CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Motivation for the Study

The present study aims at analysing Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* and Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* by applying Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches. The earlier studies of these novels highlight more the marvels or mischiefs of science in a futurist society. There is scope to focus on the socio-cultural matrix of the production of these novels.

Science Fiction is generally considered a genre dealing with futuristic technology, and science-based Utopian society. Critics, basing their interpretations on the heaviness of technology and scientific element present in the genre, conclude that Science Fiction has little to do with the past or contemporary social problems. Roberts defines Science Fiction as a “literature of ideas predicated on some substantive difference or differences between the world described and world in which readers actually live.” (Critical 3)

The twentieth century witnessed rapid progress in science and technology which, in turn, modified human life. People’s standard of living improved drastically owing to the technological advancement. Majority of researches on Science Fiction, highlight the role of technology impacting human life. Sion analyses the fiction of Aldous Huxley expressing concern about technology influencing human values, and hindering society in its human development. Simes examines science and technology associated with nuclear, computer and space science focusing on their respective treatment by Science Fiction writers like Isaac Asimov, John Barth, Arthur C. Clarke, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut. The social aspect of Science Fiction
is also taken into consideration by the modern researchers. Leslie considers the moral response in engineers and scientists to help individuals and make them adapt themselves to the social changes caused by the technological progress.

The application of Marxist and Neo-Marxist literary theories to Science Fiction brings out the fact that it actually criticises the role of people in power who want to perpetuate their own power by way of spreading their ideologies using technology. Science Fiction critiques contemporary society, just as any other type of novel does. This study is concerned with how the select novels of Huxley, Orwell and Bradbury critique society. This study uses Marxist and Neo-Marxist literary theories, with reference to class struggle, political administration, education, human values and culture. It also examines the use of various strategies by people in power for controlling and conditioning people’s minds. These theories when applied as tools to interpret the novels of Huxley, Orwell and Bradbury bring out their social relevance. Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1991), Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1953), Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* (2010) and are the novels analysed for the purpose of this study.

### 1.2. Marxist Literary Criticism

Marxist Literary Criticism analyses literature as the product of the prevailing economic condition of the society and the class struggle. It views literature as a product of the socio-cultural matrix in which it originates. The analysis of the social, political, and economic conditions, according to Marxist Literary Criticism, will enable the readers to understand a work of art as a product of history. Abrams and
Harpam emphasize that should analyse a work of art focusing on the differences between the dominant and repressed classes.

A Marxist critic typically undertakes to explain literature in any historical era, not as work created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as a ‘product’ of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era (160).

Marxist Literary Criticism holds that the social background of the author determines the types of characters in his works which comment on the political and economic conditions of his time. It emerged through the philosophy of Karl Marx (1843) who believed that the history of society is only the history of class struggle. The gap between the oppressing, and the oppressed classes, has been maintained throughout ages. Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie has been accompanied by a corresponding advancement of that class. In the modern age, the bourgeois society has sprung from the ruins of the feudal society, and has ensured the continuance of class antagonism. It has established new classes, new environments of oppression, and new forms of struggle in the place of the old ones.

The application of Marxist criticism enables the reader to understand how the hierarchical systems, and the attitudes of the different social classes, are portrayed by the writer. The nature of different characters in a novel, and the role of government in controlling the characters, reveal the exploitation they are subject to.

The central concept of Marxist Literary Criticism is determination – that of ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’. The economic system is the base, and superstructure includes law, politics, and literature, that are determined by the economic base. In addition, Marxists believe that human consciousness is made up of an ‘ideology’ --
a set of beliefs, values, and the patterns of thinking. According to Marxist critics, it is the product of the dominant class formed to protect the interests of that class. The superstructure contains certain

‘definite forms of social consciousness’ (political, religious, ethical, aesthetic and so on) which is what Marxism designates as ideology. The function of ideology, also, is to legitimize the power of the ruling class in society. (Eagleton, Marxism 5)

Belsey observes

ideology is not an optional extra, deliberately adopted by some self-conscious individuals … but the very condition of our experience of the world, unconscious precisely in that it is unquestioned, taken for granted. (4)

George Lukacs (a Hungarian) is the most important Marxist critic. Lukacs holds that a text will reflect the society in which it is produced. A close reading of the text will reveal how the characters reflect the class conflict and the prevailing social, political and economic system. In his opinion, great literature produces fictional worlds as a “reflection of life in the greatest concreteness and clarity, and with all its motivating contradictions” (Abrams and Harpham 160). He emphasises that literature should reveal the negative impact of Capitalism. But he is against the modern movements like Expressionism. Lukacs contributes to an understanding of the relationship between historical materialism and literary form, in particular, with realism in historical novel. In The Theory of the Novel (1914), Lukacs highlights the importance of content over form:

The worlds of essence are held high above existence by the force of forms, and their nature and contents are determined only by the inner potentialities
of that force. The worlds of life stay as they are: forms only receive and mould them, only reduce them to their inborn meaning. And so these forms, which, here, can only play the role of Socrates at the birth of thoughts, can never of their own accord charm something into life that was not already present in it.

However, Bertolt Brecht, a German poet and playwright, was against Lukacs’ realism. While writing about plays, he insists that “it is incomplete in itself, complete only in the audