliefs for satirical purposes, Frye’s classification maintains the illusion that *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Erewhon* are based on an antithesis between the observed delinquency in practice or belief and the ostensible norm or ideal from which the satirized practice or belief deviates.

Classifying *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* as satirical utopias, Frye

ultimately suggests that their authors believe that human individuals can oppose the dehumanizing tendencies that enslave them in corrupted and tyrannical societies. In other words, Frye's interpretation of the novels projects his optimistic and positive vision of human nature and the human predicament. His avoidance of the term "dystopia" and his neglect of the role and function of the protagonist-narrator in the discussed novels bespeak, as I will point out below, his allegiance to a humanist conception of the human individual.

At the same time, dystopian fiction's preoccupation with the inescapability of social and cultural conditioning has not gone unnoticed by its critics and commentators. Frye points out that the novels he attributes to the genre of satirical utopia communicate "the growing sense that the whole world is destined to the same social fate with no place to hide." Yet he attributes this "growing sense" of the inescapability of one's "social fate" to the authors' "increasing realization that technology moves toward the control not merely of nature but of the operations of the mind" ("Varieties" 29). And, interestingly, Frye uses the term "anti-utopian" in his discussion of contemporary American literature, claiming that

The motto of all this is that of the starling in Sterne: "I can't get out": it expresses the claustrophobia of individual and sexual impulses imprisoned by the alien social consciousness that has created civilization. ("Varieties" 48)

In this example, as in the previous one, Frye suggests that human consciousness is enslaved by "alien" social forces that prevent human individuals from realizing their essential potential. As a devoted humanist, who maintains that "inside one's natural and

social origin . . . is the embryo of a genuine individual struggling to be born” (*DV* 13), Frye leaves his own and allegedly the authors’ fundamental humanist assumptions concerning human nature and human desire for freedom and fulfillment unchallenged.

His reluctance to look into the abyss of dystopian despair is shared by Chris Ferns, who, at first glance, goes further than Frye, admitting that “the continuing appeal of dystopian fiction” is largely due to its willingness to address the fear caused by the alarming realization

that we are *already* products of our social environment, and that it is only the unpredictable outcome of competing conditioning influences that creates the illusion of individual freedom and essential identity. (107)

But Ferns does not capitalize on this insight in his discussion of dystopian fiction: he concurs with Frye in granting that “there is, after all, some essential and invariant ‘human nature’ that is in the last analysis immune to such conditioning influences” and that dystopian fiction mobilizes this “reassuring notion” against the fear of one’s inescapable social conditioning (107). In the same vein, the above listed examples of studies which recognize the fundamental role of protagonists in dystopian fiction avoid the implications of its structural irony by attributing the protagonists’ criticism of fictional dystopian societies to dystopian writers.

The trust in some essential and invariant human nature that can escape social and cultural conditioning predisposes many critical studies to detect a positive message in dystopian fiction, as well as to see this fiction as severe criticism of societies which suppress human growth and restrict human freedom. But the dystopian novel’s trust in such invariable fundamentals of human nature, as I will be arguing in Chapter 5 of this

study, is questionable. Equally questionable is the tendency of these critical approaches to attribute, explicitly or implicitly, the opinions and beliefs of narrators and/or protagonists of dystopian fiction to their authors.

Swift's and Butler's presentation of their narratives from the perspective of naïve and *fallible* first-person narrators generates a "duplicity of meaning and evaluation" (to borrow Abrams's phrase) which makes the attribution of the narrators' opinions and beliefs to their authors unconvincing. This, often implicit, identification of the narrator's or protagonist's criticism with the author's forms, as I have often indicated, is the basis of numerous humanist interpretations of dystopian fiction which maintain that the estranged world in dystopian fiction serves the purpose of warning the reader against the dehumanizing trends already present in the author's contemporary and target society. However, the *fallible* status of Swift's and Butler's narrators suggests that the narrator's view should not be mistaken for the author's.

Indeed, our understanding of the dystopian writer's attitude to his protagonist is of paramount importance for his novel's valid interpretation. However, we have to recognize that this attitude is complex and ambiguous. As Dyson points out, our interpretation of *Gulliver's Travels* depends on "what we make of Swift's relationship to Gulliver." "How far is Gulliver," asks the scholar, "a satiric device, and how far (if at all) does he come to be a spokesman for Swift himself?" Significantly, Dyson re-iterates the same concern with respect to Butler's novel and subsequent dystopian novels:

A central problem in *Erewhon*, as in *Gulliver* before it and Orwell's *1984* after, is what we are to make of the narrator. Is Butler identified with Mr. Higgs in any way at all, or does he use him only as a satiric convenience? (121)

Dyson does not answer this question, tacitly recognizing the difficulties of sorting out what statements and beliefs of Swift's, Butler's, or Orwell's protagonists can be safely attributed to the writers themselves.

Admittedly, Swift's and Butler's tendency to use, occasionally, their narrators and protagonists as vehicles for their own thoughts remains the source of confusion for the novels' interpreters. Butler, for instance, identifies with his narrator when he re-lives in *Erewhon* his personal experience of farming in New Zealand; he also occasionally expresses through his narrator some of his own most cherished thoughts reiterated later in his other works and note-books. However, he also distances himself from his narrator (and his opinions and beliefs) by putting the narrator in situations that effectively reveal the blind spots in the latter's vision. Butler also (like Swift before him and Huxley and Orwell after) uses his narrator as a target of his irony: he denies his narrator a clear understanding of his experience and even brings him, as Swift brings Gulliver, to a mental distress caused by his inability to reconcile his experience with his beliefs. In other words, Butler maintains a structural irony in his novel through the device of a *fallible* narrator.

Indicating that the presence of a *naïve* or *fallible* narrator in fiction is "a common literary device" of structural irony, aimed at sustaining "the duplicity of meaning and evaluation" throughout ironic works, Abrams defines a naïve narrator as a

spokesman, whose invincible simplicity or obtuseness leads him to persist in putting an interpretation on affairs which the knowing reader--who penetrates to, and shares, the implied point of view of authorial presence behind the naïve persona--just as persistently is called on to alter or correct.

The ironic implications of the literary device of the *fallible* narrator are further strengthened in those narratives in which the *fallible* narrator functions as a participant in or even the protagonist of the story. “Although such a narrator,” writes Abrams,

may be neither stupid, credulous, nor demented, he nevertheless manifests a failure of insight, viewing and appraising his own motives, and the motives and actions of other characters, through what the reader is intended to recognize as the distorting perspective of the narrator’s prejudices and private interests. (98)

Gulliver’s “stubborn credulity” (Abrams 98) and *Erewhon*’s narrator’s denial of his own “moral obliquity” have been often commented upon; nevertheless the purpose of this ironic device, as well as of the novel’s overall ironic structure, is often disregarded by critics who neglect the fact that the two narrators function as the targets of as well as the vehicles for their authors’ irony, and interpret the novels as pleas for humanist values or as products of “a specifically modern fear” of man’s enslavement by his own technology.

Butler thus follows Swift in using the device of a *fallible* narrator to satirize his contemporary society from the perspective of a character who is ignorant of the deficiencies of his own understanding. But, at the same time, Swift and Butler go beyond an ironic portrayal of their protagonists’ moral or mental limitations as naïve or fallible individuals. Serving as vehicles for and targets of their authors’ irony, Gulliver and *Erewhon*’s narrator present credible models of human subjectivity and exemplify their authors’ vision of human nature. Indeed, as Suvin points out, Swift’s basic concern in *Gulliver’s Travels* “is with the most radical anthropological question: What is Man?” (*Metamorphoses* 107). “After *Gulliver’s Travels*,” the scholar concludes “it is impossible to believe in a merely institutional, static utopia which does not face the

nature of man” (*Metamorphoses* 113). The namelessness of *Erewhon*’s narrator suggests that Butler, too, aims at presenting to his readers a typical human being with all his intellectual limitations and faults in reasoning.

Admittedly, Swift and Butler focus in their novels on different aspects of human nature. Unlike Swift, Butler was not repelled by the physical grossness of humanity; nor was he repelled by human shortcomings satirized traditionally as human vices. Commenting on what he calls the “central oddity about Butler’s satire,” Dyson points out that the writer’s

irony is classically satiric, but he is in no normal sense of the word an idealist.

He feels little disgust for the sinful . . . And the ‘sinful’ are not defined in any narrowly Victorian way. (116)

Butler’s major concern in *Erewhon*, as I have been arguing in the previous sections of this study, is the propensity of Erewhonians (or human individuals) not to think for themselves and instead to delegate vital decisions concerning their lives to fraudulent authorities who are more often than not guided by a conscious desire to benefit personally from fooling their victims. Yet even though Butler’s attitude to the physical side of human nature differs from Swift’s, their approaches to human reason and subjectivity have many points in common.

Both writers distrust human reason, viewing human subjectivity as socially and culturally constructed. Both writers envisage no possibility for their narrators to escape the limited perspectives that define their protagonists’ thinking. In “The Brainwashing of Lemuel Gulliver,” Denis Donoghue observes that, unlike the narrators who are granted the capacity “to understand their experience of the events they witness,” Gulliver

is “one of the most memorable characters in fiction” because Swift gives him “no character at all, no imagination, no depth of feeling, no resources of inner life beyond the attributes of a hack reporter on a local newspaper” (3). Donoghue further claims that

Gulliver is as he is not because God made him so but because England made him so. If there is an English tradition in politics, education, and morality, it is inscribed in him: it discloses itself in a sense of life that settles comfortably upon its constraints and regards as folly and vanity any interests that range beyond the narrow circle. To put the situation in a phrase: Gulliver has been brainwashed to become what he is. England has made him, written a program beyond which he does not stray. (4)

Donoghue thus recognizes that Swift’s vision of human nature leaves no space for essentials or fundamentals that could resist the social and cultural conditioning of one’s immediate environment.

No less than Gulliver, *Erewhon*’s nameless narrator is the product of the “English tradition in politics, education, and morality”: his persistent comments on the Erewhonians’ “entire perversion of thought” (56), their “moral perversity,” and “obliquity of vision” suggest, ironically, his inability to recognize in Erewhonian myths, beliefs, and opinions the distorted image of his own and to transcend and question the narrow circle of his own beliefs. He readily concedes, though, that “that which we observe to be taken as a matter of course by those around us, we take as matter of course ourselves,” which is why despite his “training in opinions so widely different” (60), he displays an unqualified willingness to conform.

Apart from the device of the first-person narrator displaying the characteristics of a naïve and *fallible* hero, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* also share, as I point out above, another device of structural irony. The “natural” and “estranged” worlds in these novels are juxtaposed to highlight their essential similarity and ultimate inescapability. The estranged worlds of Swift’s and Butler’s fantasy do not serve the purpose of satirizing the inconsistency, hypocrisy, or unreality of the writers’ contemporary social rituals and beliefs with the view of changing them for the better; they serve, in Dyson’s words about Swift’s irony, to explore the real “world’s essential unmendability” (5).

Pointing out that in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift “openly abandon[s] his positives,” Dyson highlights the transformation of the writer’s irony. “Tak[ing] a leap” and “escap[ing] from its supposed or intended purpose,” Swift’s irony in the fourth book no longer aims “to instruct and delight,” but to express a dark and pessimistic outlook on human nature and the human condition. “It ceases to be,” in Dyson’s words, “a functional technique serving a moral purpose, and becomes an embodiment of an attitude to life” (1-2). Turned against “states of mind, or existence that cannot be changed at all,” Swift’s irony attacks “certain limitations, or defects (as Swift sees them), in the human predicament that are, by the nature of things, inevitable” (5). Embodied in the ironic structure of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift’s pessimistic vision communicates a tragic sense of life which is no longer supported by a strong belief in any universal and uncompromised values. “Any supposed alternative,” as Dyson puts it, is “palpably non-existent” (Dyson 7, 11).

This phenomenon of disappearing positives tends to be neglected in *Erewhon* because of the prevailing light-heartedness of the novel’s tone and its humour. But it also tends to be disregarded because Butler often takes the sting out of his own irony by

simply denying that change will produce any effect or by implying that any “supposed alternative” to the existing order and customs is undesirable, for it will make the existing conditions worse rather than better. In Butler’s *Erewhon*, the juxtaposition of the two worlds suggests, as it does in *Gulliver’s Travels*, the world’s essential unmendability, but it also suggests the undesirability of change.

Erewhon’s two chapters on “The Colleges of Unreason” illustrate the complexities of Butler’s position, the ambiguities in his thinking, and, above all, the inevitable dystopian implications of his attempts to ridicule beliefs, opinions, and institutions he ultimately wants to preserve. The first chapter begins with ridiculing the Erewhonian education system which teaches “the hypothetical language” to prepare young people “for all sorts of emergencies,” but does not teach them to earn a living (175-6). Yet towards the end of the first chapter, the narrator finds some redeeming features in the system, particularly in the system’s “arguments in favour of the deliberate development of the unreasoning faculties.” The narrator then synthesizes the thesis and the anti-thesis of his assessment of the Erewhonian system of education by stating, unexpectedly, that ultimately this system is but of little purport, for “in spite of the attempts almost deliberately made to warp and stunt” the students’ growth, “the young men and women grew up” being sensible and good (178).

Butler lures the reader into a trap by presenting first the views of Erewhonian professors that are blatantly counter to the conventional wisdom, thus encouraging the reader to believe that he satirizes the bizarre views of Erewhonian educators. But the writer then frustrates the reader’s expectations first by defending views that run contrary to conventional wisdom and then by undermining his own criticism by lending support to the satirized view on some respectful moral ground. Thus, Erewhonians do not believe in genius, stating that “A man’s business . . . is to think as his neighbours do.”

The word “idiot” for Erewhonians “only means a person who forms his opinions for himself.” They further maintain that students should not be helped “to think for themselves,” and their duty is to ensure that students “think as [they] do, or at any rate, as [they] hold it expedient to say [they] do” (248-9). Yet at the same time, Erewhonians encourage the practice of unreason as “the necessary consequence of human reason” (177), “object to progress,” because competition fosters self-seeking and unamiability, and maintain that “intellectual overindulgence is one of the most insidious and disgraceful forms that excess can take” (250).

Notably, despite the fact that Butler recognizes the absurdity of Erewhon’s educational system, the novel contains no valid suggestions concerning its improvement. The writer reconciles the opposing perspectives in the novel by suggesting that the system of education is of little relevance anyway: it cannot harm the poor, for their poverty prevents them from fostering intellectual aspirations, and it cannot harm the rich because their “natural instinct” rebels against this warping training. Butler does recognize in “the children of the sub-wealthy classes” the only victims of the system “which passes current among the Erewhonians as education” (178), but suggests, as he does earlier in the text, that “[p]eople find their level as a rule” (169). “Those who had any special tastes could not be restrained from developing them . . . while for those who had no special capacity, the loss of time was of comparatively little moment” (178). In other words, Butler denies education any role in developing one’s intellectual or moral capacities, coming close to Plato’s vision of a commonwealth consisting of three mutually impenetrable classes whose destiny in life is confined to doing well what they can do well.

This denial of the possibility of intellectual growth assisted by systematic education--a natural outgrowth of Butler’s theory of “natural instinct”--fosters a vision of

the world where individual actions are irrelevant in the face of biological and social factors contributing to one's intellectual and moral make up. Despite Butler's pronouncements aimed at defending him against accusations of pessimism or of "denying human beings the responsibility for their actions," his vision of human nature and identity betrays a truly dystopian outlook. *Erewhon* does not endorse any strong and enduring values to abide by: the opposition between Hellenic and Hebraic values that Sharma sees in *Erewhon* is deconstructed by the novel's ironic structure; whereas the ideal of the High Ydgrunites is compromised by the absurdity of Erewhonian customs and practices and cannot be taken as an authoritative statement of authorial beliefs. Moreover, Butler's ambiguity toward the ideal of a perfect English gentleman manifests itself in different ways in his different novels. In *Erewhon*, the narrator's admiration of High Ydgrunites is undermined by his own status as a *fallible* and unreliable narrator, that is, by the apparent inconsistencies in his logic and beliefs. Indeed one wonders--in view of the many similarities between *Erewhon* and *Gulliver's Travels*-- whether the narrator's admiration of High Ydgrunites is not painted with the same ironic brush with which Swift portrays Gulliver's admiration of the Houyhnhnm race. In *The Way of All Flesh*, Ernest's avoidance of Townley and the anxiety he experiences in his presence suggest the impossibility of a meaningful relationship between an "ordinary" and an unconsciously perfect human being. In *Erewhon Revisited*, the strong elements of a fairy tale genre that raise George--the embodiment of unconscious mastery--from the rank of the Head Ranger to that of the king's Prime Minister suggest the unattainability of the ideal; and finally, in *Life and Habit*, Butler himself deconstructs his ideal of unconscious mastery by suggesting that when all individuals, as well as their customs and laws, attain unconscious perfection, human society will turn into a community of ants and bees.

This attitude complicates Butler's irony, for although the rhetoric of the novel moves in the direction of exposing human customs as absurd and human opinions and beliefs as ungrounded and unsubstantiated, this rhetoric also moves in the direction of suggesting that the present status quo--absurd as it is--is better than any alternative. Part of my argument in support of classifying *Erewhon* as a dystopian novel relies on my position that it is impossible to maintain simultaneously that a custom or belief is absurd and that it is valuable and indispensable. If Butler, in *Erewhon*, successfully poses as a wit who is able to have his cake and eat it too, his ingenious arguing in favour of both incompatible propositions still devalues and undermines the positives the writer intends to defend, tainting ideals with a suspicion that destroys their appeal. Therefore, despite Swift's and Butler's different attitudes to what the former writer sees as human grossness and to what the latter sees as human frailty, both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* express an attitude to life which is no longer supported by strong and uncompromised values. The disappearance of positives in the novels prevents their narrators and protagonists from positioning themselves meaningfully with respect to the good. Swift's and Butler's refusal to envisage a space--geographical or psychological--where their narrators can shelter themselves from what both writers see as the inescapable human predicament generates structurally a vicious-circle in their novels: the narrators, wherever they go, remain the prisoners of their conditioning, trapped in a superficially different, yet essentially similar social and cultural environment.

The claustrophobic feeling "I can't get out," that Frye, quoting Sterne, detects in what he calls "anti-utopian" narratives, is not caused by the imprisonment of one's individual and sexual impulses by "the alien social consciousness"; rather, this claustrophobic feeling stems from the dystopian writer's tragic realization that "human

nature” does not exist outside one’s social and cultural frameworks. As Donaghue points out in his study of Swift’s *Gulliver*,

Man is a function of his environment, trapped in a structure that determines him so long as it holds him there. The only escape is into another structure, where the brainwashing begins all over again, but this time according to a different, though equally arbitrary, set of ideas and principles. (10)

Erewhon’s narrator’s entrapment in the social and cultural structure that determines him, as well as his inability to escape it, are suggested by his flight from Erewhon in a balloon in which he ironically flies towards the same system or structure he is flying from. His stubborn refusal to recognize the similarities between his “natural” and “estranged” worlds suggests that wherever he goes, he remains the prisoner of his conditioning. Furthermore, his inability to leave the estranged world suggests that the literary function of this world is defamiliarization, rather than a warning against the dehumanizing tendencies already present in Butler’s contemporary society.

At the same time, Swift’s and Butler’s presentation of their narrators as fallible and unreliable, as unable to transcend the limits of their social and cultural conditioning and to orient themselves meaningfully with respect to the good, indicates that the function of the estranged, fantasy world in their novels is ironic rather than satirical. The writers aim at emphasizing the similarities between the two worlds rather than their differences. This different function of the estranged worlds in *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Erewhon* also distinguishes these novels from utopian fiction. Unlike the blueprint or tractarian utopian narratives, which assume, explicitly or implicitly, that better social conditions foster better human beings, or unlike literary utopian narratives, which

maintain that essential and invariant faults in human nature will prevent the emergence of better social conditions, *Gulliver's Travels* and *Erewhon* communicate the impossibility of transcending one's social and cultural conditions. Moreover, in utopian and meta-utopian fiction, the estranged fictional worlds serve the purpose of comparing the writers' contemporary reality with the desired ideal (whether attainable or not), whereas in Swift's and Butler's novels, estranged societies serve the purpose of defamiliarization, being, at best, only superficially different from the target ones.

Ironic comparisons between two equally unsatisfying worlds, as well as the presentation of narrators and/or protagonists as fallible, unreliable, and unable to transcend their social and cultural conditioning, will form the structural basis for later dystopian masterpieces such as *Brave New World*, *1984*, and *A Clockwork Orange*. In all of these novels, the ironic comparisons between the estranged and the target worlds will suggest that both worlds are equally inadequate, bizarre, and inescapable. They will also suggest that the purpose of major masterpieces of British dystopian fiction is to unveil to their readers the target "world's essential unmendability," rather than to warn them against the danger of translating "utopian" schemes into real-life projects.

Erewhon and Robinson Crusoe

In the inverted world of his *Erewhon*, Butler gives the name of Robinson to the narrator's Erewhonian host, Mr. Nosnibor, who is known for "embezzling a large sum of money under singularly distressing circumstances" (E 98). Even though the character of Senoj Nosnibor, or Robinson Jones, in the novel does not serve as an inverted image of Defoe's famous protagonist, by giving the name of Defoe's "Robinson" to the character implicated in "unhandsome dealings in money matters" (E 98) and by stressing the wide

circulation of this moral defect in Erewhonian society by matching this name with the common surname “Jones,” Butler laid bare the vast chasm between the visions that shaped *Robinson Crusoe* and his own *Erewhon*. Butler’s novel satirizes and exposes the network of “utopian” assumptions that underlies *Robinson Crusoe*, of which the honesty in money matters of Crusoe’s accidentally met Captains and remotely residing partners and widows is only one, albeit suggestive, example. At the same time, this exposure highlights the “dystopian” undercurrents in *Erewhon* itself. In a paradoxical way, Defoe’s realistic narrative technique serves the purpose of advocating an unmistakably “utopian” ideology, whereas Butler’s appropriation of a utopian framework for his novel serves to defamiliarize and question the assumptions most commonly held about “reality.”

Clearly, *Robinson Crusoe* is not a literary or a socialist utopia in the sense in which Thomas More’s *Utopia* or William Morris’s *News From Nowhere* is a utopia. The novel does not follow utopian conventions or explore an alternative arrangement of human society. Defoe’s utopia is a dream of his protagonist’s complete autonomy and economic independence in a world strictly governed by unassailable contracts and obligations. The utopian aspect of the novel does not manifest itself solely in Crusoe’s single-handed ability to transform a secluded island into a well-run and orderly managed plantation; it also manifests itself in Defoe’s presentation of a world in which economic transactions are based on respect for the individual’s rights to own property; where property rights are obtained (in the Lockean sense) by appropriating the gifts of nature through investing one’s labour in them; where no external apparatus of endorsing these rights is needed; and where speechless slaves with no minds of their own can be found to serve the interests of these rights.

Butler's "dystopia," as compared to Defoe's "utopia," presents a world which has been already divided into well-managed plantations; where rights on property are inherited rather than earned; where suspicion and dishonesty reign in the business domain; and where natives refuse to be subordinated to serve colonial interests. Although I maintain in my thesis that the dystopian novel is not necessarily motivated by the desire to show the impracticality of utopian schemes or parody literary utopias, in this section of my study I argue that Butler's *Erewhon* stands in a classic parodic relationship with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and targets the "utopian" assumptions underlying this novel. It should be emphasized that *Erewhon* is not limited in its scope by the polemics it maintains with *Robinson Crusoe*, but that Butler's different treatment of a similar plot, similar themes, and similar characters reveals an understanding of and an attitude to life which are radically different from the optimistic and encouraging vision embodied in Defoe's novel.

Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* has inspired many writers to undertake the project of re-writing the story from their contemporary perspective; and these subsequent literary re-incarnations of the novel have elicited prominent critical attention: the nineteenth-century re-writing of the Robinson Crusoe myth by Jules Verne prompted an extensive analysis by Pierre Macherey; whereas the twentieth-century re-writing of the story by Michel Tournier captured the imagination of Gilles Deleuze. *Erewhon*'s engagement with Defoe's seminal work, however, has not received the critical attention it deserves, even though Butler's take on some significant aspects of Defoe's story is no less representative of a strong pessimistic undercurrent in the intellectual attitudes to the moral, social, and economic climate of late nineteenth-century England than Jules Verne's work is representative of the optimistic aspirations of late nineteenth-century France.

Admittedly, Defoe's name is frequently invoked in connection with *Erewhon*, and there is no lack of Butler scholars who comment on the debt *Erewhon* owes to Defoe's famous novel. Yet most of the commentary relating Butler and Defoe focuses on what Harris calls their "*vraisemblable* method," or the realistic technique of narrating in minute detail the circumstances of the two protagonists' adventures. Thus, Harris indicates that

There are points of contact . . . between Butler and Defoe, the greatest master of realism. On many occasions Butler's *vraisemblable* method reminds us of this eighteenth-century writer. The successful affectation of reality as opposed to fiction, which Butler practiced once at least with complete success, is in the best tradition of Defoe. (Harris 15)

The realism of *Erewhon*'s introductory chapters, however, does not exhaust all connections between the two novels. And significantly, as I intend to show below, in *Erewhon*, this realism serves a different purpose. When Harris states that Butler's story "is told with an unshakable gravity, the serious air of a Cervantes or a Defoe" (77), he unintentionally perhaps invites us to reflect on the question of whether, in view of some strong similarities between *Erewhon* and *Robinson Crusoe*, Butler's novel is, in some respects, a parody of Defoe's. Butler's penchant for parody is evident in his treatment in the Chapters on "Birth Formulae" and "The World of the Unborn" of the major myths and practices of his contemporary religious establishment. The writer also gives free reign to his love of parody in some of his evolutionary works which parody scientific discourse. Evidently, Butler's parodic strategies were not merely applied to philosophical, religious, or scientific doctrines. Adam Bisanz, for example, in his above-

mentioned study of “Swiftian Patterns of Narrative in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*,” points out that “the writing of *Erewhon* may have . . . been motivated by [Butler’s] oblique and strongly veiled disposition toward literary parody” (326). However, with respect to *Robinson Crusoe*, Butler’s “disposition toward literary parody,” as I intend to argue in this section of my thesis, goes beyond merely narrative or structural solutions, manifesting itself in a thinly veiled, if not an outright direct, manner.

There are many points of similarity between *Erewhon* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Both novels are first-person narratives set within the traditional literary framework of an imaginary voyage. Both narratives, undeniably fictional as they are, insist on the veracity of the events they narrate and spare no effort in recounting multiple details of their protagonists’ trials to impart verisimilitude to their fictional novels. Both novels feature protagonists who show interest in and respect for financial gain, undertake a dangerous journey, find themselves subjected to protracted periods of solitude, and befriend (or, in Butler’s case, attempt to befriend) a native. However, the significance of these similarities lies in highlighting the striking differences in the visions that shaped the two novels. If Defoe portrays an individual whose autonomy is strengthened by solitude, Butler’s ironic retelling of the Robinson Crusoe myth in *Erewhon* presents a sociable subject who finds solitude deeply disconcerting. If Crusoe achieves economic success despite the expectations of his socially conditioned subjectivity, *Erewhon*’s narrator fails, even though he acts and thinks in full complicity with his environment’s cultural values. His failure to serve both God and Mammon reveals that the Providence that guided Crusoe’s steps is no longer a factor in Butler’s worldview.

In the following three sub-sections of my study I look at three major areas in which Butler’s pessimistic or dystopian vision contrasts sharply with Defoe’s optimistic and, from Butler’s perspective, “utopian” vision of human individuals and their societies.

Each of my selected broad categories hosts a set of interrelated themes whose treatment in the novel reveals the chasm between the two writers' attitudes to life. Focusing on Butler's treatment of the themes of religion, solitude, and identity; on his take on the relationship between the novel's narrator and his "shifty and reluctant" (in Bizanz's phrase) "Friday"; and, last but not least, on his representation of work and professionalism in *Erewhon*, I intend to show that Butler's variations on Crusoe's prominent themes are composed in a distinctly dystopian key and betray the melancholy of a truly dystopian *weltanschauung*.

Faith, Providence, Solitude, and Identity

Highlighting the differences between Defoe's and Butler's visions of the individual, his agency, and his predicament, the topics of faith, providence, solitude, and identity are interrelated in both novels. A comparison between the two writers' treatment of these topics is important for several reasons: first, this comparison clarifies the role Crusoe's faith plays in Defoe's novel; second, this comparison allows us to clarify Butler's position on the issues of faith and to challenge--or, at least, to qualify--the critically predominant view that the writer, toward the end of his life, changed his outlook on religion. And finally, this comparison reveals Defoe's and Butler's radically different visions of human nature, human agency, and the human predicament, highlighting the corresponding "utopian" and "dystopian" dimensions of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Erewhon*.

While many *Robinson Crusoe* scholars and commentators have wondered about the irrelevance of Crusoe's intense prayers and frequent religious reflections to his economic success and prosperity, some Butler scholars maintain that *Erewhon*, and, in particular, its 1901 version, reflects the writer's growing realization of the importance of

religion. Quoting Marx, Ian Watt, for example, calls the reader's attention to the "somewhat gratuitous character of Crusoe's religious life": "Of his prayers we take no account, since they are a source of pleasure to him, and he looks on them as so much recreation" (Marx quoted in Watt 148). Commenting further on the apparent "discontinuity between the religious aspects of the book and its action," Watt observes that Crusoe's

spiritual intentions were probably quite sincere, but they have the weakness of all "Sunday religion" and manifest themselves in somewhat unconvincing periodical tributes to the transcendent at times when a respite from real action and practical intellectual effort is allowed or enforced. (148)

The scholar suggests that the insignificance of Crusoe's religious life is perhaps an indication of "an unresolved and probably unconscious conflict in Defoe himself" for whom "a lifetime of somewhat mechanical practice" turned beliefs into rituals rather than doubts (149).

The critical opinion on Butler's personal attitude to faith and religion, however, has been less prone to detecting the ambiguities and doubts reflected in *Erewhon* and in its sequel, *Erewhon Revisited*. In his study *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*, Knoepfelmacher, for example, counts Butler among Victorian writers who, like George Eliot and Walter Pater, started as critics of the old religion, but ended in "a conservative clinging to its remains" (7). This unequivocal assessment of the writer's position on matters of faith is also fully shared by Sharma, who asserts that Butler was "led by his conservative instincts to a renewed faith in the institutions of his country, a faith for which he [sought] justification in his own version of the theory of evolution"

("Conservatism" 14). As I argue above, it is the lack of appreciation of *Erewhon*'s roots in Menippean satire and of its ironic structure that seems to mislead many Butler scholars who pursue the humanist approach to his writings and disregard the ambiguity of his thought. *Erewhon*'s parodic stance with respect to *Robinson Crusoe*, its frequent and undeniable verbal and thematic allusions to Defoe's novel, along with Butler's markedly different treatment of Defoe's major themes, reveal this ambiguity, exposing the discrepancy between the Victorian writer's explicitly and publicly professed beliefs and his personal, yet hardly "unresolved" and "unconscious," doubts and concerns.

Naturally, we have to distinguish between the religious feelings and beliefs of Crusoe and *Erewhon*'s narrator and those of their creators. *Robinson Crusoe*, unlike *Erewhon*, does not allow us a clear insight into Defoe's personal engagement with issues of faith or religion since Defoe, unlike Butler, does not present Crusoe as a *fallible* narrator. Yet, structurally, *Robinson Crusoe* presents an account of its protagonist's spiritual progress in his understanding of the role that God and providence play in his moral universe. Therefore, our ability to reconstruct Defoe's personal position on faith and religion is complicated by the novel's numerous unresolved tensions, such as the striking inconsistency between Crusoe's haunting expectation of deserved punishment for his "wicked, cursed, abominable life" and filial disobedience, on the one hand, and his continuing economic success, on the other. Nevertheless, as I intend to show, a comparison between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Erewhon* reveals that Crusoe's growing faith and his reliance on providence not only provide a structural principle for the novel, but also ensure his emotional and psychological survival.

The ironic structure of *Erewhon*, on the other hand, allows the reader a better insight into Butler's attitude toward his narrator and toward his narrator's opinions and beliefs. *Erewhon*, unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, features a *fallible* narrator, the deficiencies

of whose attitudes and opinions invite the reader to reconstruct the authorial position. And, structurally, too, the lack of progress in the narrator's understanding of his experience or in his economic well-being suggests that Butler's attitude to his narrator, unlike Defoe's, is undeniably detached and ironic. Moreover, the fact that Butler did not introduce any major structural changes into the 1901 version of the novel (and the fact that he did not change the ending of his novel) suggests that the textual variations he introduced into the later edition did not cause any substantial change in the novel's meaning. Butler's public pronouncements may support the critical conclusion that the writer has changed his position on religion, but whether he truly overcame his longstanding doubts is arguable. The changes that the writer introduced into his 1901 edition of the novel have perhaps anaesthetized the sting of his irony, yet there is no reason to believe that these textual variations reflected a major change in the writer's attitude to religion, his thinking about it, or his vision of its significance in human life.

In both the 1872 and 1901 versions of *Erewhon* (and in *Erewhon Revisited*), God remains conspicuously absent from the narrator's experience of his universe. The narrator's adventures in a godless universe are reflected in Butler's radically different treatment of the themes of faith, providence, solitude, and identity that are prominent in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The dissolution in Butler's novel of the interpersonal bond between God and the novel's narrator--so prominent in Crusoe's experience of his adventures and in his emotional and psychological inner life--transforms Crusoe's experience of an ordered universe ruled by providence into the narrator's experience of an inhospitable world ruled by chance (or luck); it transforms Crusoe's solitude into the narrator's loneliness; and it transforms Crusoe's firm sense of his identity into the narrator's nameless conformity. It further transforms Crusoe's trust in and his reverence for his God into Erewhonians' trust in and reverence for Mrs. Grundy, a personified

public opinion. The loss of what David Bleich calls “the omnipotent parent to trust” (8) generates the sense of loneliness and insecurity that so markedly distinguishes *Erewhon*’s unsuccessful narrator from triumphant Crusoe. Ultimately, the absence of God in *Erewhon*’s narrator’s radically different universe also accounts for Defoe’s “utopian” and Butler’s “dystopian” visions of their protagonists’ experience.

Erewhon frequent and undeniable verbal allusions to *Robinson Crusoe* highlight Butler’s markedly different treatment of Defoe’s novel’s major themes. Clearly alluding to Crusoe’s initial neglect of prayers, Butler’s narrator dryly reports, in passing, that he “often neglected” the duty of saying his prayers (69), informing the reader, in the same unobtrusive fashion, of his ritualistic observance of Sundays. As Crusoe keeps his “Reckoning of Time” by cutting notches with his knife on a square pole, making “every seventh Notch” longer (48), so the narrator keeps count of Sundays in his pocket-book, refraining from singing on those days anything “except chants and hymn tunes,” of which he “regrets to say that [he] had forgotten the words” (95). The narrator’s last comment suggests that despite his pride in his spiritual lineage (as “the grandson of an archdeacon by [his] mother’s side” and as a son of “a clergyman of the English Church,” the narrator believes himself to be “sufficiently qualified” to instruct Chowbok in “the mysteries of the Trinity and of original sin” (73)), his bond with religion and faith shows the signs of beliefs turned into rituals through “a lifetime of somewhat mechanical practice.” Moreover, unlike Crusoe, Butler’s narrator does not appeal, in his distress, to God; in fact, like Erewhonians who, as the narrator informs us, “in times of general distress” “did not so much as even think of turning” to Musical Banks (135), the narrator shows no disposition for consulting either heavenly or earthly religious authorities.

While the unresolved tension between Crusoe’s expectation of punishment for filial disobedience and his growing prosperity may point to an unresolved conflict in

Defoe's intellectual engagement with the foundational dogmas of his faith, Butler's emphasis on the inconsistency between the narrator's and Erewhonians' ritualistic and mechanical practice of religion and its insignificance and irrelevance to their actual beliefs and their everyday practice is unmistakably deliberate. This inconsistency does not serve to indicate any conflict or doubt in the writer, but reflects, rather, his resolute and conscious intent to demonstrate the discontinuity between what his characters merely profess to believe in and what they actually believe in. The novel's narrator observes that Erewhonians "appeared to have little or no religious feeling" (95), that "they did not know themselves what they believed," and that they only knew that "it was a disease not to believe as they did" (155). However, he fails to recognize that his own professed beliefs are hardly based on a more solid ground. At the same time, Butler clearly shows that despite the lip service his narrator periodically pays to religion, faith does not offer him the comfort of guidance and support.

A comparison between *Erewhon*'s and *Crusoe*'s treatment of the theme of providence reveals that despite Butler's well-known preference for cunning over luck in his evolutionary theories, his concept of cunning is undermined by his novel's unchallenged respect for luck, which in the words of the novel's narrator, is "the only fit object of human veneration" (*E* 234).

Providence in *Robinson Crusoe* serves not only to guide Crusoe's steps, but also to account for the dynamics of the protagonist's moral development and for his final reconciliation with the vicissitudes of his prolonged stay on the uninhabited island. Crusoe's reliance on faith and providence grows, gradually replacing his earlier belief in chance. When he discovers next to his "fortress" some stalks of corn growing, as he believes, miraculously, he confesses that he "had hitherto acted upon no religious foundation at all," "had very few Notions of Religion in [his] Head, or . . . any Sense of

any Thing that had befallen” him. He used to look at the events of his life as arising from “a Chance, or, as we lightly say, what pleases God; without so much as inquiring into the End of Providence in these Things, or his Order governing Events in the World” (58). On this particular occasion, Crusoe’s “religious Thankfulness to God’s Providence” begins to abate after he realizes that there is nothing miraculous in his discovery of “green Barley of the same Kind as . . . our *English Barley*” (58), growing from corn seeds he has earlier thrown away, thinking they were nothing but “Husks and Dust” (57). But, nevertheless, in the course of the novel, Crusoe comes to rely on providence, regarding it as both “a series of specific interventions” and “the general order of things” (Damrosch, Jr. 376).

Erewhon’s narrator, on the other hand, does not count on the dispositions of providence. “Could I . . . imagine,” he wonders upon discovering a pass through the mountains, which will eventually lead him to Erewhon,

that *my luck* should have led me up a wrong river in search of a pass, and yet brought me to the spot where I could detect the one weak place in the fortifications of a more northern basin? (66; emphasis mine)

In fact, providence makes its first appearance in the novel when the narrator unwittingly confuses it with luck. When he nearly drowns on his way to Erewhon, he solemnly observes that “as luck would have it, Providence was on my side” (67). His failure to discriminate between “luck” and “Providence” reveals the same inconsistency of beliefs he so keenly notices in Erewhonians and disregards in himself. Yet Butler’s deliberate use of verbal irony in this sentence does not merely expose the narrator’s failure to differentiate between “luck” and “providence”; Butler’s irony also suggests that in his

worldview, “providence” is no longer a concept that can be relied upon to guide his protagonist’s steps. Consequently, the writer further uses “providence” in *Erewhon* for satirical purposes only. Providence re-emerges in the novel when the narrator, having discovered a prosperous and autonomous country, starts entertaining thoughts of converting Erewhonians to Christianity. Convincing himself that Erewhonians “might be the lost ten tribes of Israel, of whom [he] had heard both [his] grandfather and [his] father make mention as existing in an unknown country, and awaiting a final return to Palestine,” the narrator conveniently allows providence to enter his calculations merely to assist him in his fortune-bettering schemes: “Was it possible that I might have been designed by Providence as the instrument of their conversion? Oh, what a thought was this!” (83).

Butler also shows that this strategy of justifying by dispositions of “providence” one’s self-serving goals of imposing power on others and manipulating people is a widely spread practice with a universal appeal. At the end of the novel, the narrator promises his potential investors to “convert Erewhonians not only into good Christians but also into a source of considerable profit to the shareholders,” exposing thus the underside of his own unacknowledged motive for enslaving Erewhonians. (Butler, however, shows his narrator as a victim of unconscious hypocrisy that prevents him, and other people like him, from giving themselves a clear account of their own motives. At the same time, as I will show later, the writer embodies conscious hypocrisy in the character of Chowbok.)

The disappearance of providence from Butler’s fictional universe does not merely allow the writer to exercise his verbal irony or to highlight ironically the human tendency to justify one’s self-serving goals by divine intervention. Its disappearance leads inevitably to expressions in *Erewhon* of a sense of existential loneliness that Crusoe’s

faith in providence allows him to escape. Crusoe's faith and his trust in providence reconcile him eventually to his solitary plight on an uninhabited island. "I acquiesced," says Crusoe, "in the Dispositions of Providence, which I began now to own, and to believe order'd every Thing for the best" (79-80). Coming to the conclusion that "[a]ll Evils are to be considered with the Good that is in them, and with what worse attends them" (47), Crusoe, in his typical accounting-book fashion, maintains that

Upon the whole . . . there was scarce any Condition in the World so miserable, but there was something *Negative* or something *Positive* to be thankful for in it; and let this stand as a Direction from the Experience of the most miserable of all conditions in this World, that we may always find in it something to comfort our selves from, and to set in the description of Good and Evil, on the Credit Side of the Accompt. (50)

When a philosophizing Crusoe turns from contemplating "the Dispositions of Providence" to generalizing about human nature, he asserts that "we never see the true State of our Condition, till it is illustrated to us by its Contraries; nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it" (102).

Butler's narrator, however, does not come to the same realization concerning "the Dispositions of Providence," even though his own reflections on the vagaries of his life mirror, yet inevitably distort, both the purpose and meaning of Crusoe's exhortations. Thus, *Erewhon's* narrator's variations on Crusoe's themes of reconciling oneself to adversity and of appreciating the positive side of an adverse condition suggest the same human blindness to the real scope of one's misfortunes that a generalizing Crusoe notices in humanity as a whole. Yet, at the same time, Butler's generalizing narrator

communicates a radically different vision of the human predicament: “We next to never know when we are well off: but this cuts two ways,” says Butler through his narrator:

for if we did, we should perhaps know better when we are ill off also; and I have sometimes thought that there are as many ignorant of the one as of the other. He who wrote, *O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint agricolas*, might have written quite as truly, *O infortunatos nimium sua si mala norint*; and there are few of us who are not protected from the keenest pain by our inability to see what it is that we have done, what we are suffering, and what we truly are. Let us be grateful to the mirror for revealing to us our appearance only. (*E* 60)

Breuer’s and Howard’s Notes to 1872’s edition of *Erewhon* provide the English translation for the quotation Butler uses from Virgil’s *Georgics* 2.458: “How fortunate are you farmers in your perfect assurance of good” and Butler’s own rendition of this quotation as “How unfortunate are you in your perfect assurance of evil” (63).

Like Crusoe, Butler’s narrator uses the first person plural pronoun “we” to raise his reflections to the level of generalizations that express a fundamental truth about humanity and to impart to them the wisdom-book character of Crusoe’s exhortations; he also mimics the tone and the logic of account balancing that underlie Crusoe’s meditations. But significantly, unlike Crusoe, the narrator does not present the truth about the human condition as being easily remedied by a consciously-willed change in an erroneous mental attitude. In other words, paradoxically, Crusoe’s faith in providence’s disposition to order “every Thing for the best” allows him to recognize the possibility for human choice and freedom to make the most out of even desperate

circumstances, whereas Butler's narrator's ironic gratitude to "the mirror" for keeping humanity in ineluctable ignorance of its true condition underscores human helplessness in the face of inevitable doom. Probing the depths of an awareness that is not conducive to an optimistic vision of life, Butler's take on Defoe's "settlement" of life accounts reveals that the surface of his irony conceals the emotional pain that the writer's 1901 revisions to the original text of *Erewhon* did not attempt to heal.

The disappearance of providence and the erosion of the comfort granted by unshakable faith in Butler's *Erewhon*, and, consequently, the writer's different vision of human nature and the human predicament, all shape *Erewhon*'s narrator's different experience of solitude. If Defoe portrays a human subject whose autonomy is strengthened by solitude, Butler's ironic retelling of the Robinson Crusoe myth in *Erewhon* features a sociable narrator who finds solitude deeply disconcerting. Even though in its length, the period during which *Erewhon*'s narrator is subjected to what he calls "the horrors of solitude" is negligible compared to Crusoe's almost thirty years of confinement on his island, the number of references *Erewhon*'s narrator makes to his solitude's "oppressive burden" challenges what Deleuze calls "the very thesis of Robinson: the man without Others on his island" (*Logic* 304). The repeated references to "the horrors of solitude" also indicate that Butler approached one of Crusoe's major themes from a different perspective. *Erewhon*'s narrator's experience of his solitude, as we will see below, exposes both his sense of existential loneliness and his dependence on "Others" for a sense of clear identity and mental well-being.

"Nearly all of the essential issues" of *Robinson Crusoe*, as Damrosch points out, "cluster around the critical theme of solitude. Defoe clearly gives it a positive valuation and suggests more than once that Crusoe could have lived happily by himself forever if no other human beings had intruded" (Damrosch Jr. 377-8). Indeed, even though

Crusoe, secluded on his island, occasionally complains about the lack of companionship, he also repeatedly states at different points in the narrative that he “neither saw, or desir’d to see any People” (19); that he thought he “liv’d really very happily in all things, except that of Society” (105); and that he could not say that he wanted “anything but Society” (108). *Erewhon*’s narrator, on the other hand, refers repeatedly to “the horrors of solitude” (79), revealing that his solitude “was greater than [he] could bear” (74). Unlike Crusoe, whose choice of words indicates that what he missed in his isolation from other human beings was conversation and entertainment provided by human companionship--“Society,” *Erewhon*’s narrator complains that he was “feeling strange, not to say weak, from the burden of solitude” (74); that “[s]olitude had unmanned” him (76); and that he began to doubt his identity. Craving the warmth of human connection, the narrator derives comfort “from the sight of [his] blankets and the sound of [his] watch ticking,” because these things seem “to link [him] to other people” (68).

Crusoe’s and *Erewhon*’s narrator’s different experience of solitude also manifests itself in their different attitude to animals. Suffering from “a dreadful feeling” “of being cut off from all one’s kind,” Butler’s narrator confesses that he does not “believe that any man could long retain his reason in such solitude, unless he had the companionship of animals” (68), which is why during his second travel to Erewhon, described in *Erewhon Revisited*, Higgs will be accompanied by a dog. Crusoe, on the contrary, takes no comfort in the companionship of his dog, observing dryly that “I wanted nothing that he could fetch me, nor any Company that he could make up to me, I only wanted to have him talk to me, but that would not do” (48). These small points of coincidence between the two novels may at first glance appear insignificant; however, they add up to demonstrate Butler’s intimate engagement with Defoe’s *Crusoe*. This engagement goes

beyond what Harris calls “the successful affectation of reality,” or beyond the desire to imitate Defoe’s strategy of imparting verisimilitude to his novel.

The abundance of realistic details in both novels’ descriptions of their protagonists’ adventures reveals, in fact, the differences in the two writers’ visions of the human predicament and in their ideologies. Butler’s treatment of the theme of solitude in *Erewhon* exposes the improbability of Defoe’s “realistic” account of his protagonist’s adventures and the assumptions that underlie Defoe’s worldview. Indeed, Defoe has been criticized for failing to comply with his own standard of veracity by neglecting the inevitable psychological effects of Crusoe’s long solitary confinement on an unpopulated island. From this perspective, *Erewhon*’s narrator’s experience of “the horrors of solitude” may appear to be more realistic and psychologically credible. However, despite the realism of Defoe’s whole narrative and the realism of *Erewhon*’s introductory chapters, neither novel aims at offering a psychologically valid and true-to-life portrayal of the mental impact that extraordinary experiences could have produced in their respective protagonists. Nevertheless, within the fictional space of the two novels, Crusoe’s psychological survival and *Erewhon*’s narrator’s experience of mental isolation (and his later insanity) are remarkably consistent with the role both writers envisage for faith and religion in their novels, as well as with Defoe’s optimistic and Butler’s pessimistic vision of human life and the human predicament.

Thus, for both writers the idea of solitude reflects their vision of the human predicament. As Damrosch points out, in *Robinson Crusoe*

the idea of solitude [is] undergoing a drastic revaluation. Instead of representing a descent into self for the purpose of repentance, it becomes the normal condition

of all selves as they confront the world in which they have to survive.

(Damrosch Jr. 381)

Butler's treatment of the theme of solitude in *Erewhon* also elevates the significance of solitude beyond a mere temporary and occasional state of isolation required for introspection. However, solitude in the novel is presented as a deplorable and psychologically oppressive state rather than as the "**normal** condition of all selves as they confront the world in which they have to survive" (bold face--mine). The solitude of *Erewhon*'s protagonist conveys a sense of existential loneliness in a Godless universe. Moreover, the narrator's repeated complaints that in such solitude "[o]ne begins doubting one's own identity" (68) bring into focus another significant consequence of his failed engagement with a godless universe. As the following passage where the narrator returns to the theme of endangered identity suggests, Butler was moving in the direction of establishing a firm connection between one's sense of well-being and one's strong sense of identity. When the narrator wanders in search of a pass to Erewhon, he observes that

Each moment I felt increasing upon me that dreadful doubt as to my own identity--as to the continuity of my past and present existence--which is the first sign of that distraction which comes on those who have lost themselves in the bush. I had fought against this feeling hitherto, and had conquered it; but the intense silence and gloom of this rocky wilderness were too much for me, and I felt that my power of collecting myself was beginning to be impaired. (74)

Devoid of the Romantic appreciation of nature's beauty, the narrator's contemplation of nature stresses his existential loneliness, offering him no consolation in the form of communion with God. If Crusoe's fears are often linked to the perils endangering his physical survival, *Erewhon*'s narrator's fears are linked to the dangers of losing his mind. Butler, however, does not merely relate one's mental well-being to one's strong sense of identity; his narrator's experience of doubting or losing his identity accords with Deleuze's observations concerning the connection between one's faith and one's self. Pointing out that "the identity of the self always refers to the identity of something outside us," Deleuze stresses the impossibility of preserving "the self without also holding on to God." "The death of God," Deleuze writes, "essentially signifies and essentially entails, the dissolution of self: God's tomb is also the tomb of the self." This assertion that we can "maintain the formal identity of the self" only if the self remains "subject to a divine order, and to a unique God who is its foundation" (*Logic* 294), suggests the role that religion plays for *Robinson Crusoe*.

Crusoe's religious meditations may be irrelevant to his economic success, but his faith allows him to ground his identity in the larger identity of God. Crusoe's personal relationship with God allows him to submit to a higher authority and to inscribe himself and his actions into a larger order of things, accepting his personal life as part of a divine plan. And finally, apart from thus making his emotional and psychological survival credible, Crusoe's faith also allows Defoe to order the events of his protagonist's life into a coherent and meaningful narrative.

"[L]ost . . . in the bush," or in the absence of Mrs. Grundy, a surrogate for God in Butler's fictional universe, *Erewhon*'s nameless narrator, on the other hand, is denied a solid ground for his identity and psychological well-being. He shows no signs of understanding his experience or growing intellectually, psychologically, and

emotionally. Furthermore, Butler does not order the events of his narrator's adventures into a coherent whole: his narrator remains caught in a vicious circle, running from what he is running to. And, finally, the narrator's plan of enslaving the inhabitants of Erewhon is never brought to completion.

The narrator's experience of existential loneliness in a godless world is remarkably illustrated by Georg Lukács's reflections on the comforts and security offered by solid faith. Even though Lukács does not apply his reflections to interpreting either *Robinson Crusoe* or *Erewhon*, his insights into the significance of faith for human experience, in general, and for structuring literary works and shaping them into specific genres, in particular, clarifies the difference between the two writers' conceptions of their protagonists and their experiences. "The melancholy of the adult state," Lukács writes in his *The Theory of the Novel*,

arises from our dual, conflicting experience that, on the one hand, our absolute youthful confidence in an inner voice has diminished or died, and, on the other hand, that the outside world to which we now devote ourselves in our desire to learn its ways and dominate it will never speak to us in a voice that will clearly tell us our way and determine our goal. The heroes of youth are guided by the gods: whether what awaits them at the end of the road are the embers of annihilation or the joys of success, or both at once, they never walk alone, they are always led. Hence the deep certainty with which they proceed: they may weep and mourn, forsaken by everyone, on a desert island, they may stumble to the very gates of hell in desperate blindness, yet an atmosphere of security always surrounds them; a god always plots the hero's paths and always walks ahead of him. (86)

From this perspective, clearly, Crusoe's faith in God remains for him a source of spiritual support, justification for his actions, and the foundation of his identity.

Weeping and mourning, "forsaken by everyone, on a desert island," Crusoe re-discovers his God, places his trust in God's will, and inscribes his life into the plan of divine providence.

The strength of Crusoe's interpersonal connection to his God is also reflected in the language he uses to address him. The emotional intensity of his appeals to him contrasts markedly with the matter-of-fact style of his reporting the details of his life on the island or the fact of his subsequent marriage and the birth of his children. Uttering his first prayer in many years, Crusoe appeals to his God with the words "Lord be my help, for I am in great distress" (67) and receives what he asks for, being assured of never walking alone. Beginning to "exercise" himself "with new Thoughts" and "daily read the Word of God," applying "all the Comforts of it" to his state, Crusoe opens the Bible one day on the words "*I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee,*" and immediately realizes that these words were addressed to him. "Why else," argues Crusoe

should they be directed in such a Manner, just at the Moment when I was mourning over my Condition, as one forsaken of God and Man? Well then, said I, if God does not forsake me, of what ill Consequence can it be, or what matters it, though the World should all forsake me, seeing on the other Hand, if I had all the World, and should lose the Favour and Blessing of God, there wou'd be no Comparison in the Loss. (83)

Crusoe's reliance on God and providence also justifies, as I argued above, his positive perspective on his enforced solitude and provides him with a strong sense of identity.

Butler's narrator, on the other hand, despite his ritualistic and mechanical prayers, enters a godless world. Even though he believes himself to be a religious man, he does not address God in Crusoe's emotionally intense language; this language is reserved for his expressions of his loneliness. In fact, he does not appeal, in his distress, as Crusoe does, to God. Neither can he rely on "an inner voice" to tell him clearly his ways and determine his goals. These are conditioned by his "early training" in his social and cultural environment. If we ignore the rhetoric and logic of Butler's Menippean and ironic thought, we might conclude that in *Erewhon Revisited*, in *The Way of All Flesh* and in his later evolutionary writings, Butler makes an understandable attempt to avoid what Lukács calls "[t]he melancholy of the adult state." By providing a materialistic foundation for a restored confidence in one's "inner voice" through identifying it with "instinct," the writer creates the impression of filling the void caused by the death of God. Indeed, Butler's later novels will be based structurally on the binary opposition between his protagonists' "inner voice" identified with "instinct" and their culturally-conditioned reason. However, as I argue above, Butler's evolutionary writings are written as parodies of scientific discourse and cannot be regarded as unequivocal expressions of his genuine beliefs. Similarly, structured as a comedy-romance and a wish-fulfilling romance, respectively, *Erewhon Revisited* and *The Way of All Flesh* also provide a merely fictional illustration of Butler's fictional theories. In other words, in his later novels, Butler merely finds a suitable literary form to address his ideological concerns.

Nevertheless, even within the comedy-romance structure of *Erewhon* *Revisited*, Butler fails, perhaps deliberately, to resolve the opposition between “instinct” and “reason.” Neither Butler himself nor his narrator has completely avoided the anguish accompanying their unarticulated awareness of a godless universe. Transformed into Higgs, *Erewhon*’s narrator rediscovers the language of Crusoe’s emotionally charged appeals to his God in *Erewhon Revisited*. Reflecting on “where shall wisdom be found,” torn by the conflicting drives of reason and instinct, and tortured by “lawless and uncertain thoughts,” Higgs, in his “great distress,” will pray for guidance:

“Show me Thy will, O Lord,” I cried in great distress, and “strengthen me to do it when Thou has shown it me.” But there was no answer. Instinct tore me one way and reason another. Whereon I settled that I would obey the reason with which God has endowed me, unless the instinct He had also given me should thrash it out of me. I could get no further than this, that the Lord hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom he willeth He Hardeneth; and again I prayed that I might be among those on whom he would show his mercy.

This was the strongest internal conflict that I ever remember to have felt, and it was at the end of it that I perceived the first, but as yet very faint, symptoms of that sickness from which I shall not recover. Whether this be a token of Mercy or no, my Father which is in heaven knows, but I know not. (*ER* 66)

However, despite the emotional intensity of Higgs’s appeal to God, he, unlike Crusoe, fails to establish a personal connection with him or to receive his guidance. The anguish of Higgs’s prayer merely underscores its ultimate futility: “there was no answer.” Higgs

sadly comes to the conclusion that “the Lord hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom he willeth He Hardeneth,” or, in other words, he gets yet another proof that his life depends on the chance or luck of being among those to whom mercy might be shown. He also fails to resolve on a personal level the conflict between the dictates of “reason” and “instinct,” undermining the foundation of Butler’s theories of the superiority of “instinct” as a better guide than “reason.” Notably, Higgs, like Gulliver after his fourth travel, finds himself displaced and unbalanced by his strange experience of facing his own society in a reversing, yet, nevertheless, accurate mirror. Informing the reader of his father’s “highly-strung nervous state,” Higgs’s son John in *Erewhon Revisited* will call attention to Higgs’s “mind unhinged by the strangeness and peril” of his adventures (*ER* 2); and to his “occasional fits of ungovernable excitement” (*ER* 3). In the overall context of *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*, the last sentence of the above quoted passage cannot fail but strike the reader as heavily ironic. Higgs’s readiness to contemplate insanity as a token of divine mercy indicates that Butler’s vision of human life was far less humorous and optimistic than is generally believed.

The presence of such critically disregarded but heavily ironic and provocative passages in Butler’s *Erewhon* books also suggests that Butler’s personal vision of human nature and the human predicament does not support or at least puts into question his own painstakingly formulated concepts and ideas--the very concepts and ideas with which he became firmly associated. They also indicate that Butler often placed his most cherished or anguished thoughts in obscure passages--passages where he perhaps least expected them to be detected--or attributed these thoughts frequently to characters with whom he least expected to be associated.

Unlike his later re-incarnation in the character of Higgs, *Erewhon*’s narrator does not show the same clarity of vision and understanding of his religious dilemma.

Moreover, in *Erewhon*, even though the future direction of the writer's thought is already recognizable, Butler uses the word "instinct" rather indiscriminately to indicate either one's natural disposition for certain activities or the general human propensity for violence. The dichotomy between "instinct" and "reason" does not structure *Erewhon*, which depends for most of its tension on what Morson calls the "discovery of affectation" or "the divergence between professed and unacknowledged intentions" and on "the difference between belief and disconfirming evidence." The silence of the narrator's "inner voice" in *Erewhon* pushes him toward social convention as a ground for his identity and foundation for his values. Yet his failure to learn the ways of the outside world and to dominate it clearly suggests that his eagerly-embraced conformity is no guarantee of success.

At the same time, *Erewhon* also clearly demonstrates its author's intimate acquaintance with and personal knowledge of "[t]he melancholy of the adult state." However, obscured by the seeming light-heartedness of *Erewhon*'s irony and satire, the melancholic and pessimistic strain that runs through the novel remains largely undetected. Yet the note of melancholy and loneliness is struck very early in *Erewhon*; indeed the very first sentence of the novel sets its tone and reveals the pain behind the narrative which is famous for its humour: "If the reader will excuse me," starts the narrator,

I will say nothing of my antecedents, nor of the circumstances which led me to leave my native country; the narrative will be tedious to him and painful to myself. (49)

The melancholy of the first sentence is further reinforced when in describing “the vastness of mountain and plain, of river and sky,” compared to the smallness of “the little far-away homestead giving sign of human handiwork,” the narrator observes that “[n]ever shall I forget the utter loneliness of the prospect” (52). Butler gives further expression to his narrator’s feeling of universal and existential loneliness in the following passage that might—at least at first glance—be considered anomalous and unrelated to the overall context and purpose of the novel, were it not so revealing of a deeper melancholic side of Butler’s comic vision. “I am there now, as I write,” recollects the novel’s narrator:

I fancy that I can see the downs, the huts, the plain, and the river-bed—that **torrent pathway of desolation**, with distant roar of waters. Oh, wonderful! Wonderful! So **lonely** and so solemn, with the **sad grey clouds** above, and no sound save **a lost lamb** bleating upon the mountain side, as though its **little heart were breaking**. Then there comes some lean and **withered old ewe**, with deep gruff voice and **unlovely aspect**, trotting back from the seductive pasture; now she examines this gully, and now that, and now she stands listening with uplifted head, that she may **hear the distant wailing** and obey it. Aha! They see, and rush toward each other. Alas! **They are both mistaken**; the ewe is not the lamb’s ewe, **they are neither kin nor kind to one another**, and **part in coldness**. Each must **cry louder**, and **wander farther** yet; **may luck be with them both that they may find their own at nightfall**. (*E* 52; bold-face mine)

This strange and critically disregarded passage strongly communicates Butler’s sense of the human predicament in the world where chance acquaintances are “neither kin nor

kind to one another,” and becomes an expression of the writer’s vision of human existential loneliness rather than a description of the narrator’s fleeting and transitory melancholic mood. It is also significant that the narrator neither sees God in his contemplation of nature, nor attempts to alleviate his sense of loneliness through communion with him, relying instead on “luck” rather than “providence.”

Unlike Crusoe who treasures his close and emotional bond with his God, but places little value on his interpersonal relationships with others, *Erewhon*’s narrator craves the warmth of human connection in a world where meaningful human relationships are non-existent. Nor can the narrator rely on his interpersonal connection with a higher, transcendent authority to alleviate the burden of his solitude, the melancholy of his adult state, or the pain of his born condition. Butler’s emphasis on the existential loneliness of his nameless narrator suggests the dystopian worldview which, to my knowledge, has never been fully recognized in his writings.

Chowbok

In this section of my study I focus on the character of Chowbok in *Erewhon*, arguing that Butler’s portrayal of the native constitutes an early, and, perhaps, unprecedented and unparalleled attempt to re-write the character of *Crusoe*’s Friday by presenting the native as a cunning and self-serving rival and competitor in the narrator’s pursuit of fortune. While the narrator fails to see through Chowbok’s game and attributes his own failure to control him to the native’s “impenetrably stupid nature,” Chowbok proves himself to be the narrator’s superior in reading his character and intentions. Contrary to the narrator’s expectations, Chowbok shows no signs of “an intelligent tractable disposition,” displayed by other natives of the colony (2), and no desire to fit into the mold of an eager

selfless slave willing to exchange his labour for the narrator's spiritual instruction.

The narrator's complete failure to dominate the native, who successfully beats him at his own game, suggests that Butler portrays the relationship between *Erewhon*'s narrator and his "Friday" as an ironic re-writing of the supposedly conflict-free and "natural" hierarchy of the master-slave order that forms the foundation of the relationship between Robinson Crusoe and his Friday. At the same time, the functions of Chowbok in *Erewhon* are not exhausted by Butler's parodic intentions with respect to Defoe's novel. Like *Erewhon*'s narrator, Chowbok, too, serves as the target of and vehicle for Butler's irony, clarifying Butler's attitude to his narrator. And finally, the contrast between the narrator and Chowbok, effectively a contrast between an unconscious and a conscious deceiver, structures both *Erewhon* books, and confirms the dystopian status of the first novel.

Considering the centrality of Chowbok for *Erewhon*'s ironic and dystopian structure, it is amazing that the multiple functions of this character in the novel have not been sufficiently explored. Even though Chowbok's literary kinship with Crusoe's Friday has been previously noticed, critical studies of *Erewhon* routinely assign to him the status of a minor, dispensable, or "incongruous" character whose function is not vital to the novel's major interests. Thus, Sharma attributes the presence of Chowbok in Butler's novel to the conventional elements of a tale of adventure: "As Robinson Crusoe has his Friday, Higgs has his Chowbok" ("Artist" 87). Agreeing with Sharma that the character takes its origin "in a purely realistic travel account," Adam Bisanz looks at *Erewhon* from the perspective of the novel's compliance with the Utopian tradition and points out that the scheme "in which a guide--usually a native familiar with the environment adjoining Utopia--conducts the traveler to his preconceived destination does not derive from a Utopia." Finding the presence of this "un-utopian scheme" in a

utopian novel “incongruous,” Bisanz suggests that the presence of a guide in *Erewhon* is a “borrowed element, one that does not necessarily belong to the Utopian tradition” (“El Dorado” 53).

While I fully agree that it is hard to reconcile with the Utopian tradition the presence in *Erewhon* of a character who is aptly described by Bisanz as the narrator’s “shifty and unreliable conductor,” the function, or rather the multiple functions Chowbok plays in the novel are consistent with certain of the thematic and structural requirements of the dystopian novel. Therefore, these multiple functions that Chowbok plays in *Erewhon* indicate that his presence in the novel is not “incongruous”—as Bisanz suggests—but warranted by the dystopian structure of the novel. Exposing the difference between wishful fiction and disconfirming evidence, *Erewhon* is thematically “dystopian” as a parody aimed at exposing the “utopian” assumptions that underlie the success of Crusoe’s control of Friday and his spiritual and intellectual superiority over the native. At the same time, the novel is also structurally dystopian, because its plot, based on the Aristophanic contest between a “fool” and a “rogue,” features no positive character whose wisdom and virtue could counterbalance the stupidity and moral corruption of *Erewhon*’s protagonist and antagonist.

Making his first appearance in *Erewhon* at shearing-time, an old native “nicknamed Chowbok” is dismissively described by the novel’s narrator as “a sort of chief of the natives” and as an idle drunkard who pretends “to help at the yards,” but aims “to get the grog, which is always more freely circulated at shearing-time.” His ability to “speak a little English” makes him, as the narrator informs us, “a great favourite with the missionaries” (55). In search of either new land for pasture or “gold, or diamonds, or copper, or silver,” the narrator attempts to obtain from Chowbok the information about the resources available in the nearer and the main range surrounding

their colony and about the passes leading beyond the main range. While Chowbok easily provides information about the lack of sheep-country in the nearer ranges, he changes his tone and becomes uneasy when the narrator presses him for information about the main range.

When the information the narrator finally wrestles out of Chowbok by bribing him with grog and getting him drunk proves to be baffling and inconclusive, the narrator decides to start a prospecting expedition himself, hoping that “promises of nightly grog” (57) will convince Chowbok to exchange his “bodily help” for the narrator’s “spiritual assistance” (74). Clearly seeing through the narrator’s intentions and realizing that he can benefit—as he eventually does—from the narrator’s expedition, Chowbok pretends “to have become afraid” of the narrator, acting “as one who was in [his] power” (57). He follows the narrator in his journey, showing signs of pleasure at seeing the latter “wash well for gold” (62). But he makes up his mind in advance to desert him, once the narrator gets near the main range. Consequently, when the narrator discovers a pass through the saddle in the main range, he also discovers, “to his surprise and anger,” that the native “had turned back” and left him (72).

Thus, along with satisfying the conventional requirements of a traveler’s tale, Chowbok’s character in *Erewhon* serves to highlight the gap between Defoe’s and Butler’s visions of the supposedly “natural” and conflict-free hierarchy of the master-slave relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. From the early stages of their acquaintance, the narrator clearly aims at imposing the master-slave hierarchy on his relationship with the old native. Yet *Erewhon*’s narrator misjudges his “shifty and unreliable conductor.” He plans to trick the native by taking him along to explore the prospect of the nearer range and luring him eventually towards the main range which invokes genuine horror in the native. But Chowbok proves to be a better reader of the

narrator's character and intentions; instead of being tricked and misled by the narrator, he tricks and misleads him. Unlike Friday, who selflessly serves the interests of his master, Chowbok serves his own agenda.

At the same time, Chowbok's functions in *Erewhon* are not exhausted, as I mentioned above, by Butler's parody of Defoe's novel. This character also serves to reveal the inadequacies and limitations of the narrator's understanding and vision, to challenge his belief in both the supremacy and usefulness of his religious doctrine and spiritual instruction, and, most significantly, to expose the ironic, but nevertheless fundamental, contrast between the native and *Erewhon*'s narrator. In many respects, Chowbok represents a distorted and corrupted image of the narrator stripped of his good looks and rhetorical facility: their goals and the means they use to achieve them are identical. The important difference between the two characters, however, lies in the degree of their awareness of their own true motives. While the narrator is ironically portrayed as an unconscious deceiver, or a victim of his own confused beliefs, one suffering from an "honest" delusion, Chowbok is shown as a conscious and unprincipled deceiver who uses lies deliberately to achieve his ends.

For these reasons, Chowbok does not disappear completely from the novel after he leaves the narrator at the pass leading to Erewhon. At the end of *Erewhon*, he makes his appearance in London as "the native missionary, the Rev. William Habakkuk," an evangelistic preacher of Christianity who is presented to the public as a specimen of the lost ten tribes of Israel (220). He re-emerges again in the opening chapter of *Erewhon Revisited*, in which Higgs's son John informs the reader that while remaining "in England for some years," Chowbok--"[t]he cunning creature"--"had ingratiated himself with our leading religious societies, especially with the more evangelical" (*ER* 4). And

finally, Chowbok re-surfaces once again at the end of *Erewhon Revisited* as the “head of the Christian Mission to Erewhemos,” a country adjoining Erewhon.

Chowbok thus closely follows the narrator, mimicking the latter’s attempts to discover and exploit Erewhon’s valuable resources under the guise of converting Erewhonians to Christianity. Significantly, while the narrator fails to “win fame and perhaps fortune,” the old native succeeds on both counts: he is enthusiastically greeted and applauded in Exeter Hall by “a number of devout looking people crowding into the building with faces full of interest and complacent anticipation” (162); and he succeeds, as we learn from a letter of George, Higgs’s Erewhonian son, to his half-brother John, in penetrating into Erewhon and establishing “two or three mission stations in the western parts” of this country (*ER* 263). The establishment of mission stations in Erewhon allows successful missionaries--whose true motives are identified with those of Chowbok--to enrich themselves by buying up “all [Erewhonian] silver” (*ER* 265).

If Chowbok represents complete moral corruption symbolized in his physical ugliness, the narrator represents the gullible public who, like the narrator himself, severely misunderstand and underestimate the native. Far from being, as the narrator judges him to be, “a stony ground” and “hard to teach,” he proves to be a better student than the narrator gives him credit for. Chowbok clearly sees that the narrator is in search of treasures and closely follows in his footsteps to benefit from his potential discoveries. The native also sees the material benefits of dispensing spiritual instruction to “uncivilized” natives, as well as the benefits of pretending to be a devoted convert to Christianity.

The implications of the double corruption of the native’s name--Chowbok’s real name, as the narrator informs us, “was Kahabuka” (55)--may escape the narrator, but they work metaphorically for the reader as an indication of the character’s motives and

function. As Sharma observes, Chowbok, as a corruption of Kahabuka, is also a “travesty of the Hebrew name Habakkuk” (“Artist” 104). Belonging to one of the minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible, the name Habakkuk is supposed to be related to the Hebrew verb for “to embrace.” Butler plays ironically with the semantic features offered by the possible origin of the word. When the narrator describes his efforts to instruct Chowbok “in the mysteries of the Trinity and of original sin,” he admits that

I had set my heart upon making him a real convert to the Christian religion, which he had already **embraced outwardly**, though I cannot think that it had taken deep root in his impenetrably stupid nature. (73; bold face-mine)

Even though from the beginning of their acquaintance, the narrator is able to see the native as “a great liar” (62), correctly sensing that he embraces Christianity only “outwardly,” he still naively sets his heart “upon making [Chowbok] a real convert to the Christian religion” (73), disregarding both the native’s corrupt nature and his true motives. Similarly, as Butler implies, this nature and these motives are disregarded by those at Exeter Hall, when at the end of the novel Chowbok resurfaces in London as the Rev. William Hakkabuk. “Whatever doubt there might be about [Chowbok’s] sincerity,” writes Butler in *Erewhon Revisited*, referring to the events described in his previous novel, “there was none about his colour, and a coloured convert in those days was more than Exeter Hall could resist” (*ER* 4).

While Chowbok’s physical ugliness undeniably symbolizes his complete moral corruption, the narrator’s good looks do not present him as a positive hero by way of any simple and straightforward opposition. Unlike Chowbok, the narrator does not consciously attempt to serve Mammon under the guise of serving God. Still, Butler

clearly suggests that his narrator is deluded in thinking that his religious beliefs entitle him to the position of intellectual and moral superiority.

In this respect, the contrast between the narrator and Chowbok highlights the similarities between *Erewhon*'s protagonist and Robinson Crusoe. Both characters, from Butler's perspective, delude themselves into thinking that the "bodily profit" they derive from the exploitation of "uncivilized" natives is justified by the superiority of their religious doctrine. Crusoe does not hesitate to sell *Xury*, the boy who assisted him faithfully to escape from slavery, "for sixty Pieces of Eight" on the condition that *Xury* will be set "free in ten Years, if he turn'd Christian" (26). Even though Crusoe's circumstances force him eventually to admit that he "had done wrong in parting with [his] Boy Xury," he does not condemn his decision to sell Xury on moral or ethical grounds. Crusoe merely finds himself in dire need of "bodily help" when he realizes that without Xury, all his work on his new plantation had to be done "by the Labour of [his own] Hands" (27).

Defoe, however, does not challenge, as Butler apparently does, Crusoe's assumption concerning the superiority of his religion and his entitlement--in virtue of this superiority-- to a source of cheap labour. Neither does he contemplate the possibility, as Butler does, that "uncivilized" natives may not necessarily see the exchange of their "bodily help" for the missionaries' "spiritual assistance" as a sufficiently rewarding economic transaction. Unlike Defoe, Butler also suggests in both *Erewhon* books that natives may not be as confused, as his narrator is, about their true motives and their own agenda. I should emphasize here that Butler clearly does not aim--either in *Erewhon* or in *Erewhon Revisited*--to attribute the features of moral corruption to colonized people merely because, being "naturally" unaccommodating and deceiving, they dare to resist colonization. Both *Erewhon* books project a vision of the world in

which unconscious, yet generally decent, deceivers could easily fall victims to their own tactics used consciously and deliberately by unscrupulous scoundrels.

Thus the important difference between *Erewhon*'s protagonist and antagonist lies in the degree of their awareness of their own true motives. While the narrator is ironically portrayed as an unconscious deceiver, or a victim of his own confused beliefs resulting from "honest" delusion, Chowbok is shown as a conscious and unprincipled deceiver who uses lies deliberately to achieve his ends. In *Erewhon Revisited*, Butler radically redresses the balance between the two characters: while Chowbok even as Bishop Kahabuka remains a self-serving liar, the narrator, whom Butler gives the name of Higgs, achieves wisdom, dignity, and vision that make further comparison between the characters unprofitable. However, the writer preserves in his sequel to *Erewhon* the contrast between conscious and unconscious deception in the characters of two Erewhonian professors: Hanky, a "plausible, unscrupulous, [and] heartless scoundrel" (*ER* 227), and Panky, who "must persuade himself of his own lies, before he is quite comfortable about telling them to other people" (*ER* 228). In *Erewhon*, the narrator clearly inhabits the moral space Butler assigns to Panky in *Erewhon Revisited*. Chowbok, on the other hand, acquires another incarnation as professor Hanky. George, Higgs's Erewhonian son, confirms this connection in a letter to his half-brother in England, noting that Bishop Kahabuka "is just such another as St. Hanky" (*ER* 264). In *Erewhon Revisited*, Higgs's poised and superior wisdom is able to contain Panky's stupidity and Hanky's unscrupulousness. Moreover, the action of the naturalistic chapters of the sequel also moves in the same direction: George, who stands allegorically for the novel's ideal of unconscious perfection, appeals to his brother John for assistance in turning Erewhon into "a British Protectorate" (*ER* 265) to defend the country from the moral corruption and material plunder undertaken by the likes of Chowbok. Since the

action plot in both the naturalistic and the estranged chapters of *Erewhon Revisited* moves toward social harmony and unity achieved by driving out the *pharmakos* embodied in the character of Chowbok (and his various incarnations), Butler's choice of the structure of comedy-romance for his sequel is both logical and inevitable. At the same time, the fact that the field of action in *Erewhon* is divided between a "fool" and a "scoundrel" with no intervening positive character confirms its dystopian status.

As I point out above, the centrality of the Chowbok character in both *Erewhon* books is supported by its emerging and re-emerging in the introductory and concluding naturalistic chapters of both novels. Significantly, the character of Chowbok, who becomes Bishop Kahabuka in Butler's sequel, is not part of the estranged narrative of either novel. Butler further strengthens Chowbok's naturalistic status by placing him at the end of *Erewhon Revisited* in Erewhemos--the anagram of "Somewhere," as opposed to *Erewhon*'s "Nowhere." Instead of using the contrast between the estranged and naturalistic chapters to emphasize the fictionality of his novel--as Butler does in *Erewhon*--the writer makes the typically utopian move of blurring the boundary between fiction and reality in *Erewhon Revisited*. This move, along with the writer's choice of a different literary form for his sequel to *Erewhon*, indicates that Butler clearly aimed at providing at least a literary resolution for his non-literary concerns.

Nevertheless, the continuity in the writer's vision of the world as populated by unconscious and conscious deceivers indicates that the gap between *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*--despite their different literary forms--is less significant than is commonly thought. Butler's ideas and attitudes did not undergo any substantial evolution in kind. The obvious change in the motivation that shaped both novels and found manifestation in their different literary forms should be attributed to the writer's pressing ideological concerns rather than to his changed outlook on faith and religion.

Work and Professionalism

“Why does Crusoe not relax, take time off, get a tan?” asks Danapalan Kisten Pillay in his exploration of the idea of work in Defoe’s famous novel, observing that Crusoe’s constant activity, and “his endless refining of his comforts, make him a model of ceaseless self-improvement” (103). Suggesting that Crusoe’s relentless drive for constant betterment of his skills and transformation of his environment illustrates Defoe’s vision of an individual’s ability (and even his moral duty) to endlessly improve his present circumstances, Pillay refers to P. Earle who writes in *The World of Defoe* that

Being discontented with our present condition gets all our thoughts to work to mend it. This sets the wheels of industry and application a-going; all the springs of our faculties are wound up; the whole machine called man is put in motion, for the great end of transposing the situation of his affairs, and altering the circumstances. (225; quoted in Pillay 111)

Significantly, Pillay further relates Defoe’s emphasis on Crusoe’s “constant drive for improvement and expansion” to the writer’s vision of national progress, pointing out that for Defoe “the dynamism of desire for improvement provide[s] the very fuel of progress” (103), while “[i]dleness . . . appears to signify and to guarantee a stasis which is totally antithetical to his promotion of individual and national progress” (114).

The unflagging dynamism of Crusoe’s activities and the remarkable transformation of his previously inhospitable and uninhabited island into a smoothly-run and well-cultivated plantation contrasts sharply with the unprofitable idleness of *Erewhon*’s narrator and with the static and vegetative state of the country he discovers.

Unlike Crusoe, the narrator neither invests his labour in nor transforms the environment he finds himself in. Engaged in melancholic reflections and occupied in the business of tending sheep at the beginning of the novel, he spends his time looking wistfully over the range, dreaming of future “fame and perhaps fortune” (66). Nevertheless, despite his dreams, he gladly accepts the King’s pension and settles down comfortably to observe the Erewhonian customs, reflecting on the perversity of Erewhonians’ mental habits. Besides, he finds himself in a congenially static environment in Erewhon, where fame is not eagerly bestowed and innovation not encouraged: Erewhonian history does not cherish the memory of the country’s once famous or influential men or women. On the other hand, once the narrator escapes *Erewhon*, his efforts to better his circumstances--no matter how commendable or misplaced--are doomed to failure. Wherever the narrator finds himself and whatever he attempts to achieve, Butler does not allow him to succeed. Unable to transform his environment or alter his circumstances in either the naturalistic or the estranged world of Butler’s novel, the narrator invariably finds himself in the position of a “superfluous” man,¹¹ until a large fortune he inherits resolves his economic, psychological, and social “identity crisis.” Butler informs the reader about the narrator’s inheritance in the sequel to his novel; at the end of *Erewhon*, however, the narrator’s future still looks uncertain and unpromising.

Defoe’s and Butler’s radically different treatments of the theme of labour in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Erewhon* provide significant insights into the two writers’ visions of the value of work and the difference it can make in human life. Work, from Defoe’s perspective, provides a solid foundation for the individual’s prosperity by guaranteeing to him the rights of ownership over the gifts of nature into which he has invested his labour; it also accounts for this individual’s economic and social success; and, above all,

work shapes his personal and social identity. From Butler's perspective, on the other hand, work does not legitimize the individual's claims on ownership; it does not lay the foundation for his success; it does not bring fulfillment into his life; and it does not shape his identity. Consequently, this difference between the two writers' views on the value of work in individual life underlies their radically different visions of human agency, and thus of human life and the human predicament, underscoring Defoe's optimism and Butler's pessimism, or the utopian aspects of *Robinson Crusoe* and the dystopian aspects of *Erewhon*.

This difference manifests itself most prominently in the two writers' different outlooks on the legitimacy of the individual's property rights. Crusoe's right to own the island he has previously found "in the state of nature" is based, as Pillay points out, on Locke's concept that legitimizes an individual's possession of those gifts of nature into which he has invested his labour. According to Locke,

Whatever then [this individual] removes out of the state that Nature hath provided, and left in it, he has Mixed his *Labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men. (*The Second Treatise on Government*, 288; Quoted in Pillay 104)

Indeed, Crusoe's activities on his island follow a distinct and recognizable pattern: he discovers the gifts of nature, finds that these gifts cannot be used unreservedly or even directly, invests his labour into making them usable, and thus legitimizes his claim of ownership over them. Among numerous scriptural allusions Defoe leaves tacit for the

reader to detect and ponder, we find a clear reference to Numbers 13:23, a passage that describes the return from the Valley of Eshcol of “scouts sent out by Moses.” Laden “with huge clusters of grapes,” the scouts reported that “[e]xisting vineyards awaited the Israelites when they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land.” For generations of Bible readers, these “huge clusters of grapes” symbolized the fulfillment of God’s promise to his chosen people of a land of abundance and prosperity for which they did not have to toil. Crusoe’s tireless activities on his island, in contrast, suggest that his survival there requires constant cultivation efforts; in fact, Crusoe single-handedly turns an inhospitable island into his Promised Land. Even though, like the Israelites, Crusoe finds on his island “different Fruits,” such as “Mellons upon the ground in great Abundance” and “grapes upon the Trees,” that are at the time of his discovery “in their Prime, very ripe and rich,” his previous experience has taught him to treat the gifts of nature with suspicion and not to use them unreservedly. “[E]xceeding glad of” his discovery, Crusoe remembers “to eat sparingly” of the gifts he finds because “the eating of Grapes kill’d several . . . *English Men* . . . by throwing them into Fluxes and Fevers.” Crusoe also has to take “another Course” to transport his grapes safely to that part of the island where he established his “Castle,” since he finds “that there was no laying them up on Heaps, and no carrying them away in a Sack, but that one Way they would be destroy’d and the other Way they would be crush’d with their own Weight.” To preserve his grapes, Crusoe hangs bunches of them “upon the out branches of the Trees,” turning them into “perfectly dried, and indeed, . . . excellent good Raisins of the Sun.” He also finds that if he does not take prompt action, nature will destroy its own gifts: taking his grapes “down from the Trees” just in time to prevent the loss of “the best Part of [his] Winter Food,” Crusoe saves the raisins from “the rains which . . . would have spoiled

them” (73-5). Following the same pattern, Crusoe adds his labour into numerous other “gifts” he finds on his island.

Butler’s views on the legitimacy of property rights, however, challenge the foundation of Crusoe’s ownership of his property. Echoing Proudhon, Butler asserts through his narrator in *Erewhon* that “property is robbery” (*E* 119), thereby rejecting Locke’s foundation for legitimizing the ownership of property into which an individual has invested his labour. Butler re-iterates the same idea in his *Notebooks*, inscribing it into a larger philosophical context. “No title to property,” writes Butler, “no idea and no living form (which is the embodiment of idea) is indefeasible if search be made far enough” (*NB* 314). However, despite the radical character of his statements, Butler’s insight into what he calls the “rotten” or “baseless” origin or roots of titles to property or ideas does not translate itself into a call for abolishing property rights. Comparing the status of property, ideas, and living forms, the writer emphasizes their uncertain origin; yet, at the same time, he acknowledges the necessity of maintaining and respecting their ungrounded legitimacy for the sake of social order and convenience. The same logic is clearly recognizable in Butler’s engagements with the theme of “property is robbery” in *Erewhon*. As the novel’s narrator states the case,

property is robbery but then, we are all robbers or would be robbers together, and have found it essential to organize our thieving, as we have found it necessary to organize our lust and our revenge. Property, marriage, the law; as the bed to the river, so rule and convention to the instinct; and woe to him who tampers with the banks while the flood is flowing. (*E* 119)

While Butler insists that, strictly speaking, property rights are never legitimate, he still defends “robbery” on the basis of the necessity of placing rigid confines on human “instinct” to prevent human society from sliding into anarchy. “We cannot seriously detract from a man’s merit in having been the son of a rich father without imperiling our own tenure of things which we do not wish to jeopardize,” says Butler, through his narrator, concluding that “if this were otherwise we should not let him keep his money for a single hour; we would have it ourselves at once” (*E* 119). The writer’s use of the first-person plural pronoun “we” once again raises his narrator’s thoughts to the level of significant generalizations about human nature. And, remarkably, Butler’s use of the word “instinct” in this context differs from the meaning of this word the writer is most commonly associated with, revealing that Butler was undeniably and uncomfortably aware of the dimension in human nature he left unexplored in his literary work.

The above quoted passage from *Erewhon* calls attention to the difficulties the reader faces in distinguishing between the statements the narrator makes as a mouthpiece for Butler’s own ideas and those statements that are intended to reveal the narrowness of his opinions and the limitations of his perspective. The novel’s ironic structure places every statement in an ironic context, undermining its validity and relativizing its import. Also, Butler’s technique of distancing himself from the opinions expressed in *Erewhon* by ascribing them either to his narrator or to Erewhonians--whose views can be reported by the narrator incompletely or falsely--complicates the process of distinguishing the writer’s own views from those he satirizes in his novel. Moreover, we should never discount the possibility that Butler’s own statements (made in Prefaces to his literary or evolutionary works) are intended to be ironic, for the rhetoric and logic of his works, in general, do not support many of the writer’s well-known pronouncements. Consequently, opinions about the writer’s own beliefs should not be formed on the basis

of his own or his fictional characters' isolated statements, no matter how convincingly they may be expressed. How, then, can we be sure that our interpretation of Butler's intentions gives us a credible insight into his vision? First we should look carefully into these statements in which the writer re-iterates the statements made by his fictional characters; and second, we should evaluate the validity of any significant statement made by the writer against the rhetoric, logic, structure, and genre of his work. In this connection, we should clearly make a distinction between Butler-the-thinker and Butler-the-ideologue, concluding that ultimately the writer never claimed that absolute truth can be established either in philosophy or science, but that he did attempt, for ideological reasons, to impart to his tentative thought the semblance of truth.

Apart from legitimizing Crusoe's ownership over those possessions in which he has invested his labour, Defoe also rewards his prospering protagonist by allowing him to achieve his goals through dedication and perseverance. Butler, on the other hand, places *Erewhon*'s narrator in a hostile world in which he makes several failed attempts at gaining financial independence. Not only do the narrator's attempts at turning Erewhonians into a source of cheap labour fail, but Butler also does not allow him to succeed in any of his undertakings. As we learn from *Erewhon Revisited*, when Higgs's plan to raise money to convert Erewhonians to Christianity fails, he has to support his wife and child by writing "religious tracts" (*ER* 2) and "by drawing pictures with coloured chalks upon the pavement" (*ER* 5). Moreover, we will not generally find among Butler's fictional characters examples of successful self-made individuals, dynamism and energy being usually the qualities Butler assigns to morally deficient characters who are explicitly satirized in his novels. Admittedly, this observation may seem to be contradicted by *Erewhon*'s narrator's account of the Erewhonian commitment to "exempt from all taxation" any man who "has made a fortune of over £20,000 a year,"

“considering him as a work of art, and too precious to be meddled with” (169).

However, we should be wary, as I argue above, of Butler’s isolated statements which are not supported by the overall logic of his novels or by the overall direction of his thought.

Unlike Crusoe, whose ceaseless labour lays the foundation of his economic prosperity, Butler’s narrator (as well as Ernest Pontifex, the protagonist of Butler’s novel *The Way of All Flesh*) does not gain financial independence until he comes, unexpectedly, into a large inheritance. The significance of inheriting money in Butler’s fictional universe corresponds in the writer’s evolutionary theory to the significance of inheriting character traits, psychological predispositions, or even skills previously acquired by one’s ancestors. Butler slyly translates his desired vision of a static social order into the postulates of his biological theories. While Defoe emphasizes the fluidity of Crusoe’s social identity (suggested in, among other things, the transformation of Robinson’s last name),¹² Butler firmly fixes the social identities of his fictional characters: they can inherit their fortunes, but they cannot make them.

At the same time, the low significance Butler accords to work as a source of the individual’s prosperity also manifests itself in his treatment of professionalism and professionals. The writer’s presentation of professional occupations practised by Erewhon’s inhabitants hardly solicits respect for their skills or professionalism. Even though Butler preserves his idiosyncratic ambiguity in his portrayal of Erewhonian professionals by ridiculing not only their own displaced and ineffective attempts to practise their *métier*, but also the conditions in which they are forced to work and the social attitudes that underlie these conditions, *Erewhon* offers no example of an accomplished individual whose dedicated professionalism could position him as a role model or a positive character. As a rule, Butler would either counterbalance the absurdity of social attitudes to certain professions by stressing the moral corruption of its

practitioners or exploit this corruption to highlight the gullibility of the Erewhonian public. For example, Erewhonians' attitudes to disease force the underground class of physicians to practice their profession clandestinely, whereas the ban on technology prevents variously motivated would-be reformers from modernizing the country. On the other hand, the novel also features the class of Musical Bank cashiers whose occupation is neither labour-intense nor profitable for themselves or for the public; the class of professors of Inconsistency and Invasion whose labours are mostly appreciated because they fail to exert any influence on their students; the class of judges who in punishing the sick with prison terms dispense justice that hardly contributes to the welfare of society; and the class of straighteners engaged in the unprofitable business of making straight what is made by nature crooked. Significantly, Butler's focus on what Althusser calls "Ideological State Apparatuses," or on Law, School, and Religion, disregards the important function of ideological conditioning: the reproduction of labour relations. The writer's erasure of the class of labourers whose work accounts for Erewhon's prosperity (restricted as this prosperity is by the country's ban on technological innovation) appears to betray his uneasy realization of the connection between innovation and social mobility.

Indeed, Butler portrays Erewhon as a prosperous country which has reached the point in its transformation and development beyond which its inhabitants are unwilling to go. The country looks so bountiful that the narrator admits that his

hopes of making money . . . were almost annihilated by the fact that the country was full to overflowing, with a people who had probably developed its more available resources. (*E* 84)

The reference to the country's "more available resources" being "probably developed" by its people, however, indicates that Butler does not conceive Erewhon as a picture of the Golden Age or of the Land of Cokaigne where all wishes are satisfied by the bounty of the country's natural resources alone. "Full to overflowing," Erewhon is portrayed as a prosperous country, where "even the poorest (and none seemed rich) were well kempt and tidy" (87). Traveling through Erewhon on his way to the country's Metropolis, the narrator observes that

The country was highly cultivated, every ledge planted with chestnuts, walnuts, and appletrees from which the apples were now gathering. Goats were abundant; also a kind of small black cattle, in the marshes near the river, which was now fast widening, and running between larger flats from which the hills receded more and more. (87)

However, Butler does not discuss either the origin of the country's prosperity or the class whose labour is contributing to it. Abandoning the description of the economic prosperity of the country in favour of an admiring portrayal of the physical beauty of its inhabitants and landscapes, the writer avoids further description of the country by conveniently making his narrator "blindfolded during the greater part of the time" (100) as he travels to the Metropolis.

Butler also carefully preserves the ambiguous balance in his description of Erewhon's prosperity, its rustic charm, its independence of progress and innovation, and the inevitable stagnation caused by its stunted growth. The narrator's first impressions of the country suggest that he is not going to face "savages" there. Discerning a primitive bridge across numerous streams--"a few pine logs thrown over the water"--he

is comforted with the thought that “savages do not make bridges” (79). He also observes that the streets in Erewhon are “unpaved but very clean” (86). At the same time, the narrator does not excessively romanticize the primitive conveniences of Erewhonian life, pointing out that “Even on this ledge of human society there was a **stunted growth** of shoplets, which had taken root and **vegetated** somehow, though as in an air mercantile of **the bleakest**” (86-7-1; emphasis--mine). Butler’s choice of words in this passage, as in many others, introduces his characteristic note of discord into the narrator’s otherwise pleasant description of the country.

As Menippean satire, *Erewhon* gives ample expression to its writer’s paradoxical and contradictory drives: it reflects Butler’s desire to stop the inevitable processes of social development, on the one hand, and recognizes the inevitable corollary of such a social stasis--the futility of both private and collective efforts to alter the circumstances of individual and national existence, on the other. Thus, even though *Erewhon* communicates the existential anguish of a psychologically, economically, and socially displaced, “superfluous” human individual, it also denies this individual any opportunity of shaping his identity through his own will and efforts. At the same time, by erasing the social stratum of workers whose labour contributes to Erewhon’s prosperity and by openly undermining the authority of its intellectuals and professionals, Butler denies the connection between work and “the very fuel of progress.” In other words, he seems to sacrifice the individual’s hope for agency and a meaningful life to his ideologically motivated desire to prevent social change. In *Erewhon*, Butler dramatizes the conflict between his desire to stop the process of formation of new social identities by banning technological innovation, on the one hand, and his clear realization of the consequences of this ban for individuals and societies, on the other. Significantly, this dramatization of the conflict between the desired course of action--or inaction--and the unavoidable

negative consequences of it is an important aspect of dystopian literature which can find its best expression in the literary form of Menippean satire.

Butler's attitude to the role and function of work in human life, as it emerges from my study's comparison of his and Defoe's treatment of these themes in *Erewhon* and *Robinson Crusoe*, also exposes the clearly ideological character of his evolutionary works. Even though Butler's evolutionary works were written later than *Erewhon*, the ideas articulated in them do not constitute any decisive break with his earlier thought. In fact, the novel anticipates its direction. Butler's evolutionary works will attempt to work out a theoretical basis for the writer's dislike of energetic action. Moreover, the radical difference between Butler's and Defoe's attitudes to work, as these attitudes manifest themselves in *Erewhon* and *Robinson Crusoe*, supports the validity of accusations made against the former by some of his contemporary critics, who correctly sensed the pessimism underlying his work, pointing out that Butler denies human beings responsibility for their actions. Butler's treatment of work and professionalism in *Erewhon* (and in his other works) exposes the gap or inconsistency between his later claims of re-introducing teleology into human life and the logic and rhetoric of his writings.

A brief review of Butler's openly articulated views on the perfectibility of biological species (including the human species) provides significant insights into the core contradictions inherent in his allegedly positive and optimistic position. Defending himself against accusations of pessimism and of denying human beings responsibility for their actions, Butler resolutely asserts that the theory of instinct as memory he advances in *Life and Habit* provides a positive *telos* for humanity, demoralized and disoriented by the implications of Darwin's evolutionary theory. Insisting that evolution takes place via the Lamarckian mechanism, Butler maintains that his take on evolution as a process in

which an individual can inherit the skills accumulated by previous generations of his/her ancestors adds a positive, meaningful dimension to the individual's efforts to better him/herself. "We are, in fact, no longer without a helm," writes Butler, "but can steer each creature that is so discontented with its condition, as to make a serious effort to better itself, into *some*--and into a very distant--harbor" (*LH* 230; emphasis--author's). Interestingly, Butler's choice of words in this passage recalls the earlier quoted passage from Earle's *World of Defoe*, which describes the state "of being discontented with our present condition" as a prerequisite for "setting the wheels of industry a-going." However, Butler's emphasis on the words "*some*" and "a very distant" in his description of the "harbor" qualifies his "positive" vision of human purpose to the extent that it makes human efforts unrewarded and irrelevant within the space of an individual human life.

Thus, on the one hand, Butler asserts that the evolutionary theory he has developed re-introduces the "love of beauty, design, steadfastness of purpose, courage, and every quality to which success has assigned the name of 'worth'" into the world of nature that the implications of Darwin's theory reveal merely as "a chapter of accidents and forces interacting blindly" (*EON* 52). Yet, on the other hand, Butler's "re-introduction of teleology into organic life," in Streatfield's terms (Introduction to *LH*, xiv), does not translate itself into support or admiration for tireless human activities aimed at perfecting one's professional skills, circumstances, or society. Butler, who makes no distinction between human beings and animals in terms of their evolutionary development, maintains in *Evolution, Old and New* that

No plant or animal . . . would be able to conceive more than a very slight improvement on its organization at a given time, so clearly as to make the efforts

toward it that would result in growth of the required modification; nor would these efforts be made with any far-sighted perception of what next and next and after, but only of what nextSome of these modifications would be noticeable, but the majority would involve no more noticeable difference than can be detected between the length of the shortest day, and that of the shortest but one. (*EON* 42)

Although in the above quoted passage Butler designs to project an image of himself as an advocate of the human drive for perfection--and actually succeeds in projecting this image for many of his scholars--his insistence on the slowness of the improvement process and the impossibility of knowing its end results allows him to effectively take away with one hand what he so “generously” offers with the other. Nor is Butler blind to the obvious contradiction that his theory harbours:

It may appear as though this were blowing hot and cold with the same breath, inasmuch as I am insisting that important modifications of structure have been always purposive; and at the same time am denying that the creature modified has had any purpose in the greater part of all those actions which have at length modified both structure and instinct. (*EON* 45)

To resolve the contradictions in the theory on which, by his own admission, he painstakingly worked for more than twenty years, Butler reconciles the incompatibility of his two mutually exclusive propositions by asserting that even though

[t]here is a very little perception of, and prescience concerning, the means whereby the next desired end may be attained, it matters not how little in advance that end may be of present desires or faculties, it is still reached through purpose, and must be called purposive. . . . If each of the small steps is purposive the result is purposive, though there was never purpose extended over more than one, two, or perhaps three steps at a time. (*EON* 46)

Significantly, to impart greater authority for his claims, Butler shifts “the point-of-view” in this passage, by switching from the discussion of his personal reflections in the previously quoted passage (“I am insisting”; “[I] am denying”) to the language of stating universal phenomena (“the next desired end . . . is still reached through purpose, and must be called purposive”). Butler’s strained logic allows him to blow “hot and cold with the same breath,” insisting simultaneously that evolution is guided by purpose rather than chance and fluctuation and that its direction is unfathomable.

This glaring contradiction in Butler’s theory and its social implications appears to escape numerous Butler scholars who either accept the writer’s statements at their face value, asserting that his humanist concerns turned him into “the student of human nature . . . anxious to secure for the individual the fullest degree of freedom to develop in accordance with the laws of his inner being” (Sharma “Conservatism” 6), or disregard the purport of Butler’s evolutionary works by stating that the writer’s commitment to the obsolete “paradigm of the gentleman as amateur scholar” stranded him “in the 1890s . . . in a no-man’s land,” turning him into “a living anachronism” (Whitmarsh 80). However, Butler’s thought does not qualify him for membership in either the humanist tradition or the tradition of the aristocratic amateur scholar. As Richard Lewontin points out,

The notion of the inheritance of human behavior and therefore of social position which so permeated the literature of the nineteenth century can . . . be understood not as an intellectual atavism, a throwback to aristocratic ideas in a bourgeois world, but, on the contrary, as a consistently worked out position to explain the facts of bourgeois society. (*Genes* 72)

The fact that Butler spent more than twenty years refining or consistently working out his position on evolutionary theory suggests that his anxiety was not generated by his humanist concerns; rather it was generated by the social, the political, and the inevitably democratic implications of the Darwinian take on evolution. Butler's insistence on the living species' ability to inherit acquired skills or characteristics betrays his desire to stall the irreversible process of social and political changes brought about by the growing pace of technological innovation and its concomitant democratization of his contemporary society. Even though Butler recognized the inevitability of change, his emphasis on the slow and uncontrollable character of its process made conscious human efforts at accelerating progress useless and unprofitable. Butler's insistence that "[t]he history of man prior to his birth is more important as far as his success or failure goes than his surroundings after birth" (*LH* 203) betrays his affinity with the concepts that in our contemporary context are given the name of biological determinism. However, as Lewontin insightfully writes, biological determinism is

more than mere explanation: it is politics. For if human social organization, including the inequalities of status, wealth, and power, are a direct consequence of our biologies, then, except for some gigantic program of genetic engineering, no practice can make a significant alteration of social structure or of the position

of individuals or groups within it. What we are is natural and therefore fixed.

We may struggle, pass laws, even make revolutions, but we do so in vain. (*Genes* 18-19)

If we now look at Butler's evolutionary theories and *Erewhon*'s concerns from this perspective, we would immediately recognize the seeds of Butler's later evolutionary thought in his attempts, as I argue in the previous section, to reconcile his description of the obvious absurdity of the Erewhonian educational system with his rhetoric aimed at proving its ultimate insignificance. By the same token, the writer's erasure of the class of labourers whose work contributes to Erewhon's prosperity and his emphasis on the static, vegetative state of the country reflect his concern and desire to stop both the process of social change and the upward social mobility of its active agents. Butler's *Erewhon* and his evolutionary work attempt to prevent this change, at least in fiction and in theory, by communicating the writer's vision of an unalterable human identity--or the individual's non-negotiable status in human society--firmly fixed by the circumstances of his/her birth or heredity, both biological and financial.

That Butler never articulated clearly the social and political implications of his biological theories does not automatically imply that he was unaware of them. One of his inconspicuous-looking notes, placed at the end of a chapter in his *Evolution, Old and New*, aims at providing support to his theory of instinct as memory by appealing to the insight made by the French writer Balzac in his novel *Les Paysans*:

Historiquement, les paysants sont encore au lendemain de la Jacquerie, leur défaite est restée inscrite dans leur cervelle. *Ils ne se souviennent plus du fait, il est passé à l'état d'idée instinctive.* (EON 59; n 2; emphasis--Butler's)

[On the historical plane, the peasants did not progress beyond the time of Jacquerie [Peasant Revolt in 1358]; their defeat remains inscribed in their brain. They no longer remember this event; the memory about it has reached the state of an instinctive idea.] (paraphrase--mine)

Noting merely that this extract from Balzac was sent to him “kindly” by “a friend,” Butler does not spell out the connection between the French novelist’s observation or insight and his own evolutionary theories, relying on his readers’ ability to fill the inferential gaps in his printed text.

Understanding the inconsistency between the true import of Butler’s evolutionary theories and his own explicit assertions about them allows us to recognize those aspects of *Erewhon* which anticipate Butler’s later thought and which become prominent in any comparison between his and Defoe’s treatment of the theme of work in their novels. Unlike Defoe, for whom, as Pillay suggests, idleness signifies and guarantees “a stasis which is totally antithetical to his promotion of individual and national progress” (114), Butler appears to suggest that idleness, or at least a lack of industry, guarantees a desirable stasis in both individual and national development. The literary embodiment of his nascent ideology in *Erewhon* presents a static and a vegetative society where creativity or innovation is not encouraged. Not only the narrator, but Erewhonians also, do not display the dynamic desire for improvement which provided for Defoe (or for Crusoe) “the very fuel of progress.” For this reason, *Erewhon* provides no positive examples of purposive activities or energetic and dynamic doers driven by even an unconscious sense of purpose. In Butler’s fictional universe, no character serves a worthy goal, guided by a clear or intuitive sense of purpose. The writer’s ideological

investment in making the world and human society as static and vegetative as possible generates inactive, purposeless characters who do not succeed in improving either their own lot or contributing to the progress of society. Their ignorance of purpose translates itself quite understandably into paralysis of action and avoidance of any active involvement in the affairs of the world. The writer shields some of his protagonists from the necessity of bettering their fortunes or acquiring salable skills by bestowing on them unexpected but generous inheritances, strongly suggesting that the only acceptable way of getting rich and upwardly mobile lies through inheritance.

Unlike Defoe, who constantly rewards his protagonist for rejecting the status quo, Butler seems to penalize his narrator for no better reason than his failure to remain inactive while patiently waiting for an inheritance which, if luck would have it, might come from some unexpected quarters. From this perspective, Crusoe's rejection of the social and financial status to which he is entitled by virtue of his birth and his father's fortune represents an attempt to interfere with the long and supposedly "positive" evolutionary progress which assigns to every human being a fixed place in society in accordance with the circumstances of his/her birth. Apparently, Butler's preoccupation with evolutionary theory reveals his deeply buried anxiety generated by the unavoidable experience of living in a world where rapid technological and social changes constantly provided opportunities for newly emerging social identities. Therefore, his attempt to create a fictional universe that suppresses technological innovation does not seem to be motivated by his humanitarian concerns about the dehumanizing potential of modern technology. Rather, this attempt reflects the writer's desire to stall in its tracks the inevitable process of social change in which dynamic and energetic individuals strive to rise to positions of authority, prominence, and wealth. Moreover, Butler's insistence on the slow and unfathomable progress of evolution in human beings or human societies

and the disappearance in his fictional universe of the Protestant work ethic that constantly prods Crusoe to improve his environment and his welfare contribute to his vision of the individual as the “subject” or “the object of determinant forces.”

While Butler’s thought, as I argue above, cannot be classified as humanist or obsolete, it cannot be classified as conservative either. It is undeniably dystopian. The difference between the dystopian and the conservative world outlook manifests itself in the dystopian writer’s inability to oppose what he sees as undesirable modern or future social phenomena by means of support for values of the disappearing social formation that the conservative cherishes. The dystopian writer sees human life as absurd and the human predicament as deplorable, irrespective of the particular social formation he happens to live in. When the dystopian writer focuses on the unmendable absurdity of the human condition, Menippean satire proves the best medium for articulating his concerns. When, on the other hand, his focus reflects his ideological concerns, he has to insist on a version of “truth” which he has to present as preferable to its undesirable alternatives. In Butler’s case, however, the theory he has developed to support his ideological concerns backfired: by insisting that human identities are shaped solely by biological and hereditary factors, he destroyed the rationale for a meaningful human life.

Having reviewed Butler’s radically different treatment of the themes of faith, work, and human relationships so prominent in *Robinson Crusoe*, we can now examine a larger, generic relationship between the two novels. Butler, as I point out at the beginning of this chapter, wrote *Erewhon* as a first-person narrative of an imaginary voyage, employing the same literary form or narrative framework that Defoe used in *Robinson Crusoe*.

Moreover, like Defoe, Butler, in the introductory chapters of *Erewhon*, imparted verisimilitude to his fiction by relating his protagonist's trials in a realistic and detailed manner. This verisimilitude and *Erewhon*'s narrator's insistence on the veracity of his account of his travels tempted some scholars, as I mentioned above, to conclude that Butler was merely imitating successfully Defoe's technique of "affectation of reality." However, the realism of *Erewhon*'s introductory chapters highlights the contrast between the novel's naturalistic and estranged parts to draw the reader's attention to the novel's fictionality. In view of the strong similarities between *Robinson Crusoe*'s and *Erewhon*'s "outer" forms, narrative techniques, and thematic interests, Butler's emphasis on his novel's fictionality--as compared to Defoe's emphasis on the veracity of related events--betrays his novel's parodic intentions with respect to Defoe's novel.

Erewhon's parodic stance with respect to *Robinson Crusoe* can be successfully described within the framework of two theoretical models, one developed by Rudolph to examine the Lucianic parody of early Hellenic travel novels, and the other developed by Morson to describe the relationship between utopian novels and their anti-utopian parodies. Focusing on different aspects of parodic relationships between literary works, Rudolph's and Morson's theoretical models provide equally significant insights into the nature of *Erewhon*'s engagement with Defoe's masterpiece. Significantly, both models stress what Rudolph calls the "dystopian" and what Morson calls the "anti-utopian" nature of their texts' parodic engagement with their targets.

Rudolph's explication of the parodic relationship between Lucian's *True Story* and early Hellenic imaginary travel novels highlights, by analogy, *Erewhon*'s rhetorical position with respect to *Crusoe*'s text. According to Rudolph, Lucian's "dystopian cognizance"

produces a text that is a rhetorical Trojan horse. In its irreverence, it enters an original text by parodying the original's investment in truth, and, once inside it, by divulging its fallen status ("I am a liar"). As a result of its imposture, the bad text destabilizes the original, and asserts that the host rhetoric (the original) is a liar too ("We are all liars"). (Rudolph 22)

Butler's derivative text, too, inscribes itself "within the flawed original, as all parody does, so as to divulge the anomaly parading as an original." Even though the narrator of Lucian's *True Story* openly declares himself to be a liar while *Erewhon*'s narrator insists on the truthfulness of his account, the latter's claims to veracity are undermined by his openly fictional portrayal of the country he discovers. Moreover, this deliberate fictionality of *Erewhon*'s estranged chapters highlights its status as an anti-utopian parody of *Crusoe*'s "utopian" aspirations. Morson points out that, unlike utopias, which tend to blur the boundary between fiction and reality, anti-utopias deliberately stress their fictionality. Butler's move from minute realism in his description of the narrator's travel to Erewhon to the subsequent flamboyant fantasy in his description of Erewhonian practices and beliefs is undeniably aimed at calling the reader's attention to the fictionality of his novel.

As Lucian's *True Story* parodies earlier Hellenic novels based on supposedly true accounts of travelers' adventures in order to reveal their fictional character, so Butler's *Erewhon* parodies Defoe's *Crusoe* with the view of questioning the "truth" of the assumptions that the latter novel seeks to legitimize and naturalize. Defoe's insistence on the veracity of the narrated events has often been ascribed to the fact that he was writing at a time when fiction had a dubious status and when "genuine" and "true" accounts of actual travels were preferred over literary works produced by mere

imagination. Yet significantly, this tendency of blurring the boundary between the real and the imaginary is typical, as Morson indicates, of utopian literature which tends to present “the imagined world” as “the higher reality” (86). Even though Defoe’s *Crusoe* is not a utopian novel in the sense of advocating an alternative and better society, it holds out—among its other hopeful assumptions—a utopian promise of human victory and control over the threatening and alien forces of one’s physical, economic, and social environment. This utopian promise, however, conceals the utopian underpinnings of the novel which aspires to legitimize and naturalize concepts and relationships that are unmistakably ideological.

While Butler’s parody of *Robinson Crusoe* targets the ideological assumptions underlying Defoe’s novel, his attempts to undermine them reveal his own ideological bias and his dystopian vision of human life, the human predicament, and human agency. The dystopian impulse of *Erewhon* does not manifest itself solely through exposing the generic “fraud” perpetrated by *Robinson Crusoe*. In fact, generically, both novels commit this fraud by adopting the external conventions of an imaginary travel account, yet infusing this external genre with the internal generic trappings of a wish-fulfilling romance and its dystopian parody, respectively. Moreover, while the consistency of the realistic narrative or *vraisemblance* of Defoe’s whole novel aligns it with the utopian mode in fiction, the discord between the realism of *Erewhon*’s introductory and concluding chapters and the fantasy of the middle and major part of the novel aligns it with the dystopian mode.

While Rudolph’s theoretical framework explains well Butler’s narrative strategies or the function and purpose of his “affectation of reality” in the introductory, naturalistic chapters of *Erewhon*, Morson’s theoretical model highlights the difference between the worldviews of Defoe and Butler. Indicating that the relationship between

utopian and anti-utopian novels represents a specific case of a larger category of parodic relationships between all literary texts, Morson focuses on this category's characteristic aspects. He points out that "parody aims to discredit an act of speech by redirecting attention from its text to a compromising context" (113) and that "parody historicizes" (118). According to Morson, "the parodist accomplishes what Fielding calls 'the discovery of affectation'" by highlighting "the unexamined propositions and unstated interests that conditioned the original exchange," exposing thus "the divergence between professed and unacknowledged intentions," or discovering "naiveté, the difference between belief and disconfirming evidence" (113).

Butler's exposure of "unexamined propositions and unstated interests" and of "the difference between belief and disconfirming evidence" starts with the presentation of his narrator. Indeed, the mischief of *Erewhon*, like the mischief of Swift's *Gulliver*, starts with it. In this respect, as in many others, the similarities between *Robinson Crusoe* and *Erewhon* highlight the differences in the two writer's attitudes to their narrators, their social and political outlook, and their ideology. As first-person narratives, both novels allow the reader to share their protagonists' thoughts and feelings. However, despite the undeniable yet indulgent irony with which Defoe occasionally treats his famous protagonist, Crusoe does not perform, as *Erewhon*'s narrator does, the function of a *fallible* narrator.

Moreover, even though both novels present their protagonists as credible models of human subjectivity, they expose their authors' radically different understandings of its nature and limits. Seeing in Crusoe "the universal representative, the person for whom every reader can substitute himself," Coleridge remarked that "nothing is done, thought, suffered, or desired" by him "but what every man can imagine himself doing, thinking, feeling, or wishing for" (Coleridge quoted in Watt "Crusoe" 146). Significantly,

identification with Crusoe is richly rewarding for readers. A wish-fulfilling fantasy that masquerades as a naturalistic narrative, Defoe's novel presents a likeable, self-centered narrator who is allowed to succeed despite his own expectations of the "deserved" punishment for his filial disobedience.

Erewhon's nameless narrator is no less than Crusoe "the universal representative" of humanity; however, the major quality that links him to humanity and makes him its universal representative lies in his inability to see clearly the gap between his professed and unacknowledged intentions, as well as the gap between his socially and culturally conditioned beliefs and the disconfirming evidence of his actual experience. Butler's attitude to his narrator is more complex; a blend of compassion, understanding, and vicious irony, this attitude frustrates the reader's desire to see a likeable and positive image of humanity in *Erewhon*'s psychologically insightful account of human fallibilities that masquerades as an estranged fantasy. And, since *Erewhon*'s narrator is not allowed to succeed (socially or financially), the reader, understandably, feels much less inclined to identify with him.

Butler's re-contextualization or historicization of Defoe's plot does not merely target his protagonist's inability to understand his experience and control his social environment. It also re-contextualizes or historicizes the physical environment his narrator finds himself in. The fantasy of turning an uninhabited island into a flourishing, profitable plantation through individual will and effort finds no credible support in Butler's contemporary geographical reality.¹³ The sense of abundance of space communicated by Defoe's novel and the vision of the world as an uninhabited island waiting for an adventurous explorer to turn it into a flowering garden through relentless cultivating effort disappear in *Erewhon*. In the novel's naturalistic, introductory chapters, Butler's narrator describes the new colony where he intends to "better [his]

fortunes” as “admirably suited for agriculture,” containing “millions on millions of acres of the most beautifully grassed country in the world, and of the best suited for all manner of sheep and cattle,” but admits that

once Europeans set foot upon this territory they were not slow to take advantage of its capabilities till in a few years there was not an acre between the sea and the front ranges which was not taken up. (50)

In search of either new pasture land or gold, the narrator travels over the range to the estranged fantasy world of *Erewhon*, yet finds that there too the land is populated so densely that it is “full to overflowing” filled “with the people who had probably already developed its more available resources” (84).

Neither does Butler portray a world where the narrator can feel physically, psychologically, financially, and socially secure. While Crusoe battles for survival against the elements, *Erewhon*’s narrator’s life and well-being often depend on social prejudice; and while Crusoe relies on providence, the narrator hopes for luck. Moreover, while Defoe’s fictional universe is governed by an unflagging respect for contractual obligations, both the naturalistic and estranged worlds of *Erewhon* are plagued by dishonesty. Returning after long absences, or claiming his money from the persons he entrusted it to during his absence, Crusoe invariably finds his money intact and his riches multiplied by trusted solicitors who look after his possessions and his interests as if these were their own. Conversely, not only the inhabitants of the fictional *Erewhon* find themselves swindled of their possessions and prosecuted in the Misplaced Confidence Court, but the narrator himself is haunted to the point of obsession by his fear of being taken advantage of through betraying in his account the exact location of *Erewhon*. And

finally, while Crusoe is able to enjoy the devoted subordination of his “inferiors,” the narrator discovers that natives do not always exhibit the “intelligent tractable disposition” expected of them.

Butler’s re-contextualization of *Crusoe*’s plot, his re-writing of some of its major elements, and, above all, his re-thinking of the novel’s major thematic concerns--all are subordinated to his dystopian vision. He places a Crusoesque character in circumstances recalling Crusoe’s adventures and cultivates in *Erewhon* textual similarities to Defoe’s novel to communicate his radically different vision and understanding of human experience in the real world. Unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, *Erewhon* conveys a sense of existential loneliness, of the futility of human efforts, and of humanity’s ultimate helplessness in the face of impersonal forces that control human life. Unlike Crusoe, who overcomes his social and cultural conditioning and re-integrates successfully into the society he initially rejects, *Erewhon*’s narrator does not overcome his conditioning and does not integrate into either the naturalistic or the estranged world of Butler’s novel. His superfluous status and his lack of agency qualify him for membership in the class of prominent dystopian heroes such as John the Savage and Winston Smith.

Chapter 4

A Choice Between Two Nothings: Huxley and *Brave New World*

Il faut cultiver notre jardin. Yes, but suppose one begins to wonder why?

Aldous Huxley "On Re-reading *Candide*"

When his irony is given full play, are we not reminded of a surgeon with outstanding gift of diagnosis, whose patients nonetheless always die? The knife cuts sharp and true, but there is no property of healing in it; or possibly the malignancy goes too deep. I shall argue that Huxley specializes in ironic traps from which there seems to be no way out; that he has a genius for locking us in Doubting Castle and demonstrating that all the keys have been lost. At times, one even feels that his offer to the reader is a simple choice between two Nothings . . .

A. E. Dyson *The Crazy Fabric*

There is no lack of passionate, perceptive, and profound criticism of Huxley's *Brave New World*. The novel has solicited prominent critical attention, and one can easily understand why an attempt to write yet another piece of criticism on the novel might be met with suspicion. Everything that could be said about the novel seems to have been said. However, from my perspective, Huxley's vision of human life and the human

predicament, so powerfully embodied in his most well-known novel, has never been straightforwardly spelled out. Since major critical approaches to *Brave New World* have been largely directed towards saving the novel from itself, numerous scholars have either ignored the dark pessimism of the novel, interpreted it narrowly as Huxley's criticism of the undesirable social and cultural tendencies in his contemporary world, or attributed the writer's pessimism to his ideological position. While most critical approaches to the novel generate a wealth of relevant insights, they are not, as a rule, predominantly concerned with the novel's literary form or with the significance of this form for the novel's interpretation. Unanimously recognized as a classic of dystopian or anti-utopian fiction, *Brave New World* has been almost invariably attributed to the dystopian genre on the basis of a set of humanist assumptions that were, in the opinion of the novels' critics and commentators, shared by Huxley himself.

Moreover, the focus of numerous studies of *Brave New World* on its methods of social conditioning, its description of reproduction techniques, and its description of sexual practices--in other words, on a more or less extensive paraphrase of the novel--has obscured the significance of the novel's ironic structure and of the literary tradition Huxley was following. Apparently, Huxley's much quoted admission that he wrote the fable as an "amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete" has never been given by critics its full weight or purport. However, our awareness of the literary form and tradition of Menippean satire that, in my opinion, shaped and structured *Brave New World* is of paramount importance for a valid interpretation of the novel. Huxley's provocative engagement with his French literary sources--Voltaire and Diderot, in particular--provides a key to our understanding of his design, strongly suggesting that his novel cannot be interpreted on the basis of a simplistic binary opposition often assumed between the oppressed majority of the World State's duped population and the oppressing minority of its

devious Controllers. At the same time, even though Huxley wrote *Brave New World* in the same literary tradition of Menippean satire in which Voltaire wrote *Candide* and Diderot wrote *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage,"* his treatment of some major common themes prominent in his novel and in his literary sources reveals the undeniably dystopian character of his thinking. Huxley rejects the reconciliatory gesture that marks both *Candide* and *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage."* The suicide of John the Savage, who in accordance with Voltaire's injunction attempts "to cultivate his garden" at the end of the novel, suggests the impossibility of choosing between life in the backward world of the Indian Reservation and life in the World State. Equally sinister is the meaning of Huxley's re-thinking of Diderot's *Supplement*. While Diderot advocates adaptation to and acceptance of different cultural traditions, rituals, and values, Huxley clearly refuses to reconcile his protagonist with either of his estranged worlds.

Nevertheless, there appears to be no critical study that has explored the generic and thematic connections between *Brave New World*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage."* While Huxley's engagement with *Candide* is of great thematic significance for clarifying by analogy and contrast the British ironist's negative vision of human nature and the human predicament, his engagement with Diderot's *Supplement* reveals his significant thematic, structural, and generic debt to the Menippean tradition that shaped both works, being thus of definitive importance for *Brave New World's* valid interpretation. The unmistakable and strong affinity between the two works suggests that Huxley, like Diderot, structured his novel as a meta-utopia, the genre closely related to the tradition of Menippean satire. According to Morson, meta-utopia allows its practitioners to maintain their arguments and counterarguments in their ultimately inconclusive dialectic.

The purpose of this section of my thesis is to repair this omission, focusing precisely on *Brave New World's* indebtedness to Diderot's *Supplement*, in particular, and on the implications of Huxley's choice of the literary genre of Menippean satire for the interpretation of his novel. In what follows I present first a brief overview of major critical approaches to *Brave New World*. I look next at the influence that Diderot's *Supplement* exerted on Huxley's novel and at the consequences of recognizing the novel's roots in Menippean satire for its interpretation. Finally, I outline my arguments for classifying *Brave New World* as a dystopia. Regarding a literary dystopia as a work that communicates its writer's sense of the ultimate futility and meaninglessness of human life, I argue that Huxley's pessimism should be ascribed to the failure and dissolution of those values which had traditionally sustained the spiritual and emotional life of the intellectual before the discoveries of modern science. The framework for my discussion is provided by Charles Taylor's seminal work on modern identity. Taylor argues that the category of human identity cannot be divorced from our most cherished beliefs and values and should recognize where we as humans stand with respect to the good. This inability to find a firm ground to base one's values on, and its accompanying identity crisis, is characteristic not only of dystopian protagonists but of dystopian writers themselves.

4.1 Major critical approaches to *Brave New World*

Major critical explorations of *Brave New World* can be broadly divided into two categories of socially- and literary-oriented studies. Essays by Kumar, Booker, and Adorno illustrate critical approaches to *Brave New World* that focus on the novel as a satiric response to undesirable historical, social, and cultural changes in Huxley's

contemporary England. Faithfully and meticulously reproducing the intellectual, scientific, and political climate of early twentieth-century England, Kumar's historical study places the novel in its contemporary context. Focusing on the scientific discoveries and innovative ideas of the era, Kumar relates them to the major themes and preoccupations of the novel. Booker's approach to *Brave New World* emphasizes the novel's significance as a social and political criticism of the negative trends in Huxley's contemporary society. Adorno's philosophico-ideological approach to the novel provides a rare, and perhaps the only, example of a resolutely negative critique of the novel. Since there appears to be no extensive discussion of Adorno's engagement with *Brave New World* in Huxley criticism, I devote considerable space and attention to his essay "Aldous Huxley and Utopia."

Literary-oriented critical approaches to *Brave New World* include a study of the novel's major thematic and structural elements as a dystopia (Gottlieb), of its narrative structure (Ferns), and of its underlying structural irony (Dyson). Needless to say, the insights generated in both socially- and literary-oriented critical studies often go beyond the narrow confines of the adopted critical method; nevertheless, surprisingly, the variety of critical approaches to *Brave New World* is not matched by a variety of diverging or conflicting interpretations. Nearly all critical approaches to the novel concur in acknowledging in it, first and foremost, the elements of severe social and cultural critique of Huxley's contemporary society.

If most critical approaches to *Brave New World* display an uninspiring lack of conflicting opinions about the novel's interpretation, the critical attempts to deal with (or to neutralize) the novel's pessimistic and devastating message--often recognized as such by the novel's commentators--do manifest some interesting variety. In this respect, critical studies of *Brave New World* can be divided into three categories. One group of

critics chooses to disregard flatly the pessimism of Huxley's message. Critics in this group generally see the dystopian novel, or anti-utopian novel, as severe criticism of the dehumanizing trends in the writer's contemporary society and as a warning against these trends. Consequently, these critics tend to identify the fictional protagonists' critique of fictional dystopian societies with their authors' criticism. Since *Brave New World* is universally accepted to be a classic and a masterpiece of the dystopian genre, interpretations of the novel--despite the glaring evidence to the contrary--treat it as a manifestation of the principles thought to be common to the genre as a whole. Identifying Huxley's attitude to his fictional *Brave New World* with the criticism waged against it by his fictional character John the Savage, the critics in this group assert that the Savage represents an uncorrupted image of humanity, embodying those traits in human nature that are beyond the reach of culture.

Quinonez, for example, sees *Brave New World*, along with other masterpieces of dystopian fiction, as an expression of Huxley's "vital humanism." Claiming that "many of the assumptions on which the dystopian vision rests are markedly positive," she argues that when the dystopian novelist "indicts certain contemporary ideologies and structures," he also voices "a passionate faith in what man can become, an eloquent vision of what it is to be human." "Behind the [dystopian novelist's] severe judgment," Quinonez sees his "affirmative predications about man and the conditions of his existence" (263).

Ferns, like Quinonez, also sees *Brave New World* as embracing the values and pursuing the strategies common to all dystopian novels. Approaching dystopia as parodic inversion of the utopian ideal, Ferns suggests that "[a]s a counter to the threat of utopian future, the dystopian writer ends up merely reasserting the values of the past" (128). Huxley, according to Ferns, "does not avoid the trap of merely reversing the

utopian equation, and judging the alternative society by the standards of today's rather than vice versa." Among the standards by which *Brave New World* is judged as "specious and inauthentic" Ferns cites "Art" and "Religion" as non-transient absolute values that are "lost sight of in *Brave New World*'s pursuit of subjective happiness" (124-5).

Although Ferns concedes that *Brave New World*, like dystopian fiction in general, communicates the fear "that we are simply creatures of our society--that what we take to be our essential identity is in fact socially constructed, and hence susceptible to radical change under different social circumstances," he still maintains that

[n]ot the least of the reasons for the continuing appeal of dystopian fiction is that it addresses this fear, but at the same time mobilizes against it the reassuring notion that there is, after all, some essential invariant "human nature" that in the last analysis is immune to such conditioning influences. (107)

Thus, even though Ferns recognizes that Huxley portrays the Savage's aspirations to embody "the old fashioned male ideal of chivalric love" as "quite as ridiculous" and "as clearly socially constructed" (124-125), he still maintains that the writer, as a dystopian, is "merely reasserting the values of the past":

Paradoxically, while the concept of some kind of essential invariant human nature lies at the root of dystopia's critique of the traditional utopia, what dystopia dramatizes is the possibility of that nature being altered--a horrifying possibility which can only be avoided by a return to the past. (128-9)

Ferns's position clearly illustrates what I have called above the critical tendency to save the novel from itself. Despite his insights into *Brave New World's* engagement with the central issue of the *always already* socially constructed character of human identity, Ferns still bases his interpretation of the novel on the assumption that Huxley favours one member in the binary opposition he imposes on the contrasting values of the past and future. Schmerl, another critic who maintains that Huxley favours the values of the past over their distortion in the future, even suggests that Huxley's juxtaposition of past and future values in *Brave New World* weakens his critique, for whatever the writer

gains by contrasting Shakespeare with the "feelies," genuine sexual passion with random promiscuity, a sense of guilt and honor with a sense of discomfort, he also loses by forcing the reader to look back three hundred years for values to set against the esthetic and ethical vacuum of six hundred years in the future. (329)

Both Schmerl's and Ferns's perspectives on *Brave New World* highlight two important assumptions that prevail in the novel's criticism: the belief that the novel advocates the desirability of a return to the past and the belief that it asserts "some kind of essential invariant human nature."

While the first of these two wishful assumptions about the novel's message is challenged by other critical studies, the second one remains the almost unshakable cornerstone of major humanist interpretations of the novel. Gottlieb and Kumar exemplify the group of critics who detect the troublesome elements in the novel, yet seek to neutralize the novel's message by appealing to Huxley's more positive statements in the prefaces to the novel or in his other writings. While these scholars, unlike Ferns and Schmerl, question Huxley's alleged unqualified support for the past, they still appeal to

some positive fundamentals of human nature to justify their hopeful readings of the novel. To support her position, Gottlieb cites more positive statements made by Huxley elsewhere as evidence of his humanism; and Kumar attempts to undermine the pessimistic message of Huxley's *Brave New World* by finding some "cracks" in the novel itself.

Gottlieb correctly questions those critical approaches to the novel that maintain that "by rejecting the potential of a technological future, Huxley urges us to a nostalgic, pastoral return to utopia in the Reservation" (65) and the approaches that tend to see in the Savage "the mouthpiece of Huxley's norm of sanity and good reason in the satire" (64). Recognizing that John is "a flawed human being who suffers from many of our typical psychopathologies that Huxley cannot--and does not want to--present as exemplary" (70), she rightly discerns that at the end of the novel "the Savage is left in a limbo"; that "in fact he has no choices"; and that "[e]nacting his unresolvable philosophical dilemma, the Savage goes insane and finally commits suicide" (70). Nevertheless, despite her full awareness of the tragic ending of the novel and of its implications, Gottlieb still maintains that Huxley's "standard of sanity is that of humanism, based on the assumption that there could be consensus on what the human being's Final End is." Although she recognizes that many a postmodern critic "would have difficulty recognizing, let alone endorsing," the concept of a "universal agreement on what makes one human," Gottlieb still insists that "the foundation of Huxley's dystopian satire" is "such a humanistic norm," which also implies "the norm for sanity" (74). Gottlieb supports her perspective on Huxley's dystopian satire by a quotation from the preface to the 1946 edition of *Brave New World* in which Huxley states that even though he is "no less sadly convinced than in the past that sanity is a rather rare phenomenon," he is still "convinced that it can be achieved and would like to see more

of it" (74). Significantly, even though she recognizes that in *Brave New World*, Huxley sets the debate between two opposing principles, demonstrating that there can be no winners, Gottlieb, nevertheless, asserts that the writer leaves the reader "with a desire to search for a third alternative." She further maintains that this "urgent invitation that *we search for the third alternative* is typical of the strategies of great satire in general, and of dystopian satire in particular" (72; italics-author's).

If Gottlieb attempts to "save" the novel by separating the Savage's "flawed" humanity from the writer's implied standard of sanity, Kumar, as I mentioned above, attempts to find hope in the novel itself. Like Gottlieb, Kumar fully recognizes the "fundamental pessimism" (251) of *Brave New World*. Commenting on the novel's "ironic mode," he observes that

Irony has always been the natural stance of those who dislike the present, distrust attempts to resurrect the past and have no hope for the future. This had been the mood of [Huxley's] essays and the novels of the 1920s, and it remained the mocking, skeptical mood of the 'amused, Pyrrhonic aesthete' who was the author of the fable of 1932. (277)

Kumar, however, does not attribute the "crack" he finds in the novel to Huxley's conscious design. Rather, he argues, the writer might have unwittingly indicated the way out of *Brave New World* through his suggestion "of a development in Lenina." In other words, if Ferns cites "Art and Religion" as the implicit values against which the World State is judged and found wanting, Kumar appeals to the promise of romantic love. Lenina's "impulse to pursue her happiness," says Kumar, "is an indication that the stuff of a very different sort of happiness--and the possibility of tragedy--is a potentiality of

even so debased a culture as *Brave New World*.” “There is a sort of poetic justice in this,” concludes the scholar, “that the way both into and out of *Brave New World* might lie through Lenina’s arms” (287).

Even though Kumar focuses on irony rather than satire in his commentary on *Brave New World*, he underestimates, in my opinion, the ironic structure of the novel and Huxley’s heavily ironic presentations of romantic love both in his dystopias and in his other literary works. As Bernard’s passion for Lenina wanes after he discovers that his new popularity makes him “desirable” to other women, so Lenina’s passion for John grows stronger with his repeated rejection of her advances.

The third group of critics, who are neither blind to Huxley’s fundamental pessimism nor attempt to diffuse it, comprises Adorno, Booker, and Dyson. Adorno and Booker approach *Brave New World* as social and cultural critics, focusing primarily on the validity of the novel’s projections into the future. However, if Booker cultivates a neutral, objective, and scholarly tone in his study, Adorno’s tone betrays the impatience of a critic whose ideological position compels him to discredit a powerful, yet ideologically unacceptable message. Dyson’s critical study of Huxley, on the other hand, constitutes a rare and valuable attempt to recognize the implications of *Brave New World*’s ironic structure for its interpretation. Even though Dyson does not look into the novel’s indebtedness to the genre of Menippean satire and does not attribute it to the dystopian genre, he correctly identifies its paradoxical and ambiguous nature, suggesting further that ultimately the novel offers “to the reader a simple choice between two Nothings.”

Maintaining that “*Brave New World* is one of the important defining texts of the genre of dystopian fiction” (*Guide* 171) and recognizing that “Huxley’s projected dystopia” includes “not only ominous characteristics of advanced capitalism and of

developing totalitarianism, but also certain negative aspects that have informed Judeo-Christian culture all along” (*Impulse* 52), Booker asserts that “much of the importance and continuing topicality of Huxley’s book lies in the general accuracy of his projections of the future” (*Impulse* 66). Booker concurs with Ferns and Gottlieb in admitting that even though John the Savage “might . . . seem to be a figure of natural humanity as opposed to the artificially conditioned humans of England and other ‘civilized’ parts of the world,” the Savage has “also been conditioned by the society in which he has lived, his values being no more natural (i.e., less socially determined) than those of Marx’s fellow citizens of London” (*Guide* 174). Yet, even though Huxley, as Kumar points out, “had been unnervingly prophetic” (266), the validity of his predictions into the future is not, as Schmerl correctly insists, a literary matter.

Against Booker’s verdict on Huxley’s significance as a prophet of the future, Dyson emphasizes the writer’s “continuing relevance as an interpreter of life” (166). Dyson’s literary approach to *Brave New World* focuses on the novel’s structural irony and its relationship to the earlier tradition of the philosophical novel. Like Adorno, Dyson identifies the major theme of the novel with the question of “where . . . happiness [is] to be found” Yet unlike Adorno, Dyson refers to the literary tradition of the philosophical novel, pointing out that, “[l]ike many previous explorers, including Dr. Johnson in *Rasselas*, the answer Huxley appears to offer is ‘nowhere’”(175). The scholar also notes the structural similarity between *Brave New World* and Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*, indicating that the direction of Huxley’s irony, like that of Swift, seems to be “devastatingly reversed halfway through” with “everything thrown in the melting-pot again” (175-6).

The above reviewed critical approaches to *Brave New World* testify to a strong critical resistance to taking even the most perceptive insights into the novel to their

logical conclusion. Insufficient critical attention has been given to the ironic structure of the novel and to its origin in the literary tradition of Menippean satire rather than in the tradition started by Zamiatin's *We*. The generic, structural, and thematic affinities of *Brave New World* with Diderot's *Supplément*--the focus of this chapter--indicate that Huxley's novel is structured as a meta-utopia, in Morson's terms: a work that allows the writer to maintain his arguments and counterarguments in their ultimately inconclusive dialectics. At the same time, the disappearance of positives in the novel, or the inability of its multiple protagonists to position themselves meaningfully with respect to the good, testifies to its dystopian character. Before focusing on Huxley's engagement with Diderot's *Supplément*, I review at some length Adorno's criticism of *Brave New World*. Adorno's negative response to Huxley's novel highlights, among other things, one of the major aspects of the dystopian *Weltanschauung*, that is the desire of the dystopian writer to place the individual beyond the confines of his/her socially and culturally conditioned subjectivity and his clear realization of the impossibility of transcending the individual's early conditioning or his/her inescapable social destiny.

4.2 Adorno and Huxley's *Brave New World*

Adorno's essay "Aldous Huxley and Utopia" deserves a special place in Huxley criticism because of its paradoxical nature. On the one hand, the essay is undeniably one of the best and most profound pieces of criticism ever written on *Brave New World*. On the other hand, by approaching *Brave New World* from an ideological rather than a literary perspective, Adorno severely, and undeservedly, condemns, misjudges, and underappreciates the novel. Interestingly, despite the fact that to make his argument Adorno identifies implicitly Huxley's position with that of John the Savage--a move

made by numerous other critics--his essay on *Brave New World* is rarely, if ever, referred to in Huxley criticism. This lack of attention can perhaps be explained by the overall direction of Adorno's argument that makes the novel's interpretation from a humanist perspective impossible.

A perceptive and subtle critic of the novel, Adorno fully recognizes its profound pessimism; yet, he does not attempt, as Kumar does, to defuse this pessimism by finding hopeful cracks in the novel itself. Attacking the novel on philosophical and moral grounds, Adorno points to the untenability of its predictions of the future, to the inconsistency of its thematic assumptions, and, above all, to its reactionary character. Confident in his choice of the deadly weapon of dialectical materialism, Adorno rudely forces Huxley's thought into the mold of disillusioned romanticism, arguing that Huxley's vision is shaped by the constraints of his bourgeois ideology.

Adorno's typically Marxist move of turning his critique of *Brave New World* into a weapon in the ideological struggle between supposedly progressive dialectical materialism and allegedly reactionary bourgeois idealism displays the weakness of all purely ideological approaches to literary works: it neglects the evidence of a solid literary analysis. Approaching the novel as a social rather than as a literary critic, Adorno strips it of its philosophical and intellectual richness, mistaking the writer's "honest thought" for the constraints of his ideology. He does not recognize the dialogue *Brave New World* maintains with the philosophical and literary tradition that shaped it and provided its content. Yet Adorno's attempt to defeat Huxley's alleged idealism does not succeed, largely because he ascribes to Huxley an ideological and philosophical stance which is not supported either by *Brave New World* or by Huxley's other literary works.

At the heart of Adorno's dissatisfaction with *Brave New World* lies his radically different view of human nature, the human predicament, and human agency, and, above all, of the role the intellectual is called to play in the desirable--and achievable, from his perspective--transformation of unjust and unequal societies. Accusing Huxley of the failure to "understand the humane promise of civilization" (106), Adorno maintains that "[t]he struggle against mass culture can consist only in pointing out its connection with the persistence of social injustice" (109), that human consciousness cannot be separated "from the social realization its essence requires" (108), and that "[t]hrough total social mediation, from the outside as it were, a new immediacy, a new humanity, would arise" (107).

Even though Adorno misrepresents, in my opinion, Huxley's philosophical position, he correctly senses that Huxley's response to what the writer sees as the idiocy of mass culture is to flee from it rather than to take arms against it. Even though the Savage's attempts to free himself from the alien and obtrusive culture do not succeed, Bernard and Helmholtz are allowed to find a more congenial environment in a distant community of exiled individuals. Moreover, the writer does not place much faith in social influences upon the individual's formation, in the dissolution of humanity's "false consciousness" "with the elimination of its economic basis" (113), or in the change in "the relationship of need to satisfaction" brought about by the disappearance of scarcity (110). Pointing out that "Huxley's alternative amounts to the proposition that mankind should not extricate itself from the calamity" (113), Adorno resists the novel's resounding echo "Nothing to be done" by branding it as "bourgeois" and by stressing the similarity of such a policy to "precisely the perfidious 'You must adjust' of the totalitarian *Brave New World*" (114). In other words, Adorno insists that Huxley's strategies are indistinguishable from those of his fictional totalitarian state.

It is not hard to recognize some typically Marxist assumptions, vocabulary, and rhetorical strategies underlying Adorno's statements, which is why the strength of his genuine insights into *Brave New World* is undermined by the constraints of his own ideology. He correctly perceives that the wonders of scientific and technological innovations are peripheral to the innermost concerns of the novel, where the major emphasis is not placed "on objective technological and institutional elements" and where "the economic and political sphere as such recedes in importance" (99). However, Adorno's assertion that the novel's major focus lies "on what becomes of human beings when they no longer know need" (99) both trivializes Huxley's thought and imposes a simplistic dichotomy on the writer's philosophical reflections. Admittedly, Huxley did see what Gellner describes--in a different context--as the alternating states of "unsatisfied, hungry, unfulfilled, tormented craving, and weary, depressed, satiated exhaustion" with no "positive satisfaction in between" as one of the fundamental features of the human condition. And fundamental as the issue of the possibility of human happiness is to major concerns of *Brave New World*, the novel's interpretation cannot be based on a simple formula relating the unfettered satisfaction of basic human needs to the boredom of unproblematic existence. Yet, for Adorno, this interpretation allows one to conclude that

The crude alternative of objective meaning and subjective happiness, conceived as mutually exclusive, is the philosophical basis for the reactionary character of the novel. The choice is between the barbarism of happiness and culture as the objectively higher condition that entails unhappiness. (112)

However, this conclusion reveals a radical inconsistency in Adorno's critical approach to the novel: on the one hand, he insists that Huxley "immeasurably exalt[s]" the category of the individual, while convicting, at the same time, the "moral bankruptcy" of "the overburdened private individual" (115). On the other hand, Adorno relies on the identification of Huxley's own position with the criticism of Brave New World waged by Bernard Marx and John the Savage--the characters whose emotional and intellectual responses to the challenges they face and the experiences they undergo are undermined by the inevitably ironic context in which they are placed.

Adorno makes another equally valuable observation (and he draws an equally erroneous conclusion from it) when he points out that

Huxley's book, like his entire work, blames the hypostatized individual for his fungibility and his existence as a 'character mask' of society rather than a real self. These facts are attributed to the individual's inauthenticity, hypocrisy and narrow egoism, in short, to all those traits which are the stock-in-trade of a subtle, descriptive ego psychology. (115)

Even though Adorno distorts the novel's message when he asserts that Huxley sees "the disgrace of the present" in "the preponderance of so-called material culture over the spiritual," he correctly senses that the writer does not attack, as in Adorno's view he ought to, "the socially dictated separation of consciousness from the social realization its essence requires" (108). Whether the essence of human consciousness requires social realization is a question that Adorno, unlike Huxley and Butler before him, answers affirmatively. Huxley, on the other hand, advocates the separation of consciousness from its social realization both because, in his view, social conditioning warps human

consciousness and because social personas are too restrictive, confining, and inadequate to provide intellectual and emotional support for human individuals. However, Huxley's position does not call for a liberation of some deeply buried "real self" which, in accordance with the prescriptions of ego psychology, should be freed from distorting social influences. Neither does Huxley see human nature as a *tabula rasa* on which a desired program can be inscribed through social mediation. In Huxley's worldview, one is not born human, but one becomes human by making a rational choice. "Only in the knowledge of his own Essence/Has any man ceased to be many monkeys," writes Huxley in *Ape and Essence*, asserting that human beings rise above their animal nature by making rational and individual choices rather than by following socially prescribed roles. However, as a truly dystopian writer, Huxley does not suggest that every human being is able to make this choice.

The belief that human consciousness is shaped by the material and economic conditions of one's existence does not find support in Huxley's atemporalist thought. Indeed in *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), Huxley explicitly formulates ideas dramatized in *Brave New World* through the structural opposition of the only superficially different worlds of the World State and the Indian Reservation. "The charm of history and its enigmatic lesson," the writer points out,

consists in the fact that, from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different. In the personages of other times and alien cultures we recognize our all too human selves and yet are aware, as we do, that the frame of reference within which we do our living has changed, since their day, out of all recognition, that propositions which seemed axiomatic then are now untenable and that what we regard as the most self-evident postulates could not, at an earlier

period, find entrance into the most boldly speculative mind. But however great, however important for thought and technology, for social organization and behaviour, the differences between then and now are always peripheral. At the center remains a fundamental identity. (*DL* 300)

Huxley's atemporalist belief in the fundamental unchangeability of human nature and human aspirations leads him to conclude further that

In so far as they are incarnated minds, subject to physical decay and death, capable of pain and pleasure, driven by craving and abhorrence and oscillating between the desire for self-assertion and the desire for self-transcendence, human beings are faced, at every time and place, with the same problems, are confronted with the same temptations and are permitted by the Order of Things to make the same choice between unregeneracy and enlightenment. The context changes but the gist and the meaning are invariable. (*DL* 300-1)

The above quoted passages strongly suggest that even though Huxley recognized that human consciousness is powerfully shaped by the circumstances of one's upbringing and development, he did not believe that a change in the circumstances of one's material existence would result in a radical change in human emotional responses to the perennial challenges of human existence. In both of the estranged fictional worlds of his novel, the *Brave New World* and the *New Mexican Reservation*, the dynamics of human relationships--personal and social--are remarkably similar.

Adorno, however, neglects the parallels Huxley draws between his two equally fictional and estranged worlds and the ironic implications of their inevitable

comparisons; he also neglects the irony with which the writer treats *Brave New World*'s multiple protagonists. Even though he recognizes the authorially intended flaws in Huxley's fictional characters, he still relies on these characters' negative perspectives on the Brave New World, or on their opposition to the society, for his novel-oriented interpretation. "The tradition of the novel," Adorno points out, "has as its object the conflict of human beings with rigidified conditions" (107). But the tradition of Menippean satire to which *Brave New World* belongs has as its object the demonstration of the relativity of all frames of reference for human values and opinions.

Understandably, it is hard not to sympathize with Adorno's desire (shared by many of the above reviewed critics of and commentators on *Brave New World*) to neutralize the pessimism of Huxley's vision of the future by resolutely insisting that "things have developed differently and will continue to do so" (115). And "things" perhaps might have developed differently; yet, in many respects, they did not. Even though the strength of Huxley's prophesying powers is not, as Schmerl insists, a literary matter, time, for worse rather than better, has proven the writer "unnervingly" right even in those of his "predictions" which might have been originally intended merely as estrangement devices. Yet, in attacking the validity of Huxley's vision of the future, Adorno, ironically, laid bare the weakness of his own ideological conjectures. Even though in many regions of the world, "scarcity has disappeared," the relationship of "need to satisfaction" (110) has not changed. And, recalling another eagerly awaited but unfulfilled promise, one notes that the rise of "new humanity" "through total social mediation" has been equally slow in coming.

Admittedly, my short and cursory summary of Adorno's essay hardly does justice to his remarkable insights into the novel. But my goal was to demonstrate that the depth of these insights is compromised by Adorno's attempt to present Huxley's thought as

ideologically motivated, while, at the same time, remaining silent about the conjectural status of his own assertions. Adorno does not entertain the possibility that his own ideologically-motivated assertions can, in the final analysis, be as erroneous as, in his opinion, Huxley's conjectures are. In a typically utopian move, he presumes to possess knowledge of "a higher reality" distorted and obscured by Huxley's allegedly bourgeois and idealist vision. Yet the difference between "honest thought" and ideological constraints lies precisely in the writer's willingness to recognize conjectures as conjectures. Adorno's utopian critique of Huxley's dystopian outlook reverses the relationship between utopian and dystopian works, theorized by many scholars of anti-utopia. Instead of offering his readers an anti-utopian parody of untenable utopian assumptions, Adorno counters Huxley's philosophical irony with grave and supposedly unshakable principles. His engagement with *Brave New World* displays the weakness of all ideologically-motivated approaches to literary works: it tends to distort the meaning and impoverish the richness of Huxley's novel by forcing it into the Procrustean bed of his own arbitrary, rigid, and misleading framework.

The question, however, remains whether Huxley's novel deserves the label of reactionary and whether the honesty of Huxley's thought is compromised, as Adorno maintains, by the moral constraints of the writer's own ideology. Does *Brave New World* condemn, resist, or refuse to recognize the positive developments in Huxley's contemporary England or the United States by suggesting that the spiritual void discovered in the materially prosperous society of his novel was non-existent in technologically backward societies? Is the novel marked by a nostalgic longing for an idealized past or conservative longing to preserve the status quo? Or is it a bitter affirmation that, in Dyson's phrase, "any supposed alternative is so palpably non-existent?"

In her essay on “Parody and Satire in American Dystopian Fiction of the Nineteenth Century,” Jean Pfaelzer states resolutely that “[d]ystopian fiction is formally and historically, structurally and contextually, a conservative genre” (61). Although Pfaelzer focuses on a number of minor American dystopias written in response to both the prevalent historical tendencies of that period and to the popular literary tradition of utopian fiction, she summarizes the content and purpose of these works as providing “ideological critique of ideology” (61). Claiming that “in the late nineteenth century the dystopian hypothesis was invariably conservative” (62), Pfaelzer points out that

Rather than represent the revolutionary tendencies of capitalism and technology, dystopians portray a historical collapse, a regression to an era--often conceived in Jeffersonian terms--which is pre-industrial, pre-immigrant, and pre-urban. Reversing the central utopian axiom, they assert that history is not inherently progressive. (62-3)

Even though Pfaelzer’s study focuses on American dystopias, the theoretical framework she develops for defining the dystopian genre is of considerable interest for my own study. While, from my perspective, this framework does not account for the dystopian status of Huxley’s *Brave New World* or Butler’s *Erewhon*, it does recognize at least two important aspects of British dystopia. First of all, this framework acknowledges the “negativity” of dystopian novels, or their authors’ refusal to accept any progressive tendencies in their contemporary societies. Second, Pfaelzer’s theoretical framework emphasizes the presence in fictional dystopias of regressed “pre-industrial, pre-immigrant, and pre-urban” societies. Both *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* feature such economically backward societies--“backward,” that is, from the perspective of Butler’s

and Huxley's contemporary state of science and technology. Many scholars of both novels, as I note in my discussion of the novels' critical reception, were inclined to suggest that the writers intended to portray these fictional societies as desired alternatives to the dehumanizing tendencies of their contemporary industrial worlds. Adorno, for instance, attaches the label of "reactionary" to Huxley's novel; Butler's *Erewhon* has been regarded as a manifestation of the writer's "conservative" ideology. While, strictly speaking, the two terms "reactionary" and "conservative" are not synonymous, they overlap and cover substantial common ground. Applied to dystopian fiction, these terms characterize the dystopian writer's negative perspective on his contemporary reality and his clear preference of the social, economic, and spiritual ideals of the past over the socially alienating, profit-driven, and spiritually empty cultures of his present. However, the Menippean structure of *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* undermines this simplistic binary opposition, whereas the disappearance of positives in these novels points to the inapplicability of these terms to their interpretation.

Critical awareness of *Brave New World*'s structure, as well as of the literary tradition this work has affinities with, can drastically change its interpretation. May draws attention to the importance of structural design in Huxley's novels, noting that "[d]espite his clarity, Huxley is liable to be misunderstood if his structures are insufficiently or improperly taken into account" (11-2). And Morson points out that "to understand an author's intentions regarding a work one must first understand his intentions regarding the *kind* of work he is writing" (59). Admittedly, the novel has been occasionally attributed to the genre of Menippean satire. Placing *Brave New World* in the same category as *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Candide*, Frye acknowledges the novel as an example of Menippean Satire, but he does not spell out what elements account for the novel's attribution to the genre or focus on the implications for the novel's interpretation

entailed by the recognition of its genre. Erika Gottlieb, too, observes that to “see *Brave New World* from its proper perspective, we should probably concentrate on its strategies as a Menippean satire.” However, Gottlieb defines the genre narrowly “as a satire of ideas,” suggesting that *Brave New World* is a satire of the two great dreams by which the nineteenth century defined humanity’s utopian hope,” namely “science and socialism” (76).

The purpose of the Menippean and ironic structure of *Brave New World*, however, is to juxtapose opposite ideas (or two contrasting worlds), allowing them to cast an ironic shadow over each other. This strategy allows a Menippean writer to avoid a clear, unambiguous commitment to or preference for any of his fictional characters and any of the opinions and beliefs they articulate. Our understanding of the debt Huxley owes to Diderot’s *Supplement*, and of the polemics he maintains with it, highlights *Brave New World*’s Menippean structure, clarifying Huxley’s attitude to his fictional characters and estranged worlds.

4.3 *Brave New World* and *Supplement to Bougainville’s “Voyage”*

Even though Huxley’s novels and essays abound with references to and quotations from French writers and poets, there are, surprisingly, very few critical studies that explore the influence of French literature on Huxley’s literary work. According to his brother Sir Julian S. Huxley, the writer studied French literature at Eton and was “well versed” in it (Quoted in Rohmann 1). Scales points out that Huxley “not only manifested an awareness of, and a keen interest in, contemporary trends in French thought, literature and art, but also showed himself to be steeped in the French cultural heritage.” He fully

shares André Maurois's claim that "Huxley was in fact as much a man of French as of English culture" (13).

Nevertheless, despite Huxley's well-known fluency in French and his deep knowledge of both contemporary and classic French literature, the very few critical studies that focus on the writer's engagement with it are mostly devoted to listing his publicly made statements about French authors and the allusions of his fictional characters to French authors and their fictional characters, or to tracing the influence of contemporary French poets and writers on his literary techniques.¹⁴ The debt that Huxley owes to French Enlightenment *philosophes*, however, even though it is noted, does not appear to be properly studied. Scales, for example, observes in passing that "Huxley had certain affinities and also some fault to find" with Voltaire, "the most representative figure of the Enlightenment in France," but he narrows the connection between Huxley and the "other two principal *philosophes*, Diderot and Rousseau," to "a few references" in the writer's literary *corpus* (25).

It seems strange that an obvious, significant, and thought-provoking connection between *Brave New World* and Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* should have escaped critical attention. Admittedly, to my knowledge, there is no direct reference in Huxley's writings to Diderot's *Supplément*. Yet considering Huxley's fluency in French and French literature, as well as the structural, thematic, and generic similarities between *Brave New World* and the *Supplément*, my claim that Huxley modeled his novel on Diderot's and borrowed significant elements of its plot does not seem to be far-fetched. Like Diderot, in his *Supplément*, Huxley, in *Brave New World*, portrays a sexually permissive society which has as its main goal the attainment of national stability and welfare through maximizing the social utility of its individual

members. In Huxley's *Brave New World*, as in Diderot's fictional "utopian" Tahiti, the morality of human actions is determined by their usefulness for the state. Moreover, the contrast set by Diderot in his *Supplément* between savage "natural" laws and civilized "artificial" ones is re-played in the ironic structure of Huxley's novel. Notably, the neglect of this structural irony and of the Menippean tradition that informs both works has manifested itself in their similar critical reception: both Diderot and Huxley were erroneously taken to be the proponents of primitivism. Our awareness of thematic, structural and generic parallels between the two works satisfies more than a purely academic interest in establishing the literary affinities between two *oeuvres* that belong to different historical periods and different literary traditions. These parallels are directly relevant for a valid interpretation of *Brave New World*. They also help to clarify Huxley's stand with respect to some of the French *philosophes*' major concerns.

Written in 1771-2, Diderot's *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* is an interesting work both in terms of its literary features and in terms of its extra-literary context. Pasco suggests that its origin is to be found in Diderot's unpublished review of the book written by the real eighteenth-century French navigator Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, who, in 1766, undertook a voyage around the globe. In 1771, Bougainville published his *Voyage autour du monde* in which he described his travels and, in particular, the island of Tahiti.¹⁵ Diderot's *Supplément*, structured as a dialogue between two interlocutors A and B, discusses a fictitious text allegedly written by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, which was, for some reason, omitted in the original publication of his *Voyage*.

While Diderot's literary engagement with the text of Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* is beyond the interests of my study, the actual circumstances surrounding the French navigator's return to Paris after his travels are of direct relevance

for Diderot's *Supplément* and for Huxley's *Brave New World*.¹⁶ Upon his return to Paris, Bougainville brought with himself a real Tahitian, Aotourou, who created quite a stir in Parisian society. This historical fact attracts considerable attention on the part of Diderot's fictional interlocutors who discuss both the fictitious text allegedly written by Bougainville and the actual, true circumstances of Aotourou's sojourn in and departure from Paris. Providing historical background information for and commentary on Diderot's *Supplément*, Vernière writes that

Bougainville avait pendent onze mois, de mars 1769 à février 1770, promené et montré dans tout Paris son passager des antipodes, le Tahitien Aotourou; Louis XV, le duc de Choiseul avait reçu l'insulaire; on l'avait aperçu a l'Opéra, au Jardin Royal; les amis de Mlle de Lespinasse l'avait interrogé; le philologue Pereire avait établi un glossaire tahitiene. La Dixmerie, en 1770, voulut faire d'Aotourou le censeur éloquent des mœurs parisienne. (447)

[During eleven months, from March 1769 to February 1770, Bougainville was showing around and acquainting everyone in Paris with his passenger from the other side of the world, the Tahitian Aotourou; Louis XV and the Duke of Choiseul received the islander; he was seen at the Opera and in Jardin Royal; the friends of Mlle de Lespinasse conversed with him; the philologist Pereire compiled a Tahitian glossary. In 1770, La Dixmerie fancied turning Aotourou into an eloquent censor of Parisian morals, customs, and habits.] (translation--mine)

Listing the French “notabilities” (in Huxley’s terms) eager to make an acquaintance with the Tahitian, Vernière also mentions the fact that Aotourou was fictionalized by Diderot’s contemporary Nicolas Bricaire de La Dixmerie even before the French explorer Bougainville published his *Voyage autour du monde* in 1771. With the publication of *Le Sauvage de Tahiti aux Français, avec un Envoi au philosophe ami des sauvages* in 1770, La Dixmerie turned Aotourou into a critical observer and eloquent censor of Parisian society and morals; La Dixmerie’s fictional Tahitian criticizes the corruption and artificiality of French society by constantly opposing to them Tahitian authenticity and naturalness.

If Diderot turns the story of Aotourou’s experience of life in Paris into one of the significant themes in his interlocutors’ discussion, Huxley actually bases the whole plot of *Brave New World* on this story. Upon his return from the expedition to the New Mexican Reservation, Bernard Marx brings with himself John the Savage, who, like Bougainville’s Tahitian, creates a stir in London’s society. Like his Tahitian and real-life precursor, the Savage is shown “civilized life in all its aspects” (120). His “immense celebrity” (167) mirrors Aotourou’s moment of “supremely fashionable glory” (168). Including “[t]he Chief Bottler, the Director of Predestination, three Deputy Assistant Fertilizer-Generals, the Professor of Feelies in the College of Emotional Engineering, the Dean of the Westminster Community Singery, [and] the Supervisor of Bokanovsification” (159), the list of Bernard Marx’s “notabilities,” “wild to see [the] delicious creature who had fallen on his knees before the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning,” reads as if it were a deliberate parody of the above list of French dignitaries impatient to meet the Tahitian Noble Savage. The list merely substitutes “all upper-caste London” (117) for all upper-caste Paris.

Moreover, Huxley, like La Dixmerie and Diderot, appears to give the impression of turning his Savage into a severe critic of the ills and vices of the society he visits. Clearly, John's attempt to open the eyes of the multitude of Deltas, who patiently wait in line for their daily ration of Soma, to the real conditions of their existence--"But do you like being slaves?" (218)--has its origin in the literary tradition of presenting criticism of the faults of civilization from the perspective of a supposedly pure, primitive, and thus unspoiled human nature. However, unlike La Dixmerie, Diderot and Huxley use this device in a subtle, rather than straightforward, fashion. The Menippean structures of Diderot's *Supplément* and Huxley's *Brave New World* cast an ironic shadow over the opinions and beliefs of individual fictional characters.

Even though the outer form of Diderot's *Supplément* follows the literary tradition of the philosophical dialogue, whereas Huxley's *Brave New World* is framed as a novel, both works are Menippean satires. The lack of recognition of their Menippean structures has tricked many of their readers into the erroneous conclusion that both writers dramatize in their respective works the opposition between the artificial and civilized, and the natural and primitive worlds.

In his study of the role the French *philosophes*--Diderot in particular--played in supporting the myth of the Noble Savage, Allan H. Pasco accuses Diderot of embracing with "notable ardor" the myth of the Noble Savage and of morally superior nature at a time where there was so much evidence to the contrary. Pasco further suggests that Diderot has deliberately misrepresented Bougainville's objective and truthful account of Tahitian customs and practices, by emphasizing the beauty of the island, its marvelous climate, and the easy access of the islanders to numerous sexual partners, while ignoring, at the same time, the problematic reality of "the virtually constant wars, the human sacrifice, the syphilis, and the pilfering" (1). Wondering "why a major intellectual like

Diderot . . . would write a work designed to play on if not to spread the falsehood,” Pasco blames the philosopher for mixing “truth and fiction without distinction,” for his failure “to explain the method of his creation,” and for leaving his readers with “the impression that the *Supplément* is based solidly in the reality of Bougainville’s *Voyage* and is, thus, true” (2). Ironically, failing to recognize the Menippean character of Diderot’s work, Pasco sharply identifies the genre’s most conspicuous characteristics.

As a truly Menippean work, the *Supplément* blurs the boundary between fact and fiction, inextricably blending fact and fantasy, confusing its readers, and complicating its interpretation. As a truly Menippean work, the *Supplément* mixes various literary genres, inserting within a larger frame of the philosophical dialogue two utopian sections--one, in the form of a monologue (“The Old Man’s Farewell”), and another, in the form of a dialogue-within-dialogue (“Conversation Between the Chaplain and Orou”)--describing an allegedly perfect Tahitian society. Morson rightly indicates that when these two fragments are “anthologized or analyzed separately,” as has often been the case, “these two fragments stand as unambiguous utopias.” However, as Morson goes on

in the context of the *Supplément*, which describes not only the utopian society but also *the reactions of the two readers to a description of a utopian society*, they function as a part of a complex structure that casts a shadow of irony over them. (162, italics--author’s)

Approaching the *Supplément* in his *Boundaries of Genre* as an illustration of a dialectical approach to philosophical reflections embodied in a literary form, Morson attributes Diderot’s work to the class of meta-utopias or works in which neither of the conflicting

voices should be regarded as authoritative. As fundamentally open texts, meta-utopias invite readers “to entertain each of the resulting contradictory interpretations in potentially endless succession.” Exploiting the dialogue between parody and counterparody, meta-utopias expect their readers “to comprehend the work not as a compromise between book and counterbook, but as their ultimately inconclusive dialectic” (142-3). Therefore, even though the *Supplément*’s two embedded sections focus on “the contrast between savage ‘natural laws’ and civilized artificial ones, which are, in the Tahitians’ view, the cause of European vice and misery” (Morson 162), the ultimately inconclusive dialectic between the two opposing positions undermines any interpretation of the *Supplément* that would favour only one term--“natural” or “civilized”--in the binary opposition that structures the embedded sections of the work but does not define it in its entirety.¹⁷

Bringing every section of the text under the shadow of irony cast by its other sections, the *Supplément*’s generic heterogeneity or its Menippean structure makes the attribution of any of the opinions expressed in it to its writer problematic. Diderot effectively distances himself from these opinions by complicating the structure of his work and by examining the work’s most significant themes from different perspectives.

Similarly, Huxley distances himself from the opinions expressed by his multiple protagonists in *Brave New World*--John the Savage, Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and Mustapha Mond--by structuring his novel as a meta-utopia or a work in which none of the conflicting voices should be regarded as authoritative. The neglect of *Brave New World*’s Menippean structure has resulted in at least two erroneous approaches to the novel’s interpretation. First, Huxley, like Diderot, is erroneously taken to be the proponent of primitivism. However, both writers can be regarded as proponents of primitivism only if their critical perspectives on the fictional societies they describe are

identified with those of their protagonists. The Savage's straightforward rejection of *Brave New World* does mirror the young Tahitian Orou's--Diderot's fictionalized Aotourou--condemnation of "artificial" French society. But, neither Diderot nor Huxley actually supports the myth of the morally superior nature of the Noble Savage.^{18,19} Ironically, if Diderot has been occasionally blamed for misleading his readers through lending support to the myth of a Tahitian paradise and of an essentially good human nature,²⁰ Huxley has often been appreciated for supporting the idea that there is a fundamentally good human nature that can be oppressed by totalitarian hell. Gorman Beauchamp's and Brett Cooke's critical approaches to *Brave New World* argue that, as a "dystopist," Huxley "counters the enforced perfection of utopia with some form of cultural primitivism as humanity's only hope of escaping what Dostoyevsky calls the human anthill" ("Primitivism" 89) and that "lacking the attributes of recent civilization," the "relatively primitive" inhabitants of the Reservation represent for Huxley the "universals of 'human nature'" (Cooke 7).

The error of attributing John's perspective on *Brave New World* to Huxley leads thus to the mistaken assumption that the writer favours the "natural" or "primitive" state of humanity over its "civilized" or "artificial" state. But ironically, not only John the Savage, but Mustapha Mond, too, has a strong claim on being regarded as the mouthpiece of Huxley's views. Baker points our attention to "the curiously ambiguous quality of Huxley's social criticism in *Brave New World*," suggesting that the writer "has created his dystopia in order to frame a complicated questioning in the guise of an apparently simple juxtaposition of contending points of view." "A significant number of Mustapha Mond's principal beliefs," the scholar continues, "were shared at that time by Huxley. Indeed, they form the stable subjects of his satirical fiction throughout the interwar period" (143-4). Although Baker does not identify Huxley's position with that

of Mustapha Mond, he correctly, in my opinion, indicates that the Controller's ideas "are similar enough, in the broadest sense," to Huxley's to suggest "the scope and depth of the philosophical dilemma in which Huxley found himself in the early thirties" (145). Recognizing that many of the opinions expressed by the World Controller were, in fact, Huxley's own, Schmerl, too, points out that "[r]egarded as anti-totalitarian fantasy, or perhaps more accurately as fantasy anti-totalitarian in its anticipations, *Brave New World* represents a strange mixture of desire and revulsion on the part of its author" (330).

Moreover, the literary strategies Diderot and Huxley adopt in the *Supplément* and *Brave New World* undermine the binary opposition between the novel's "primitive" or "natural" world and its "civilized" or "artificial" one, effectively showing both worlds to be "artificial." These literary strategies aim at providing strong support for the conclusion reached by Diderot's two interlocutors, A and B, who suggest that "the state of nature, which one may imagine, . . . probably does not exist anywhere." These strategies also support Morson's insight into Diderot's *Supplément* as aiming to demonstrate that "the very distinction between laws of nature and of civilization . . . may both be untenable and itself a product of civilization" (162-3).

The narrative strategies aimed at demonstrating the equally artificial or socially constructed moral and ethical standards by which human behaviour is judged in both contrasted societies require that Diderot and Huxley place their fictional characters in an alien community and describe the indignation of this community at the actions that are widely accepted by and considered as "natural" in the community of their origin. By means of this strategy, both writers highlight the relativity of socially and culturally accepted moral and ethical standards and norms, as well as their ultimate dependence on anthropology. Indeed, the full title of Diderot's work-- *Supplément to Bougainville's "Voyage" Or, a Dialogue between A and B on the undesirability of attaching moral*

values to certain physical acts which carry no such implications--clearly points to the writer's interests and the focus of his attention. In the *Supplément*, the socially and culturally constructed character of the ethical and moral standards of the primitive and civilized worlds can be illustrated by the two following parallel episodes: when the Tahitians discover that one of the servants on board of the French ship is actually a woman disguised as a man, they seize her, stretch her on the ground, and remove her clothes "getting ready to render [her] the customary politeness of the country" (193). Likewise, guided by "the Tahitian custom of having all women in common . . . firmly ingrained in his mind," Aotourou, when Bougainville brings him to Europe, throws himself "upon the first European woman who came near him . . . getting ready, in all seriousness, to render her one of the courtesies of Tahiti" (184-5).

Huxley's *Brave New World* also includes a series of parallel episodes that serve to illustrate that opinions, customs, and behaviour accepted as natural in one society inevitably appear artificial, unacceptable, or even immoral in the other. Reversing Diderot's opposition between primitive and sexually permissive, and civilized and sexually repressive societies, Huxley retains Diderot's narrative strategy of drawing constant parallels between the two contrasted worlds by opposing the socially and culturally conditioned responses of the World State's and the Indian Reservation's characters to the same actions. Linda's uninhibited sexual forwardness is resented by the Indian Reservation women, who savagely beat her for luring away their husbands; whereas Lenina's attempt to seduce John by openly showing her desire causes his uncontrolled anger and resentment.

Huxley also appears to follow Diderot in his use of the narrative strategy of contrasting parallel episodes which demonstrate that, shaped by the circumstances of its social and cultural conditioning, human consciousness cannot transcend this

conditioning. In the *Supplément*, the interlocutors A and B discuss the generosity of Bougainville who “finally sends Aotourou back to Tahiti, after having provided for his expenses and made certain that he would arrive safely.”²¹ Speculating on the reasons which led to the Tahitian’s return, B cites Aotourou’s unhappiness in unfamiliar surroundings and his difficulties in both learning the French language and speaking it properly. B also insists that, upon return to his homeland, Aotourou will not be able to give the account of his stay in France to his family and friends because of his inability to grasp or convey in his own language the concepts and ideas for which this language has no corresponding words and because no one will believe him. Having compared their own customs with those of the French public, says B, the Tahitians “would prefer to think that Aotourou was a liar than that we are so crazy” (*Supplément* 185).

This emphasis on the inability of human consciousness to make sense of an unfamiliar experience, or unfamiliar concepts and beliefs, throws an ironic light on Huxley’s Savage’s vehement criticism of the World State. Huxley recognizes, no less clearly than Diderot, the limits imposed on human consciousness by the circumstances of individual education and upbringing. In *The Devils of Loudun*, Huxley writes that individuals “cannot think about their experiences except within the frame of reference which, at that particular time and place, has come to seem self-evident” (181). Even though *The Devils of Loudun* was written some twenty years after *Brave New World*, many of the writer’s reflections in the later novel are dramatized in the earlier one. Not only John the Savage, whose familiarity with Shakespeare places him above the average crowd of his fellow Indians, but also Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson--two Alpha Pluses of superior intelligence--show signs of inescapable conditioning. The Savage’s predisposition to resort to self-flagellation mirrors the customs and practices he had been exposed to since his early childhood; Bernard’s fear of being exiled reflects his inability

to visualize himself outside the familiar social framework of the World State; and Helmholtz's hearty laughter at the sufferings of Romeo and Juliet betrays his inability to find value and meaning in romantic love.

Despite strong differences in the social customs, practices, and beliefs of the two contrasted societies--"primitive" and "civilized"--portrayed in *Supplément* and *Brave New World*, both Diderot and Huxley convey a strong sense of these societies' essential similarity in terms of their fundamental artificiality.²² Diderot's *Supplément* suggests that the freedom of Tahitians is in fact rigidly controlled. Indeed, serving the goal of increasing its population, sexual "freedom" in Tahiti appears to be no less strictly enforced than the strict morality imposed on the "civilized" Europeans. For example, sexual encounters which cannot result in pregnancies are strictly prohibited in Tahiti. A "loose woman," by Tahitian standards, is a barren woman who nevertheless seeks sexual gratification.

Huxley, too, while seemingly portraying two widely different worlds, gives the impression of being more interested in their fundamental similarities than in their differences. As Baker points out, "these two apparently contrasting cultures" of *Brave New World* and the Indian Reservation

actually mirror each other in a number of ways. . . . Both societies are morally coercive, while [*sic*] the debasing violence of the fertility ritual finds its attenuated counterpart in the repressed violence of the communal orgies of Bernard's London. (140-1)

Baker also brings the two cultures together by implicating both of them in the Savage's tragic end. The Savage's suicide, he writes,

cannot be attributed solely to the pernicious impact of Fordean civilization on a mind unprepared for such an onslaught. Therefore his death significantly complicates the satirical direction of *Brave New World*, implicating both the irrational freedom of the Reservation as well as the oppressive regimentation of the World State. (142)

The tragic ending of Huxley's novel highlights a radical difference and a subtle polemics that *Brave New World* maintains with Diderot's *Supplément* or even, in broader terms, with the philosophical tradition of the French Enlightenment. Huxley rejects the reconciliatory endings of Voltaire's Menippean *Candide* and Diderot's Menippean *Supplément*: the Savage finds himself unable (or rather, Huxley suggests his inability) to follow Voltaire's counsel and "cultivate his garden" or to follow the advice of Diderot's interlocutors and move comfortably from one imperfect world to another, merely changing his dress and adapting his behaviour to the standards and norms expected in either society.²³

Moreover, Diderot's *Supplément* appears to be firmly grounded in values that Huxley's *Brave New World* will resolutely reject. Even though, as I note above, any direct attribution to Diderot of the opinions expressed by either his fictional interlocutors or his fictional Tahitians is complicated by the meta-utopian structure of the *Supplément*, the text's concern with "general welfare rather than the individual's well-being" (*Supplément* 200) and the use of the criterion of national welfare as a yardstick against which one can measure the utility and even the morality of customs and practices adopted by a state stands as the *Supplément*'s strong and provocative message. As Diderot's fictional Tahitian Orou states:

you cannot condemn the morals of Europe for not being those of Tahiti, nor our morals for not being those of Europe. You need a more dependable rule of judgment than that. And what shall it be?

Orou claims that there is no better rule for judging the moral value of any country's customs and practices "than general welfare and individual utility" (208). The parallels that Diderot draws between his fictional Tahitian society and European societies indicate that, at least as far as sexual freedom is concerned, the writer supports Orou's position. Sexual freedom in Diderot's "utopian" society serves the worthy purpose of increasing its population, ensuring thus the island's self-sustained prosperity and its potential for defense against the attacks of external enemies. On the contrary, the strict sexual morality of French society, as well as the celibacy imposed on its clergy, does not appear to serve any rational, logical, or desirable goal.²⁴

In *Brave New World*, Huxley reverses Diderot's opposition between the "primitive" and sexually permissive society and the "civilized" and sexually repressive one, portraying his ostensibly "primitive" world of the Indian Reservation as sexually repressive. However, the sexual "freedom" he describes in the World State is as strictly regulated as the sexual practices of Diderot's Tahitians. Notably, this freedom also serves the same goal of ensuring the State's stability and its citizens' happiness by protecting them from the frustrations of unsatisfied passion. Moreover, Huxley, like Diderot, emphasizes the focus of his "utopian" state on the "general welfare" and on the "individual utility" of its citizen. While flying with Lenina over "the majestic buildings of the Slough Crematorium," Henry Foster observes with satisfaction that the World

State's practice of fertilizing plants with phosphorus recovered from human corpses makes even dead citizens "socially useful" (*BNW* 73).

The loaded irony of Huxley's portrayal of an imaginary society organized on the same principles that underlie Diderot's "utopian" Tahiti, as well as the suicide of John the Savage, seem to suggest that Huxley aims at demonstrating that the subordination of the individual to social welfare destroys him. However, "the individuals" of *Brave New World*--Bernard Marx, Helmholtz Watson, and John the Savage--all show signs of an *a priori* conditioning. Schmerl makes a convincing point when he observes that

Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson could not have been enlarged into full-scale antagonists of their society without violating the conception of the novel; to suggest, however faintly, that something there is that does not love a brave new world, something inherent, that is, in protoplasm, transmitted through genes despite bottles and hypnopaedia, would imply an optimism totally inconsistent with Huxley's purpose. (329)

By presenting his protagonists first as severe critics of the World State and undermining then their perspective on it by highlighting their conditioning and inability to transcend the limits of their respective subjectivities, Huxley establishes Bernard, Helmholtz, and John as *fallible* protagonists.

Despite strong structural and thematic similarities between the *Supplément* and *Brave New World*, Diderot and Huxley use the genre of Menippean satire for different purposes. Diderot's purpose lies in questioning the rationale behind European laws, customs, and beliefs. Judging them from the perspective of "individual utility" and "national welfare," the French *philosophe* finds European laws, customs, and beliefs

irrational and ineffective. Therefore, even though the writer forces his readers to think about the nature of their received opinions, behind his “free play of literary recreation,” to use Holland’s perspective on the Menippean genre, “lies a firm belief in a transcendent value”--the value of rational thinking. For Huxley, on the other hand, Menippean satire becomes the vehicle for the expression of purely dystopian sentiments. Recognizing that human thinking is compromised by the inevitable bias imposed on it by one’s social and cultural conditioning, the writer offers his readers no basis for a solid judgment about what constitutes a good life in a good society. The “simple choice between two Nothings” that Huxley offers his readers reflects the disappearance of transcendental values in the fictional universe of *Brave New World*.

4.4 *Brave New World* as a dystopian novel

Unlike Butler’s *Erewhon*, whose generic affiliation continues to puzzle his scholars, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, in terms of its genre, has caused little discord among its critics. Moreover, since the interpretive conventions most critics use to classify the novel as an anti-utopia, a science fiction, or a dystopia--the three genres the novel has been most often attributed to--are interrelated, the critical decision to assign *Brave New World* to any of the above listed generic categories did not result in its widely different interpretations. However, as I argue in my study, *Brave New World* cannot be successfully classified as a dystopia on the basis of the currently accepted definitions of the genre. Neither can the novel be classified as an anti-utopia or a science fiction.

Brave New World’s attribution to the anti-utopian genre is often based on the assumption that the novel continues the generic tradition started by Zamiatin’s *We*, or on the assumption that a quotation from the Russian philosopher Berdiaeff, that the writer

strategically placed at the beginning of his novel, expresses Huxley's hopes for and his trust in the possibility of reversing what Berdiaeff calls "life's march toward utopias." Apparently, George Orwell's authoritative reading and interpretation of *Brave New World* started the critical tradition of associating the novel with Zamiatin's *We*. Evaluating Huxley's novel in terms of the credibility of its projections into the future, Orwell emphasized the opposition between "the primitive human spirit" and "a rationalized, mechanized, painless world" that Huxley, in his opinion, dramatized in *Brave New World*.²⁵

Brave New World's affiliation with Zamiatin's *We*, however, has been questioned by a number of Huxley scholars. Woodcock indicates that "striking as the resemblances" between *We* and *Brave New World* may be,

[i]t is hard to prove that Huxley was influenced by Zamiatin at the time he wrote *Brave New World*. Unlike Orwell he never admitted such an influence. And though, given Huxley's omnivorous reading habits, it seems unlikely that he failed to read *We* during the seven years between its publication and that of *Brave New World*, this appears to have affected only secondary details of his book. The essential outline of *Brave New World* was sketched already in *Crome Yellow*, and while it is true that *We* was written in 1920, and was secretly circulated as a forbidden text in Soviet Russia, it is improbable that Huxley saw a copy of it or even learnt of its existence before he conceived the character of Mr. Scogan and filled his mind with Utopian ideas. (72)

Concurring with Woodcock, Schmerl observes that "[a]lthough *Brave New World* has been said to be related to Evgeny Zamiatin's *We*, it does not appear probable that

Huxley's fantasy is derived from the Russian's" since "the essence of the idea of the society he finally portrayed in his famous fantasy was already contained in his first novel" (330). Kumar, who dedicates a sizable section of his study of *Brave New World* to the similarities between the two novels, also states that, despite the strong parallels between them, "there is no clear documentary evidence of Huxley's having read *We* at the time of writing *Brave New World*, or indeed at any time thereafter" (462, note 6).

Huxley's choice of a quotation from Berdiaeff's writings, on the other hand, does seem to indicate, as Peter Fitting, points out, the writer's "rejection of the utopian premise."²⁶ However, the rhetoric of *Brave New World*, as it reveals itself in the novel's ironic structure, does not support the assumption that Huxley shared the Russian philosopher's hope in the possibility of a better society, articulated in the quoted passage. Stating that humanity finds itself confronted by the agonizing discovery that utopias are realizable, or that life marches toward utopias, Berdiaeff expresses his hope that "peut-être un siècle nouveau commence-t-il, un siècle où les intellectuels et la classe cultivée rêveront aux moyens d'éviter les utopies et de retourner à une société non utopique, moins 'parfaite' et plus libre." [a new century may begin, a century when intellectuals and the cultivated class will dream about finding the means of avoiding utopias and returning to a non-utopian society, which will be less "perfect" and more free] (translation--mine)

Brave New World, however, does not place any faith in the ability of intellectuals or "the cultivated class" to devise means of returning to a less perfect but freer society; therefore, the novel does not support Berdiaeff's hope or illustrate its possible translation into practice. Moreover, Huxley's novel does not place much trust in the intellectual's ability to govern or influence the processes of social change. Neither Bernard Marx nor Helmholtz Watson displays the imagination or strength required to reform or confront

Brave New World in a meaningful way. Neither can the novel be interpreted as Huxley's own "dream" of envisioning a freer and less perfect society: *Brave New World* fails to portray such a society. Neither can *Brave New World* be interpreted as an illustration of Berdiaeff's verdict on the direction of contemporary social and political changes: Huxley's fictional utopia rejects the most vital premise of social utopias--its citizens are only "physico-chemically equal" (47). From this perspective, Berdiaeff's quotation serves to highlight an ironic gap between the Russian philosopher's trust in the intellectual's ability to reform the world and Huxley's vision of his lack of agency.

Similarly, *Brave New World's* attribution to the generic class of science fiction fails to generate valuable insights into its valid interpretation. Two notable theoreticians of science fiction, Darko Suvin and Brian Aldiss, offer distinctly different approaches to defining the genre. Suvin's approach to "SF" as a genre which is defined by "cognitive estrangement," or by its "estranged techniques of presenting a cognitive novum (*Positions* x), is sufficiently all-inclusive to subsume Huxley's novel; however, this definition of science fiction is too broad to offer a meaningful insight into Huxley's choice of genre as a vehicle for his vision.²⁷ At the same time, when Suvin narrows this broad definition, suggesting that "SF is distinguished by the narrative dominance of a fictional novelty (novum, innovation) validated both by being continuous with a body of already existing cognitions and by being a 'mental experiment' based on cognitive logic" (*Victorian* 86), he unwittingly undermines the basis for his attribution of Huxley's novel to SF. *Brave New World* fails the test of Suvin's definition, because, as Schmerl formulates it most succinctly,

Huxley's history of the future is an almost entirely satiric account of what was beginning to happen in the world in 1932. There is no science-fiction writer's

pretense in it of beginning with a postulate of some sort and then working out (the science-fiction jargon is “extrapolating”) all implications logically and objectively. (331)

Schmerl's insight into the novel brings our attention to Huxley's literary strategies: even though the Brave New World adopts radically new methods of human reproduction, its citizens are not psychologically, emotionally, or even intellectually different from the inhabitants of the backward Indian Reservation. John's inability to adjust--mentally and emotionally--to the Brave New World is paralleled by his mother's inability to adjust to the life in the Indian Reservation. The isolation of Bernard Marx, whose physical appearance does not conform to the Brave New World's standards of physical attractiveness for its Alpha Plus citizens, is paralleled by the isolation of John the Savage, whose blond hair makes him a stranger in the community where he was born. In both men, social isolation fosters the intellectual excess that proves to be equally detrimental for their personal well-being and their social status. Nevertheless, despite their heightened sensibilities (developed as a result of their exclusion from their communities), Bernard and John display a stubborn inability to recognize their views and opinions as socially and culturally constructed, and thus as limited and arbitrary. In other words, Huxley's literary strategy of drawing parallels between the equally *fallible* characters, brought up in different social, economic, and intellectual environments of the technically advanced Brave New World and the backward Indian Reservation, suggests that, fundamentally, progress in science and technology does not change human beings psychologically, emotionally, or intellectually.

The assumption that the mental or emotional constitution of human beings may indeed be changed by a rapid progress in science and technology becomes the working

postulate of Brian Aldiss's approach to science fiction. Addressing concerns that lie at the core of speculative fiction, he defines science fiction as "the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced yet confused state of knowledge (science)" (*Spree* 8).²⁸ Suggesting that *Brave New World* is "arguably the Western world's most famous science fiction novel" (*Spree* 215), Aldiss points out perceptively that "that the most tried and true way of indicating man's status is to show him confronted by crisis, whether of his own making (overpopulation), or of science's (new destructive virus), or of nature's (another Ice Age)" (*Spree* 9). The major crisis that the characters of *Brave New World* face is the challenge of encountering a strange and, in their own terms, inexplicable culture. Nevertheless, despite his interest in "man's status" in works of science fiction, Aldiss, like Suvin, focuses on Huxley's descriptions of the *Brave New World*'s advances in biology and its strange customs and rituals, drawing no parallels with or even disregarding the defamiliarization techniques the writer uses for his portrayal of life in the Indian Reservation.²⁹ Therefore, Huxley's novel fails the test of Aldiss's definition of science fiction too. Despite the attention given in *Brave New World* to fictional--at least at the time when Huxley wrote the novel--advances in biology, technology, and the entertainment industry, *Brave New World* cannot be classified as science fiction precisely because the advances in science and technology that the novel describes do not change, as I argue above, the human being's status in the universe.

Disregarding the highly suggestive ironic parallels that Huxley draws between the *Brave New World* and the Indian Reservation and between the characters conditioned by their different--but only superficially different--societies, many critics and readers of the novel focus almost exclusively on its detailed descriptions of new reproduction and conditioning techniques, of futuristic helicopter flights, and of virtual

entertainment. Suggesting that Huxley's satiric portrayal of Brave New World implies his endorsement of the "values" embraced by John the Savage, numerous critics of and commentators on the novel maintain that the novel aims at demonstrating that the emotional responses and needs of tube-grown individuals differ from those of naturally-grown humans, that the "mechanized world" destroys the very foundation of humanity, and that the Brave New World's conditioning destroys the human capacity for thinking independently. In other words, they interpret the novel as a dramatization of "the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalized, mechanized, painless world" (Orwell quoted in Watt 333).

However, the ironic structure of the novel undermines these readings. The advanced technology that Huxley describes in his fictional Brave New World fails to produce a new brand of human beings: the emotional anguish of tube-grown humans deprived of their daily ration of soma does not differ from the emotional anguish of their naturally-born counterparts when their minds are unclouded by mescal. Compared to mescal, soma is merely a cleaner and physiologically better digested drug with less harmful consequences for the human organism. Compared to the backward world of the Indian Reservation, the Brave New World is merely a sanitized version of Insane Old World. The ubiquitous dependence of Brave New World's citizens on soma questions Orwell's description of Huxley's fictional world as "painless." The centrality of the drug in the supposedly well-adjusted and rationalized society of fully conditioned humans also undermines Orwell's assertion that Huxley's book solves, in a sense, "the problem of 'human nature' . . . because it assumes that by pre-natal treatment, drugs and hypnotic suggestion the human organism can be specialized in any way that is desired" (quoted in Watt 333). The ironic juxtaposition of the two superficially different worlds also undermines the moral, psychological, and emotional binary oppositions between the test-

tube-grown and “natural” human beings that forms the basis of major humanist interpretations of the novel. If the World State’s citizens are so well adjusted, why do they need soma? Why does Huxley preserve in his fictional biologically and psychologically conditioned human beings the capacity of feeling miserable?

Partly, the answer to this question can be found in Huxley’s novel *The Devils of Loudun*, where stressing the inability of human beings to understand their experience “except within the frame of reference which, at that particular time and place, has come to seem self-evident,” Huxley insists that “human nature” does not change. What does change in the course of human history is only our interpretation of our “urges and emotions.” In every historical period, this interpretation is carried out in terms of this period’s “prevailing thought-pattern.” However, even though this “thought-pattern conditions to some extent the expressions of urges and emotions, [it] can never completely inhibit them” (*DL* 172). Suggesting further that “[t]he charm of history and its enigmatic lesson consist in the fact that from age to age, nothing changes and yet everything is completely different” and that “[i]n the personages of other times and alien cultures we recognize our all too human selves,” the writer concludes that “however great, however important for thought and technology, for social organization and behaviour, the differences between then and now are always peripheral” (*DL* 284).

Huxley’s stress on the fundamental similarities between human beings born in and shaped by different cultures highlights his preoccupation with what, from his perspective, is humanity’s major defining characteristic--its fundamental, constitutional, and immutable unhappiness. Huxley’s concern with human unhappiness also explains his choice of the literary form for *Brave New World*. The novel’s roots in the literary tradition of Menippean satire, its epistemological uncertainty, its structural irony, as well as the disappearance of positives--in other words, the novel’s membership in the class of

works known for their ambiguity--point us in the direction of its radically different interpretation. In many respects Huxley's pessimism results from his unflattering vision of human nature. Yet it appears that no consistent critical attempt has been made to probe more deeply into Huxley's vision of human nature or human identity--the cornerstone of all his writings--in the context of his dystopian novels, despite the fact that a mistaken representation of this vision served, ironically, as a foundation for major humanist interpretations of *Brave New World*.

As I mention at the beginning of this chapter, the impressive body of criticism on Huxley's *Brave New World* seems to have rigidified into one, variously expressed, yet basically similar interpretation of the novel which privileges the values articulated by John the Savage over the values articulated by Mustapha Mond. However, as Baker and Schmerl point out, Huxley's position with respect to his fictional world was ambiguous, or "Pyrronic," as the writer describes it himself. The neglect of the Menippean tradition that informed his writing results in the novel's simplistic interpretation in terms of non-existent binary oppositions, while the treasury of Huxley's thought remains unexplored.³⁰ Dyson's sympathetic and appreciative treatment of the writer who "has had a wide success after all, among readers who delight in intelligence as an end as well as a means," emphasizes the undeserved neglect of Huxley's literary work. Deploring the fact that "the universities have paid so little attention to an outstandingly intelligent writer," Dyson suggests that this lack of attention is "perhaps symptomatic of the mistrust with which intelligence is often viewed in Britain, especially by those who possess it" (166). Brooke too observes that "[t]hough a 'best-seller,' [Huxley] remains, paradoxically, an essentially 'unpopular' writer" (7). As far as *Brave New World* is concerned, one wonders if this unpopularity can be accounted for by the lack of variety in the novel's interpretations.

Chapter 5

Human Nature in Dystopian Fiction

“The living portrait of utopia,” as the Manuels point out, “rests on a set of implicit psychological, philosophical, or theological assumptions about the nature of man” (4-5). The centrality of the issue of human nature to both utopian and dystopian fiction has been widely recognized; nevertheless, surprisingly, there appear to be no major studies which would focus exclusively on the assumptions and beliefs about human nature that underlie the classics of utopian or dystopian fiction. The lack of such comprehensive studies can perhaps be explained by the fact that, despite the obvious attraction of engaging with a topic “that breaks down the boundaries between the sciences, the humanities, and the religions” (Stevenson 245), human nature is an immensely complicated subject which comprises biological, psychological, and social dimensions. And even these separate categories may prove to be, in turn, too broad for any student of human nature to deal with the subject successfully.

Yet, on the other hand, despite the complexity of the subject, the assumptions about human nature underlying utopian fiction and its criticism are remarkably analogous; largely, they can be divided into two major categories. “[T]he basic tenet” of the first category of utopian texts is, as Gorman Beauchamp asserts, that “mankind has no essential nature” (quoted in Cooke 6). This view is prompted by the recognition that “the primary rationale for building a utopian society has always been the promise of reconstructing its inhabitants” (Cooke 3). “According to this theory,” Cooke goes on,

a child constitutes at birth a *tabula rasa*: its personality is plastic, amenable to any mold we subject it to. Such “social construction” gives us the hope that we

can control the future in which we live, we can reshape ourselves, especially our descendants, and thus make a utopian state possible. (3)

Even though this belief in reconstructing human nature follows, as Cooke points out, “the Marxist dictum that environment conditions consciousness,” it is “shared by many non-Marxists.”

Apart from the view of human nature as infinitely malleable and adjustable to changing social conditions, there is another view of human nature that powerfully manifests itself in utopian fiction. This view presents human nature as basically and irredeemably corrupt, and thus in need of rigid governance by those people or classes whose superior moral and intellectual characteristics supposedly qualify them for exercising such strict control. These two opposite, yet not entirely unrelated, visions of human nature have generated in turn two different kinds of utopias: the first vision has been embodied in More’s *Utopia*; the second vision in Plato’s *Republic*.

Both More’s benevolently patriarchal and Plato’s rigidly authoritarian utopias have been criticized for envisioning societies that are supposed to be perfect, but that in fact limit human freedom, human creativity, and human prospects for change. Indeed, a common reproach waged against both types of utopias is that in tightly controlled and strictly regimented utopian societies, human beings lose not only their freedom, individuality, and opportunity for growth, but also their very humanity. This loss of humanity or of its vital prerequisites lies, as many critics believe, at the heart of the dystopian parody of major utopian novels. Cooke, for example, even suggests that

the plan for writing a piece of anti-utopian literature is relatively easy: determine what human nature is and affront it with forms of behaviour we are likely to

regard as unnatural and dehumanizing. The dystopian writer need only to depict behaviors that are the reverse of our normal practice. (20)

Even though Cooke's approach to dystopian fiction is based on unproved and complacent assumptions that we know "what [our] human nature" and what "our normal practice" are, it is, nevertheless, representative of the main direction of twentieth-century criticism of utopian/dystopian fiction. Since many critics of and commentators on dystopian masterpieces--*Brave New World*, *1984*, and *A Clockwork Orange*--regard them as anti-utopian parodies of major utopian classics or of the social, cultural, and political assumptions underlying them, they correspondingly maintain that dystopian writers do not share these assumptions, that their vision of human nature rests on a set of radically different assertions, and that their dystopian novels are written in protest against the psychological, philosophical, or biological assumptions about human nature implicit in utopian fiction. In line with this thinking, critics tend to condemn utopian writers for presenting human nature as infinitely malleable and adaptable to changing social conditions and praise dystopian writers for resisting this concept of human malleability and for suggesting, importantly, that there is in human nature, in Lionel Trilling's words, "a hard, irreducible, stubborn core . . . which culture cannot reach and which reserves the right, which sooner or later it will exercise, to judge the culture and resist and revise it" (*Freud* 53-4).

This desire to discover in human nature "a residue of human quality" which is beyond the reach or control of culture has shaped twentieth-century criticism of dystopian fiction. Ferns, for example, claims that "the concept of some kind of essential invariant human nature lies at the root of dystopia's critique of traditional utopia" (129); Morson states that anti-utopia "affirms the existence of universals of human nature"

(121); and Gottlieb maintains that “there is a universal agreement on what makes one human” (74).

Two concepts, in particular, of an “authentic inner self,” doomed to stagnation in the inhuman conditions envisaged by fictional dystopian societies, and of a hard biological core that will resist utopianization have been prominent in the twentieth-century criticism of dystopian fiction. Both concepts reflect the understandable human desire to discover in human nature either a psychological or genetic immutable core that will resist social or cultural conditioning. Morson, for example, claims that the universals of human nature affirmed in anti-utopian fiction include “humanity’s unchanging need for growth, creativity, and change itself,” while Cooke asserts that the utopian belief in the infinite plasticity of human nature “denies a genetic code to our behavioral tendencies” (3).

On the other hand, many critics admit that utopian writers’ hope of the infinite malleability of human nature has yielded to dystopian writers’ clear and unwelcome recognition of the effects of inevitable social and cultural conditioning on it. Ferns points out that dystopia dramatizes “the possibility of [human] nature being altered” (129), while Gottlieb concedes that *Brave New World* expresses Huxley’s “fear about the survival of our species in terms of what the humanist defines as the essential qualities of being human” (78). Nevertheless, most critical commentary on the dystopian novel displays a distinct reluctance to probe the depth of pessimism and misanthropy that, in my opinion, informs it and recognize that, unlike the utopian novel, often based on the assumption that better social conditions make better human beings, the dystopian novel confronts what it sees as a radical flaw or even evil within the human mind or human heart. The dystopian novel either judges humanity as directly responsible for the misfortunes that befall its lot, or mourns its common unfortunate predicament.

Significantly, while dystopian fiction does tend to emphasize the immutability of human nature, it does not portray this immutability in life-asserting or optimistic terms. Moreover, distinctly dystopian sentiments are often betrayed by prominent literary works--such as Plato's *Republic* or More's *Utopia*--which are traditionally regarded as utopias. Even though no "utopian" or "dystopian" writer made an attempt to engage in his writing with the concept of human nature in its entirety, a study of Plato's, More's, Voltaire's, Butler's and Huxley's (and of Wells's, Orwell's, and Burgess's) specific interests or biases related to this subject can highlight those aspects of human nature which the writers viewed as defining or responsible for the human condition.

5.1 Major studies of human nature in dystopian fiction

The critical reluctance to probe the depth of pessimism informing the dystopian writer's vision of human nature is perhaps directly responsible for the lack of comprehensive studies on this subject. To my knowledge, there have been only two attempts to explore the concept of human nature in dystopian fiction: Brett Cooke's book-length study *Human Nature in Utopia: Zamyatin's We* and Lora Ann Quinonez's Ph. D. thesis "The Concept of Man in Representative Dystopian Novels." Notably, these two studies are also representative of the main trends in the criticism of dystopian novels: Quinonez explores her subject from the moral and ethical perspective, whereas Cooke examines it from the biological and genetic one. Nevertheless, despite the different foci of their studies, both scholars view the dystopian novel as an expression of its writer's "vital humanism" or his assertion of the essential qualities of being human.

Approaching her subject from a distinctly humanist perspective, Quinonez asserts that dystopian novels are

expressions of a vital humanism. Many of the assumptions on which the dystopian vision rests are markedly positive; when the novelist indicts certain contemporary ideologies and structures, when he casts suspicion on utopian conventions, he is voicing . . . a passionate faith in what man can become, an eloquent vision of what it is to be human. The construction of the imaginary societies is, therefore, also an exercise--often indirect and suggestive, often simplistic--in philosophical anthropology; behind the severe judgment are affirmative predications about man and the conditions of his existence. (263)

Like many other scholars of and commentators on dystopian fiction, Quinonez views the concept of human nature that informs it in positive and optimistic terms. At the same time, like many of them, she cannot turn a blind eye to the obvious negative representations of human behavior in such dystopian novels as *Brave New World* or *1984*. Quinonez views the instances of unbecoming behaviour on the part of fictional dystopian characters as deplorable lapses in judgment on the part of erring individuals or a deviation from the otherwise unassailable ideal rather than as manifestations of dystopian writers' visions of the essential characteristics of being human. Pointing out that "man himself" becomes the object of dystopian novelists' indictments, Quinonez states that dystopian authors

are disturbed by a comparative ease with which man is persuaded to renounce his birthright or individual integrity in exchange for the safety of the crowd mind.

They cite the human tendency to seek in vigorous activity a refuge from self-knowledge, to substitute group identity for the more demanding communication with other integral selves. (262)

This desire to separate the unflattering presentation of human behaviour from the writers' supposedly humanist belief in the promising potential of human nature is also shared, as we have seen, by Erika Gottlieb who makes a very distinct emphasis in her claim that the Savage's psychopathology should not be taken as a reflection of Huxley's views of humanity (70).

Based on recent discoveries in the field of evolutionary psychology, Cooke's study of human nature in Zamiatin's *We* approaches the issues related to the dystopian writer's vision of human nature from a biological or genetic perspective. Viewing evolutionary psychology as "a powerful heuristic system for the generation of new knowledge," Cooke maintains that "it will soon be evident that our new perspective readily yields a cornucopia of important findings that are useful for reading other dystopian texts" (11). Drawing upon the literary tradition that views *We* as the founding novel of the dystopian genre, Cooke extends his conclusions to other classics of the dystopian genre such as Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Cooke's position--shared by some notable scholars of dystopian fiction³¹ and, in their opinion, also shared by dystopian writers--is that human nature is rooted in human genes (7). From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, Cooke maintains that natural selection influences "not just our physiology but also our actions and attitudes," which means that "human nature is relatively fixed" and "not sufficiently amenable to social engineering" (4). Zamiatin, whose novel, in Cooke's opinion, "constitutes a remarkable case of aesthetic cognition" (4), supports this perspective on human nature by

following the practice of evolutionary psychology and making “explicit what we have always known intuitively” (7). The contrast that the writer sets in *We* between “the effete citizen of the Single State” and “the hairy people living beyond the wall” reflects his intuitive knowledge that human nature is rooted in human genes. Significantly, Cooke maintains that the contrast set by Huxley in *Brave New World* between “the largely Native American inhabitants of the Reservation” and the World State serves a similar purpose. Since “these relatively primitive people” lack “the attributes of recent civilization,” Huxley uses them “to represent universals of ‘human nature’”(7).

Furthermore, according to Cooke, dystopian fiction “impels us to acknowledge our enduring human nature,” pointing out effectively “our behavioural universals” by “directly confronting them.” The tinkering of social engineers “with traditional modes of sexual reproduction, the rearing of children, and other vital elements of daily life” creates a world which is “unfit for human habitation.” This mishandling of our human nature in *We*, *Brave New World*, and *1984* “triggers a powerful aversive reaction on the part of fictional characters as well as most sensitive readers” (3).

As I mention above, Quinonez’s and Cooke’s studies are representative of the overall critical tendency to search for the abiding essentials of human nature either in some mysterious “inner core” of humanity that will resist utopianization or in human genes (or biology). Significantly, both Butler and Huxley were intensely interested in psychological, moral, and biological aspects of human nature. However, their dystopian vision of it--and the embodiment this vision takes in their novels and other writings-- does not support the humanist and optimistic assumptions that their critics and commentators attribute to them. Even though Butler and Huxley highlight in *Erewhon* and *Brave New World* certain aspects of human nature that they believe to be essential and immutable, they do not see them in optimistic terms; moreover, neither of the writers

sees human nature as essentially good. In many respects, the writers follow the earlier dystopian tradition of portraying human nature as morally deficient. Examples of such focus on the moral shortcomings of humanity abound in Plato, More, and Voltaire. However, unlike their literary predecessors, Butler and Huxley do not necessarily see humanity's moral flaws as directly responsible for its deplorable condition. In general, the emphasis in modern dystopian fiction shifts from the view of human nature as morally deficient to the view of humanity's ineluctably dire predicament.

Nevertheless, the unflattering portrayal of humanity in the dystopian novel tends to be disregarded by most critics of and commentators on dystopian fiction. When they assert the existence of some kind of essential invariant human nature, they implicitly suggest that, even though human beings may be corrupted by dehumanizing totalitarian regimes, they are intrinsically good. The search for invariant fundamentals of human nature predisposes some critics to see in Huxley's *Savage* a character whose negative response to *Brave New World* turns him both into a mouthpiece of Huxley's ideas and into a model of uncorrupted humanity. When Gorman Beauchamp claims that "[t]he dystopist . . . counters the enforced perfection of utopia with some form of cultural primitivism" ("Primitivism" 88-9), he communicates his and allegedly Huxley's belief in the moral superiority of the *Savage's* primitive and unspoiled nature.

5.2 The eighteenth-century myth of the Noble Savage and twentieth-century criticism of dystopian fiction

This belief in the morally superior nature of the Noble Savage was, as Allan Pasco suggests, fostered by the social and political climate of eighteenth-century France and by the writings of French intellectuals. As I argue in Chapter 4, in his study of the role the

French *philosophes*--Diderot in particular--and the Romantics played in supporting the myth of the Noble Savage, Pasco erroneously claims that Diderot has deliberately misrepresented Bougainville's objective and truthful account of Tahitian customs and practices. However, even though Pasco's interpretation of Diderot's *Supplément* is flawed by the inadmissible neglect of the literary tradition which inspired the philosopher's work, the undeniable value of his essay lies in drawing our attention to the fact that at the time when Diderot wrote and rewrote his *Supplément* "public interest in the Noble Savage enjoyed a paroxysm of enthusiasm" (2). Pasco's study provides significant insights into the origins of the widespread eighteenth-century interest in savages and "wolf" children and into the origins of the stubborn belief in the nobility of human beings uncorrupted by civilization. Among possible explanations for the widespread public acceptance of the myths of Tahitian paradise and of the Noble Savage, Pasco cites an ever increasing interest in "differentiating human beings from animals," an interest in the "so-called 'natural man' who had not been infected by civilization," and a willingness to believe "that such a creature would be good, indeed noble."

Tracing the origin of the myth of the "Noble Savage" to the much earlier attempts of priests and missionaries "to defend the enslaved people of newly discovered lands from the all too common inhuman treatment by European masters," Pasco argues that the myth subsequently became "a useful tenet for both *philosophes* and Romantics" (2). Significantly, he explains the interest in "what made human beings uniquely human," in "how they differed from animals," and in "whether there was such a thing as natural morality" (2) by the anxiety generated by the collapse of the authority formerly represented by the church or the state. Citing "[m]igration, the abhorning industrial revolution, and other social transformations . . . as possible causes for this society-wide anguish that so colored Romanticism and its accompanying political, social, and

aesthetic revolutions,” Pasco draws our attention to a “sense of flux or, more anguishing, of political, social, and ecclesiastical instability” brought about by the weakening authority of the aristocracy, the church, and the government. The inability of the government and the church to guarantee “the validity of the law” resulted in significant changes, even in a “paradigm shift in the perception of social issues,” and, above all in a shift in ethical standards whose former strength was undermined by an uncomfortable realization that “there might be no basis for ethics itself.” Pasco describes eighteenth-century France as

an unsettled society with weak foundations, great anxiety, ephemeral pleasures, and only the scraps of joy. Suicide increased to such a degree that in the early nineteenth century there was talk of an epidemic. People apparently felt lost. (3)

In this crisis “people desperately wanted to discover the essence of humanity,” “to uncover the hidden, inner core of human beings stripped of society’s imperatives” ; the general uncertainty of people about their own essence generated an acute interest in the studies of “natural” man uncorrupted by civilization, in a “stable core, a base reality that depended on neither church nor king” (4).

According to Pasco, even though the mirage of the South Sea paradise and the myth of the Noble Savage were eventually discarded, some aspects of these erroneous notions “remained a constituent part of the Western worldview for more than one hundred years” (1). Concluding his study, Pasco points out that

Belief in the Noble Savage and a morally superior nature did not dissipate immediately. . . . Nor did the myths fade absolutely. Resurgent phantoms recur

in neo-Romantic creations by Paul Gauguin and Pierre Loti, and several of its constituent elements, particularly the distrust of civilization and the dogged belief that humankind is basically good, would become two of the most important tenets of Romanticism. (7)

One might suggest that some aspects of the intellectual, social, and political climate of eighteenth-century France can be also identified in different countries and in different historical periods when rapid social and political changes force human individuals to renegotiate their identities. David Bleich, for example, describes late nineteenth-century England in terms that almost mirror Pasco's analysis of the intellectual climate of eighteenth-century France. Bleich states that during the "Transition" period in England, spanning roughly from the 1870s to the 1920s,

[c]ultural identities reached new degrees of turbulence and uncertainty as the inner claims of the individuals, communities, and marginal groups' interests began challenging long-established, externally constituted authorities, notably the church and the crown. Scientific possibility in the Transition, mobilized by intellectuals, brought these claims to their most feverish pitch. (127)

Similarly, the emergence of two distinct political systems in the twentieth century, as well as what seems to be the never ending cycle of the collapse of old and the emergence of new political, social, and cultural authorities, generated an equally strong crisis in human identities, an equally strong anxiety and uncertainty about one's human nature, and an equally strong desire "to discover the essence of humanity," in Pasco's terms. Interesting parallels can thus be drawn between the concerns and anxieties of eighteenth-

and nineteenth-century intellectuals and major trends in twentieth-century literary criticism of the dystopian novel.

Registering this persistent desire to discover humanity's "authentic inner self" as a broad twentieth-century social and cultural phenomenon, Henry Stuart Hughes observes that

[m]ore recently, a number of American commentators have picked up the threads of optimism that lie scattered through Freud's latter writings and have tried to weave them into a coherent theory. Lionel Trilling has asked us "to consider whether this emphasis on biology . . . far from being a reactionary idea . . . is actually a liberating idea. It proposes to us that culture is not all-powerful. It suggests that there is a residue of human quality beyond the reach of cultural control, and that this residue . . . , elemental as it may be, serves to bring culture itself under criticism and keeps it from being absolute. (138)

One can definitely see a specific manifestation of this tendency in numerous examples of twentieth-century criticism of dystopian fiction. Apparently, the myth of the Noble Savage has cast a long shadow over its direction. While eighteenth-century French *philosophes* blamed civilization for the corrupted state of men, twentieth-century critics of and commentators on dystopian novels have attributed the evil of corruption to totalitarian regimes. Thus, according to Gorman Beauchamp, "the central *mythos* of the dystopian novel" features the rebellion of "natural" man "against the rigid and reductionist rationalism of utopia" which is inevitably expressed in cultural primitivism. Claiming that "the dystopian novel reintroduces the discontent of the individual with civilization," Beauchamp asserts that the dystopist "raises the immemorial cry of men

discontent with their civilization: Back to Nature” (“Primitivism” 88-9). Even though Beauchamp puts the word “natural” in inverted commas, thus pointing to the adjective’s tentative status, he still uses it to describe some essential characteristics of human beings, assuming at the same time that the fundamentals of humanity are essentially positive and that they can be best observed in primitive societies.

The earlier reviewed studies of human nature in dystopian fiction by Quinonez and Cooke also aim at asserting the presence of an immutable core in human nature--whether moral and psychological or biological. However, as I note above, neither *Erewhon* nor *Brave New World* (nor other British dystopian novels) views this immutable inner core in positive or optimistic terms. In many respects, Butler’s and Huxley’s views of humanity’s flaws and shortcomings have been shaped by the earlier tradition of literary utopias which displays strong, yet, to my knowledge, insufficiently studied (or focused upon) dystopian undercurrents. A review of Plato’s, More’s, and Voltaire’s assumptions about human nature, as these assumptions manifest themselves in their most known works, can thus provide significant insights into the nature of Butler’s and Huxley’s engagement with their influential and provocative thought.

5.3 Representation of human nature in Plato’s *Republic*, More’s *Utopia*, and Voltaire’s *Candide*

5.3.1 Plato

“No utopian who read,” the Manuels point out, “ever laid the ghost of Plato” (110); yet this observation is also true in the case of dystopian thinkers. Plato’s view of human nature manifests undeniable affinity with dystopian thinking on this subject, challenging,

at the same time, the philosopher's rather doubtful status as a utopian. Indeed, even though many critics have detected in *The Republic* some features of a totalitarian or even an "early Fascist state,"³² acknowledging what Bleich calls "the latent ruthlessness of the intellectual posture" of Plato's utopianism (30), the philosopher retains a place of honour in the history of Western utopian thought for bequeathing "to Western utopia the idea of a city of perfect justice ruled by an aristocracy that was educated to abide by a set of absolute values" (the Manuels 111). Accordingly, most critical approaches to *The Republic* reflect the tendency that is easily traceable in the studies of other utopian/dystopian masterpieces: critical discussion almost invariably focuses on the mode of government, education, social customs, and rituals of Plato's imaginary fictional state rather than on his assumptions concerning human nature.

At the same time, Plato's thought in *The Republic* has become almost exclusively identified with his famous and often quoted lines:

Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils,--no, nor the human race, as I believe,--and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. (166)

However, the uplifting pathos of these famous lines does not convey their writer's deep mistrust of human nature or even his profound misanthropy. Surprisingly, it appears that another of Plato's pronouncements, the one that should have made him equally well

known, is rarely if ever quoted--at least in the context of utopian/dystopian commentary and criticism on his own works or the works his *Republic* inspired:

Say then, my friend, In what manner does tyranny arise?--that it has a democratic origin is evident.

Clearly. (254)

Plato's animosity to democracy springs from his conviction that freedom in a democratic state degenerates into liberty which will have no limits (255) and from his pessimistic view of human nature. "[I]n all of us," states his fictional Socrates in *The Republic*, "even in good men, there is a lawless wild-beast nature, which peers out in sleep" (265). Socrates asserts further that "gorged with meat and drink," the wild beast within every human being "can shake off its sleep and go forth to satisfy its desires." And when a man parts "company with all shame and sense," "there is no conceivable folly or crime . . . [he] may not be ready to commit."

However, even though Socrates maintains that every human being appears to have the propensity for these "unlawful" and "unnecessary pleasures and appetites," he also maintains that

in some persons they are controlled by the laws and the reason, and the better desires prevail over them . . . while in the case of others they are stronger, and there are more of them. (264)

Plato counts "children, women, and servants," as well as "the freemen so called who are of the lowest and more numerous class," among people who are generally incapable of

controlling their “manifold and complex pleasures, and desires, and pains” (121).

His ideal state calls for subordinating the overwhelming majority of its population to the disciplined and principled majority. As Socrates puts it,

. . . everyone had better be ruled by divine wisdom dwelling within him; or, if this be impossible, then by an external authority, in order that we may be all, as far as possible, under the same government, friends and equals. (286)

This presumed inability of the major part of the population to control their “unnecessary” pleasures and appetites serves in *The Republic* as a justification for an authoritarian state in which “the meaner desires of the many are held down by the virtuous desires and wisdom of the few” (121). This mode of governing is clearly incompatible with a democratic state in which, according to Plato, the State’s subjects become like the State’s rulers; the rulers become like the subjects; the fathers descend to the level of their sons; the sons possess no respect for their fathers; “the master fears and flatters his scholars”; the scholars, in turn, “despise their masters and tutors”; and “young and old are alike” (255-6). In other words, in such a State, freedom turns into liberty, making any exercise of authority impossible. This mode of governing can hardly be desirable from the perspective of Plato’s Ideal State, in which the only basis of human equality is the suppression of the individual freedom of all people comprising Plato’s three classes: philosophers, guardians, and workers.

Plato’s elaborate tri-partite structure of the soul in which the better principle, or Reason, should subordinate both its middle principle, or Passion (which Plato believes sides with reason), and its lowest principle, or Appetite, both mirrors his earlier stated

views on human nature and provides further justification for the authoritarian principles governing his Ideal State:

. . . in the human soul there is a better and also a worse principle; and when the better has the worst under control, then a man is said to be master of himself; and this is a term of praise: but when, owing to evil education or association, the better principle, which is also the smaller, is overwhelmed by the greater mass of the worse--in this case he is blamed and is called the slave of self and unprincipled. (120)

Plato extends his concept of the soul's tri-partite structure to the structure of his State and its government, repeatedly emphasizing the connection between them and asking his readers "not to forget the parallel of the individual and the State" (270). Asserting, in a rather circular manner, that "[s]tates are like men; they grow out of human character" (235) and that "as the government is, such will be the man" (249), the philosopher advocates the necessity of the "higher class" of guardians whose task is to protect the State against its enemies and to maintain peace among the citizens, so that "the one may not have the will, or the other the power, to harm us" (104).

This reference to the potential power of the State's populace and its ability, as Plato puts it, "to harm us" is highly suggestive. To prevent social mobility within his Ideal State, Plato firmly fixes the social and professional status of its citizens, defining their identities in terms of their professional occupation and social position. Therefore, another significant aspect of Plato's views on human nature concerns his assumption that nature predisposes human beings to perform certain tasks, which is why "the original principle," that the philosopher lays at the foundation of his State, proclaims that "one

man should practice one thing only, the thing to which his nature was best adapted” (122-3). Accordingly, the role of education in Plato’s Ideal State does not consist in developing the natural abilities of its citizens, but in training them physically to follow the rigid rituals of behaviour that their assigned social position prescribes. And, above all, the role of education in Plato’s Ideal State calls for conditioning its populace mentally, so that they accept without questioning the State’s rulers’ view about their function in society.

Even though Plato’s view of human nature has remained largely unchallenged by later dystopian writers, his ideal vision of the State based on the rule of Reason has lost its attraction for them. While Thomas More, in his *Utopia*, still dramatizes a philosopher’s conflict between his duty, as Plato defines it, of putting his “political greatness and wisdom” in the service of his country and his growing realization that Reason is powerless to control the “unnecessary pleasures and appetites” of humanity, Voltaire makes a decisive break with the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king. The French *philosophe* advocates in *Candide* the ideal of an intellectual who takes refuge in the quietness of philosophical reflection uninterrupted by the folly of the world. Samuel Butler oscillates uncomfortably between rejecting all forms of institutional authority and preserving it at the same time in the form of an impersonal force of unfathomable evolution. And Aldous Huxley ostensibly puts his wisdom and authority at the service of his country, yet, at the same time, he never forgets to remind his perceptive readers that he has no faith in the success of his efforts.

5.3.2. Thomas More

If Plato's *Republic*, like Voltaire's *Candide*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and Huxley's *Brave New World*, displays no interest in considering the issue of social inequality or unequal distribution of wealth as a potential cause of human delinquency, More's vision of human nature in his *Utopia* accommodates his understanding that many human "vices" are caused by the appalling and inescapable poverty of the offenders, who, ironically, often find themselves sentenced to death for the offence of theft they commit to avoid death from hunger. *Utopia*'s emphasis on social inequality in More's target society and the book's famous description of the fictional country where private property and money have been abolished seem to suggest that More shared Hythloday's utopian belief that better human societies foster better human beings, or, in other words, that human nature is malleable. The critical tradition of interpreting More's book as an unambiguous utopia also lends support to this conclusion.

On the other hand, More's eponymous narrator and his fictional alter-ego, Raphael Hythloday, also recognize that there is an immutable or "fixed" core in human beings. However, they are not inclined to see this core in positive and optimistic terms or lay any hope on its redeeming potential. On the contrary, both interlocutors view human pride--a defining characteristic of human nature in More's *Utopia*--as an insurmountable obstacle that will invariably undermine all human attempts to establish an ideal or perfect human society. Disagreeing on the issue of whether philosophers should serve princes, More-the-narrator and Hythloday concur in deeming human pride a serious impediment to the goal of universal happiness. The agreement between the two interlocutors, whose function is to dramatize the opposing viewpoints, further

underscores More's view of the moral corruption of human nature, introducing a distinctly dystopian note to his *Utopia*.

The strong tradition of interpreting More's *Utopia* as an unambiguous utopia and the overwhelming critical attention devoted to its second part (which contains a detailed account of the social arrangements and cultural rituals that are adopted by More's famous fictional state) have diverted the attention of *Utopia*'s critics and readers from the book's unflattering portrayal of human nature. Even though it is often recognized that More's eponymous narrator does not have much hope that he will ever see the commendable practices of the state of Utopia followed in his own country, the dystopian character of the writer's vision of human nature, to my knowledge, has not been brought into focus. Meanwhile, it is precisely More's dystopian view of human nature that lies at the heart of the conflict which is dramatized in the book and which necessitates its Menippean (or meta-utopian) structure.

Written at a time when, as Blanchard points out, the ideal of an active life began to be challenged by the ideal of a contemplative life, More's *Utopia* dramatizes the moral conflict of an intellectual between his aspirations to put his wisdom and talents at the service of his country and his knowledge of the ultimate futility of such an undertaking. Representing two sides of this conflict, two learned and sagacious philosophers, More-the-narrator and his alter ego, Raphael Hythloday, debate the feasibility of their service to their country. Invoking Plato's famous saying on the value and appropriateness of appointing philosophers to be rulers in a perfect state, More-the-narrator urges his opponent to use his wisdom and talents to serve his country, insisting that Hythloday "might, by the advice which is in [his] power to give, do a great deal of good to mankind." From the narrator's perspective, doing good to mankind "is the chief design that every good man ought to propose to himself in living." Concurring with Plato's

belief “that nations will be happy, when either philosophers become kings, or kings become philosophers,” he suggests that social injustice in his contemporary state results from philosophers’ refusal “to think it their duty to assist kings with their councils” (17). To defend his refusal to serve kings and princes by his enlightened advice, Hythloday replies that “there is no room for philosophy in the Courts of Princes” (22). He doubts that his wisdom will have enough influence to correct the follies of either kings or their ministers, who are guided by considerations of increasing their personal wealth and pleasure rather than enhancing public good. More-the-narrator, however, asserts that there is room for philosophy in the Courts of Princes. But, says he, this philosophy is not

speculative philosophy that makes everything to be alike fitting at all times: but there is another philosophy that is more pliable, that knows its proper scene, accommodates itself to it, and teaches a man with propriety and decency to act that part which has fallen to his share. (22)

More further argues that one must not “abandon the commonwealth, for the same reasons [one] should not forsake the ship in a storm because [one] cannot command the winds” (22). Strongly disagreeing with the narrator’s argument, Hythloday responds that if he adopts this course of action, all his efforts will be directed at preserving himself from going mad while he endeavours “to cure the madness of others” (22).

The meta-utopian structure of More’s book allows the writer to give equal weight to both interlocutors’ arguments without giving a clear preference to either conflicting voice. At the same time, the unresolved argument dramatized in the first part of *Utopia* casts an ironic shadow on the description of the Commonwealth of Utopia Hythloday

offers in the second part of the book, indicating that More did not write *Utopia* as a blueprint of a model state.

Despite their inability to come to an agreement about the purpose that “every good man ought to propose to himself in living” or to reconcile the intellectual’s desire to perform his moral duty and serve his country with his understanding of the futility of this service, More-the-narrator and Hythloday attribute their disagreement to the same cause--the moral corruption of human nature. Both see human pride as the defining characteristic of human nature that largely accounts for humanity’s deplorable condition.

Pointing out that many human vices are caused by social injustice, Hythloday advocates the abolition of private property and money as the root of all social evils; on the other hand, he maintains that human pride will prevent the establishment of a human society in which all citizens could enjoy equal rights and equal wealth. Referring to human pride as the origin of human inequality and unhappiness, as the “plague of human nature,” and as the “source of . . . much misery” (83), Hythloday explains that

this vice does not measure happiness so much by its own conveniences as by the miseries of others; and would not be satisfied with being thought a goddess, if none were left that were miserable, over whom she might insult. Pride thinks its own happiness shines the brighter by comparing it with the misfortunes of other persons; that by displaying its own wealth, they may feel their poverty more sensibly. This is that infernal serpent that creeps into the breasts of mortals, and possesses them too much to be easily drawn out. (84)

Highly praising the “form of government” that “the Utopians have fallen upon” and wishing that “all the worlds could be so wise as to imitate them,” Hythloday,

nevertheless, readily acknowledges that, in real life, it is unattainable. More-the-narrator also expresses his doubts concerning the attainability of the Utopian state by stating directly that “there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our government” (85). Moreover, he does not challenge Hythloday’s assertion that human pride, feeding on possession of money and private property, forces rich people to “pursue their private ends” “on pretence of managing the public” affairs (83). He also concurs with Hythloday’s negative verdict on human nature, acknowledging that “ill opinions cannot be quite rooted out” and that one “cannot cure some received vice according to [one’s] wishes.” However, thinking as a statesman, More-the-narrator observes to himself that the practice of “living in common, without the use of money,” would take away “all nobility, magnificence, splendour, and majesty, which according to the common opinion, are the true ornaments of a nation” (84). In this way, More-the-narrator both supports Hythloday’s verdict on human nature and suggests that from the national perspective, human pride may have a positive dimension.

The ambiguity of More’s *Utopia* manifests itself not only in the pun that is incorporated in its famous title--“EUTOPIA,” or a “good place,” and “OUTOPIA,” or “nowhere”--but also in the vision of the moral shortcomings of human nature that the book communicates. While More-the-narrator does not challenge Hythloday’s negative view of human nature, he, in line with the book’s meta-utopian form, offers a different perspective on human vanity, greed, and selfishness. Nevertheless, in view of Utopia’s concern with social injustice, human pride’s redeeming quality of contributing to the glory of a nation does not compensate for its rendering great vision impossible. Still, despite the intentional ambiguity of his book, More’s commitment to humanist values outweighs his negative view of human nature: More’s book is not a dystopian novel.

Even though the writer questions the individual's wisdom of serving his nation by his knowledge, he does not question the wisdom of acquiring knowledge as an end in itself. The lure of contemplative life allows the writer to position himself firmly with respect to the good.

Voltaire

The vision of human nature that Voltaire communicates in *Candide* harks back to both Plato and Thomas More, highlighting human beings' in-built, constitutional propensity to violence and their moral corruption. Like Plato, who resolutely states that "there is no conceivable folly or crime . . . a man may not be ready to commit" "when he has parted company with all shame and sense," Voltaire is not averse to laying bare all imaginable manifestations of human imperfection:

"Do you believe," said Candide, "that men have always massacred each other as they do to-day, that they have always been liars, cheats, traitors, ingrates, brigands, idiots, thieves, scoundrels, gluttons, drunkards, misers, envious, ambitious, bloody-minded, calumniators, debauchees, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools?"

"Do you believe," said Martin, "that hawks have always eaten pigeons when they have found them?"

"Yes, without doubt," said Candide.

"Well, then," said Martin, "if hawks have always had the same characteristics why should you imagine that men may have changed theirs?" (55)

Even though further in the text, *Candide* attempts to undermine Martin's analogy between human beings and brutes by pointing out that the capacity for free will distinguishes humans from animals, the overall rhetoric of Voltaire's *conte philosophique* suggests, as the rhetoric of Plato's *Republic* does, that all humans beings are not equally endowed with this faculty. Significantly, both Plato and Voltaire demonstrate in their respective works the dystopian belief in the existence of an immutable core in human nature; and, in line with their dystopian view of human nature, the philosophers regard this immutable core as a set of strongly negative, rather than positive, aspects of being human. Voltaire, however, departs from Plato's vision of a good life when he suggests in *Candide* that the intellectual's exercise of wisdom lies in cultivating his individual--as opposed to public--"garden." Voltaire's protagonists are encouraged to escape the evil and folly of the world rather than to control it through establishing the rule of enlightened philosophers.

At the same time, Voltaire dramatizes in his *Candide* the theme of human pride, so prominent in More's *Utopia*. His portrayal in *Candide* of a fictional utopia--the country of El Dorado, which has preserved the "innocence and happiness" (43) of its inhabitants-- serves the function of defamiliarization, providing an ironic contrast between the attitudes to wealth and status of the inhabitants of El Dorado and the attitudes to wealth and status of the citizens of *Candide*'s native country. Even though *Candide* and his valet Cacambo find the country of El Dorado admirable and hospitable, they still decide to return to the world to which, despite its obvious imperfections, they are bound by ties of common values. Significantly, *Candide*'s and Cacambo's reasons for leaving El Dorado are the same reasons that More's Hythloday provides in support of his conviction that Utopia's customs cannot be followed in European countries. "If we abide here," says *Candide*,

We shall only be upon a footing with the rest, whereas, if we return to our old world, only with twelve sheep laden with the pebbles of El Dorado [precious stones that have no value for El Dorado's citizens], we shall be richer than all the kings in Europe. (46)

Voltaire clearly indicates that his fictional characters' decision is prompted by those features of their individual characters that are common to all human beings. Happy in El Dorado, Candide and Cacambo resolve "to be no longer so" because "mankind are . . . fond of roving, of making a figure in their own country, and of boasting of what they have seen in their travels" (46). From Voltaire's perspective, as from More's, the fatal moral shortcoming--human pride--ruins the prospects for establishing an ideal commonwealth in reality by making life in a perfect state unattractive and boring.

However, Voltaire, like Diderot in his *Supplément*, allays, at end of his fable, the dystopian sentiments that it fosters by a reconciliatory gesture. Encouraging his protagonists to cultivate their gardens, Voltaire provides a moral injunction for his readers, instructing them on how to lead a good life or on how to position themselves with respect to the good. The allegiance of *Candide's* characters to their newly-found values distinguishes them from the narrators and protagonists of later dystopian novels. Their authors will provide no guidance for them--or for the readers of their dystopian novels--on how to live a good life.

Although Butler clearly shares Plato's anti-democratic views and his negative opinion on human nature, his staunch disrespect for authorities, as I argue in Chapter 3, prevents him from envisioning an Ideal State in which the rule of "the cultivated class" over "the populace" will ensure order and stability in the state. To maintain the status quo, as the lesser of the two evils which confront humanity, Butler invests an abstract concept of "tradition" and an impersonal force of evolution with the ultimate authority over the human predicament. However, the writer's defense of beliefs, values, and of the way of life, which he regards as irrational and absurd, generates no sustainable values by which to position his contemporary intellectuals with respect to the good. Butler's ingenious arguing in favour of privileging the absurd over the unknown devalues and undermines the "positives" he ostensibly defends, tainting his "ideals" with a suspicion that destroys their appeal.

For Huxley, on the other hand, Plato's Ideal State has an undeniable appeal. As Schmerl points out, the writer "has never explicitly rejected" the aristocratic ideal "that everyone should be in his proper place" (331). From this perspective, *Brave New World* portrays a monstrous corruption of Plato's lofty ideal of a state based on the rule of reason, which is why the novel cannot be regarded unequivocally as an anti-authoritarian anti-utopia. On the other hand, the relationship between Plato's *Republic* and *Brave New World* is ambiguous and complicated. "[A] strange mixture of desire and revulsion on the part of its author" (Schmerl 330), *Brave New World* both mourns the impossibility of Plato's vision and attempts to escape it.

While critical interpretation of Huxley's later works--*Brave New World Revisited*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island*--tends to suggest that the writer, as an

intellectual, viewed his moral duty in serving his country or even humanity by envisioning a utopian--in the best sense of this word--future for it, the annihilatory gestures his above mentioned works make at the end indicate that Huxley, like More, is haunted by a conflict between his desire to make a difference in his contemporary society and his understanding of the futility of such an undertaking. Huxley's negative view of human nature resurfaces in his later works, undermining the strength of his positive vision. In *Brave New World Revisited*, the writer compares humanity with birds that having learned "how to grub up a good living without being compelled to use [their] wings will soon renounce the privilege of flight and remain forever grounded" (96). In Huxley's *Island*, the Fortinbras-style invasion of Pala at the end of the novel substantially reframes the narrative, suggesting that the writer does not place hope in the viability of his vision.³³ Moreover, the interpretive conventions of approaching *Island* as an unambiguous utopia and the overwhelming critical focus on the principles underlying Pala's governance and its social and cultural life have obscured both Huxley's concern and his novel's focus on the fundamental and constitutional unhappiness of human beings and on the tragic aspects of their experience and existence. The writer's allusion to the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and his concept of "Will," that are clearly recognizable in the name Huxley gives to his protagonist, has completely escaped (to my knowledge) the attention of the novel's critics. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that the writer was completely unaware of the sinister resemblance between the social strategies he recommends as "utopian" in *Brave New World Revisited* and *Island* and those that he ostensibly satirizes as "dystopian" in *Brave New World*. The inconclusive dialectic of a meta-utopian structure works not only within some of Huxley's individual novels, but also between them. His "utopian" vision is, in many respects, a continuation of his dystopian one.

The negative and pessimistic view of human nature that Plato articulates in *The Republic* generates his vision of an Ideal State in which the irrational appetites of the many are controlled by the rational governance of the few. More's negative view of human nature in *Utopia* yields to his humanist concerns: his narrator's belief that the intellectual's duty is "not to forsake the ship in a storm," despite this intellectual's clear understanding that he "cannot command the winds" (22), clearly communicates the writer's humanist values. Voltaire's contemptuous view of human nature prompts him to abandon Plato's idea of the intellectual's moral duty to serve his state and to side with More's Hythloday. In *Candide*, the Enlightenment *philosophe* encourages the intellectual to "forsake" the metaphorical ships of all war-torn and madness-driven states and to seek shelter from the insanity of the world in a quiet "harbour" of his intellectual "garden." Even though Voltaire's vision of the intellectual's duty, unlike More's, abandons humanity to its own devices, his *Candide* still allows the individual to position himself with respect to the good. Butler's poignant admission in *Life and Habit* that in all he writes he is "among the damned" (35) and Huxley's questioning of Voltaire's dictum in his "On Re-reading *Candide*"--" *Il faut cultiver notre jardin*. Yes, but suppose one begins to wonder why?"--indicate that the values that sustained generations of prominent intellectuals have lost their luster for modern British dystopians. But, even more importantly, the very issue of the intellectual's moral duty disappears from the dystopian agenda. Butler's negative and pessimistic view of human nature generates in *Erewhon* a vision of humanity which is represented by only two equally uninspiring types: the rogues and the fools. Their invariably misplaced and misdirected actions demonstrate only these actions' ultimate futility. Fully sharing Plato's, More's, and Voltaire's low opinion of human nature, Butler envisages no action but inaction for his intellectual. Huxley, on the other hand, without sharing Thomas More's *Utopia*'s

humanist values, finds himself haunted by the book's unresolved conflict.

Nevertheless, in framing his "utopias," he strictly follows Aristotle's injunction.³⁴ In his *Island*, Huxley does assume what he wishes in framing his ideal, but he re-frames his "utopia" in order to "to avoid impossibilities."

Notes

1. Holland points out that the menippea “embraced various genres such as symposium and diatribe in antiquity” and “added the paradox to its repertoire in the Renaissance” (133).

2. The fragmentary character of Varro’s extant work and the centuries that separate us from the period in which Lucian wrote his Menippean satire make it difficult to claim with absolute authority what purpose writers pursued in using the genre. However, the distinction Hall makes between the Varronian and Lucianic use of Menippean satire clarifies the generic distinctions between the types of satire Dryden uses in his *Absalom and Achitophel* and discusses in his *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, and Pope uses in his later four-book edition of *The Dunciad*. Significantly, Pope, like Samuel Butler and, arguably, Aldous Huxley, resorts to Menippean satire at a time when major changes occur in approaches to accumulating knowledge or when new knowledge necessitates the transfer of authority in criticism or science to a new type of scholar or scientist. Notably, Blanchard links both the origin and the revival of the Menippean genre in the Renaissance to “a period of social and intellectual ferment that gave birth to the discipline of modern scholarship” (12).

3. Bisanz notes that *Erewhon Revisited* represents a rare variation upon the theme of the tragic consequences of Christ’s return on earth. In fact, he says it is one of only two. The other variation on the same theme is explored in the legend of The Great Inquisitor in Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*. See Bisanz, “The ‘Grand-Inquisitor’ Motif.”

4. I resist the practice of numerous scholars of *Erewhon* who refer to the novel's narrator by the name Butler gives him in the sequel--Higgs. Even though the two *Erewhon* books show significant continuity in their plots and action, Butler did not change the name of his narrator in *Erewhon* after he revised his first novel for publication in 1901.

5. To draw parallels between the intellectual climate of fifth-century Greece and Victorian England is beyond the scope of my study; nevertheless the following observation by Dover can, in my opinion, successfully describe the intellectual atmosphere in late nineteenth-century England from Samuel Butler's perspective. Dover points out that fifth-century Greece

produced some individuals of extraordinary intellectual penetration, who speculated on the structure and history of the universe in terms of natural intelligible processes from which the acts of personal gods were excluded; but in the same city as such an individual, often perhaps in the same household, we should find a majority for whom a strong wind was a person who decided when he would blow, a blight on the crops the manifestation of the god's anger for a sacrifice promised but not performed, and a sudden bright idea the intervention of an unseen being in the mental processes of an individual human. The average Greek, in short, felt himself to be living in a world populated by superhuman agents. (Dover 31)

6. Knoepfmacher rightly senses that *Erewhon* cannot be unproblematically attributed to the genre of satire. However, he suggests that "*Erewhon* fails to sustain its satire,"

because at the time of the novel's writing, Butler was still groping "for the norms necessary for such a position." Therefore, Butler, in Knoepfelmacher's opinion, "obliterates the position of the author and converts his confident laughter into an unsure search." *Erewhon*, thus, combines satire with "an effort to endow a still wishful Utopia with the evolutionary creed that Butler did not find and establish until the codification of his later theories" (238).

This statement shows that Knoepfelmacher, along with other critic and scholars, does not recognize the elements of Menippean satire in Butler's evolutionary writings. The "uncertainty" of *Erewhon*'s message does not reflect the uncertainty of Butler's moral stand. The novel "hesitates" because the author is torn by conflicting impulses: his desire to expose the lack of foundation for human practices and beliefs and his desire to preserve and leave intact the institutions that promote them.

7. Butler's affinity to Lucian also manifests itself in the attention he gives to these elements in *Erewhon*'s plot that, as Turner points out, constituted for Lucian standard rhetorical exercises of his literary training which was aimed at modeling his style and content "on those of the best Greek authors" (12). Thus Turner writes that

Of the many standard exercises used in this training, it will be enough to mention two, which might otherwise be mistaken for original forms invented by Lucian. They are *dikanikos logos*, which was to dramatize an argument in a law-court scene (as in "Fishing for Phonies"), and the *ekphrasis*, which was to describe a visual object (like the statues in "The Pathological Liar") as vividly as possible. The other point to register is that though these exercises were usually of a

controversial nature, the subject of the controversy was often quite absurd: it did not matter what you were saying, as long as you said it convincingly. (13)

From this perspective, *Erewhon*'s Chapter on "Some Erewhonian Trials," the narrator's detailed description of the gigantic statues he finds upon his entrance to Erewhon, and the Chapter on "The views of Erewhonians Concerning Death," in which the narrator speaks of sculptors' work and of Erewhonians' love for making sculptures of themselves, indicate that for Butler too these Chapters presented the challenge of an exercise in rhetorical training. Ergo, the writer was following the tradition which clarifies what kind of work he was writing.

8. The development of false analogies in *Erewhon*'s "The Book of the Machines" and in *Life and Habit* can also be traced back to Lucian's writings. As Tackaberry indicates, in Lucian's

treatise of Philodemus the subject of false analogy and incomplete similarity . . . in induction occupies a prominent place. If we conclude that, since a hair of the head on being removed is replaced by nature, therefore a head or an eye will be restored, we have failed to consider the common and peculiar properties of visible phenomena. Lucian likewise emphasizes the danger of false analogies. Hermotimus's analogy of the wine fails because it is most unlike philosophy. Whereas wine is homogeneous . . . and admits the application of the principle . . . by which we pass from the sample to the whole cask, philosophy on the other hand is heterogeneous; the teacher produces something different every day. We cannot therefore reason from vine to philosophy. (60)

Again, the recognition of false analogies Butler pursues in the Chapters on “The Book of the Machines” clarifies the tradition Butler’s work belongs to and indicates that *Erewhon* cannot be classified as a utopia or dystopia on the basis of the Erewhonian ban on machinery.

9. The mood and tone of this chapter also echoes Blake’s poem “The Book of Thel” in which the horrors awaiting humanity after the grave and the misery of life spent in anticipation of death force the heroine--a pre-natal soul discontented with her paradisaical existence, as some Erewhonian unborn are dissatisfied with their disembodied bliss--to refuse to be born.

10. Admittedly, this self-reflecting questioning or even downright acknowledgement of the ultimate insignificance of one’s creative efforts did not start with Butler. Rochester’s *Satires* communicate, and Pope’s later version of *The Dunciad* betrays, similar sentiments. Yet in Butler’s *Erewhon* and in twentieth-century literary dystopias, the haunting suspicion of the insignificance and irrelevance of creative work becomes part and parcel of their authors’ overall dystopian outlook.

11. Originating in nineteenth-century Russian literature, the concept of “the superfluous man” refers to clever and talented individuals who, lacking a clear sense of identity, are not socially and professionally integrated into their societies.

12. In the first sentences of Defoe’s novel, Crusoe informs the reader about the transformation of his family name from “Kreutznaer” to “Crusoe” (4).

13. In a paper given during the 30th Annual Meeting of the Society for Utopian Studies (October 2005), Alex MacDonald emphasized the “mental confinement” of the inhabitants of Butler’s fictional world. Pointing out that “many of the cashiers and managers of the Musical banks . . . carry a ‘cramped expression upon their faces’ (144),” he further suggested that “[e]ven the unborn seem to be cramped and confined within their world for they make the extraordinary decision to be born into Erewhon.” (E-mail to author, October 19, 2007.)

14. On the subject of Aldous Huxley and French literature see Gerd Rohmann, *Aldous Huxley und französische literature* (Marburg: Kleinoffsetdruck Görich & Weiershäuser, 1968); Norma Rinsler, “Aldous Huxley and French Literature: A Reconsideration,” in *Recherches comparatistes de la Renaissance à nos jours, Revue de Littérature Comparée* Paris, vol.56, no. 1, 1982: 79-91; Derek P. Scales, *Aldous Huxley and French Literature*, Australian Humanities Research Council, Monograph 13 (Sydney 1969); and Ruth L. Temple, “Aldous Huxley et la littérature française,” *Revue de Littérature Comparée* Paris, (janvier-mars 1939): 65-110.

15. Pasco indicates that Diderot revised the *Supplément* at least twice, the last time in 1780, four years before the writer’s death and sixteen years before it was published in 1796 (2).

16. Bougainville was also the founder in the 1760s of the first settlement in the Lively Island, one of the Falkland Islands which bears in Spanish his name: *Isla Bougainville*.

In Huxley's *Brave New World*, the Falkland Islands become the place of Bernard Marx's and Helmholtz Watson's exile from civilization.

17. Although Morson places bigger emphasis on the meta-utopian rather than Menippean qualities of Diderot's text, he points out the connection between the two forms by pointing out that "[t]he "seriocomic" tone of meta-utopia probably reflects its generic debt to [M]enippean satire" (203, note 9).

18. The Preface to the English translation of the *Supplément* refers to the passage in the surviving review of Bougainville's book that was not used in his *Supplément* in which the writer shows Diderot's full awareness of the unflattering portrayal of savages in Bougainville's book. Bowen points out that the passage clearly indicates that "Diderot was not swept off his feet by the fashionable tendency of the period to idealize the primitive" (177-8).

19. "Monsieur de Bougainville's book," Diderot writes,

several times portrays the savage man as a being who is generally so stupid that a masterpiece of human industry makes no more impression on him than the great phenomena of nature; he has always seen those phenomena; he has ceased to think about them; he no longer marvels at them; and he lacks the necessary fund of elementary ideas that would lead him to a true estimation of great works of art. (quoted in Bowen 178)

20. See Alan Pasco, "On Making Mirages, Tahitian and Otherwise."

<http://www.vqronline.org/articles/2001/spring/pasco-on-making-mirages/>

21. Vernière writes that

Le désintéressment de Bougainville fut admirable. Il confia Aotourou au commandant du *Brisson* qui quitta La Rochelle en mars 1770 . . . pour l'île de France; une somme de 35.000 livres était consacrée au prix de passage. Aotourou fut à l'île de France l'hôte du gouverneur Poivre (oct.1770--sept.1771). Puis le capitaine Marion Du Fresne le pris á bord du *Mascarin*, mais le pauvre Tahitien mourrut dela petite vérole á Fort-Dauphin, lors d'une relâche á Madagascar. (464, note 1)

[Bougainville's disinterested generosity was admirable. He entrusted Aotourou to the care of the commander of the ship *Brisson* that left La Rochelle for Île-de-France in March 1770, having paid a sum of 35000 pounds to cover the expenses of his return travel. On Île-de-France, Aotourou was hosted by Governor Poivre (October 1770--September 1771). Then, Captain Marion Du Fresne took Aotourou on board of *Mascarin*, but the poor Tahitian died of small pox in Fort-Dauphin on the way to Madagascar.] (translation--mine)

22. Morson's analysis of Diderot's *Supplément* also led me to the conclusion that parallels can be drawn not only between this work and *Brave New World*, but also between it and Huxley's *Island*. In Diderot's work, "[i]nstead of converting the savages to Christianity," the chaplain is, as Morson points out, "like other utopian travelers,

himself converted to Tahitian natural religion and ‘confesses that he was tempted to throw his vestments into the ship and spend the rest of his days with them’” (162). Will Farnaby, the protagonist of Huxley’s *Island*, undergoes a similar transformation. Originally, he comes to the Island to promote the interests of the industrialist Lord Aldehyde, who nurtures the plans of bringing the resources of the small south sea island of Pala under his control. Yet, at the end of the novel, Will embraces the Palanese way of life as a sound alternative to the folly of the civilization he left.

23. Diderot’s *Supplément*, unlike Huxley’s *Brave New World*, ends “with the sort of balanced antitheses characteristic of meta-utopias” (Morson 163). Despite the convincing rhetoric of his fictional Tahitians, the writer does not advocate a “return to nature,” partly because the *Supplément* implies that the state of nature does not exist any longer, and partly because Diderot’s interlocutors recognize that the state of nature “includes both vices and virtues along with everything else.” The unclouded view of the actual state of nature makes A and B wary of all social schemes that promise utopian or perfect societies through establishing a new social order. “Putting things in order,” states B, “always means getting other people under your control” (225). Dividing their loyalties, as Morson puts it, “between utopian extravagance and prudent skepticism,” Diderot’s interlocutors decide to be “monks in France and savages in Tahiti,” putting on the costume of the country they visit, but keeping “the suit of clothes [they] will need to go home in” (228).

24. At the same time, Diderot clearly shows his awareness of the excesses inherent in extreme rationality. Discussing the pressures that an oversized population can put on the country’s limited resources, A and B suggest that many cruel and inhuman practices in

savage populations, such as cannibalism, crushing babies “under feet of a priestess while still in their mothers’ wombs,” putting “the edge of a priest’s knife” to the throats of grown men, or castrating them (183) may be manifestations of the early methods directed at limiting the growth of population. Wondering what may happen if savage nations “go on multiplying on a little spit of land that is less than three miles across” (182), Diderot’s interlocutors introduce the subject of Huxley’s unflagging concern. The uncontrolled growth of population was, in Huxley’s opinion, the main moving force of those changes that slowly eroded the values which used to nurture the intellectuals. Huxley addresses the theme of population growth in *Brave New World Revisited* and in his *Island*, attempting to offer solutions for curbing this growth.

25. In his *Tribune* article of January 4, 1946, on Zamyatin’s *We*, Orwell wrote:

The first thing anyone would notice about *We* is the fact--never pointed out, I believe--that Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* must be partly derived from it. Both books deal with the rebellion of the primitive human spirit against a rationalized, mechanized, painless world. . . .The atmosphere of the two books is similar, and it is roughly speaking the same kind of society that is being described, though Huxley’s book shows less political awareness and is more influenced by recent biological and psychological theories. (quoted in Watt 333)

26. E-mail to the author, July 28, 2007.

27. Suvin sees even utopia as “not a genre but the *sociopolitical subgenre of science fiction*” (*Metamorphoses* 61; italics--author’s).

28. Significantly, Aldiss points out that this search “for a definition of man and his status in the universe . . . is characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mode” (*Spree* 8). To my knowledge, no scholar has studied the elements of the Gothic genre and its function in Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *1984*, and Wells’s *The Time Machine*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, and *The Island of Doctor Moreau*.

The conventions of the gothic genre in *Brave New World* are less pronounced than in Wells’s *Time Machine* or Orwell’s *1984*; yet they are, nevertheless, conspicuously present. Not only does the novel’s setting in a distant future recall gothic locations in a distant and terrifying past (Aldiss 21), but Huxley’s physically repulsive description of Brave New World’s Deltas and Gammas also evokes in the reader the sense of imminent danger and impending doom with no possibility of escape.

29. Despite his original and thought-stimulating approach to defining the genre of science fiction, Aldiss offers a rather hackneyed interpretation of *Brave New World* when he suggests that “Huxley’s novel remains of great interest . . . partly because its central debate how far people should be induced to surrender their individuality for the benefit of a smooth-running state remains ever topical” (*Spree* 216).

30. At the same time, the lack of appreciation for Huxley’s thought allows the French writer Michel Houellebecq to “mine” clandestinely the rich deposit of Huxley’s thought to great acclaim for his own intellectual power. In *The Elementary Particles*, for instance, Houellebecq explores the dichotomy Huxley creates in *The Devils of Loudun*

between the “pure spirit” and the “pure flesh” that are embodied in the novel’s two major characters. The very title of Houellebecq’s *The Possibility of an Island* refers to the future of--or rather to the possibility of a future for--Bernard Marx and Helmholtz Watson.

31. Cooke refers to Gorman Beauchamp, whose critical approach to *Brave New World* “reflect[s] a common” and, in Cooke’s opinion, a “largely accurate belief that human nature is rooted in our genes” (7).

32. See Bleich for the list of notable commentators on Plato’s *Republic* such as Bertrand Russell, who recognized the problematic character of Plato’s ideal state (30).

33. In his “Choosing Utopia: An existential Reading of Aldous Huxley’s *Island*,” Alex MacDonald argues convincingly that *Island* “is a profoundly optimistic work” (103) in which “the idea and possibility of utopia does not end but remains to be worked for” (111). Pointing out that the novel’s ending “does not disestablish or invalidate” the Utopian dream that the beliefs and values of Pala’s founders have translated into practice, but that *Island*’s ending merely directs our attention “toward the struggle and the challenge of the world-at-large beyond Pala” (110), MacDonald brings forward a compelling case in defense of Huxley’s utopian beliefs.

34. The quotation from Aristotle Huxley places as an epigraph to his *Island* runs as follows: “In framing an ideal we may assume what we wish, but should avoid impossibilities.” The re-framing of the novel toward its end suggests that Huxley’s engagement with Aristotle’s words, like his engagement with Berdiaeff’s quotation that

he places as an epigraph to his *Brave New World*, is ironic. By destroying his vision at the end of his *Island*, Huxley avoids the impossibilities inherent in it.

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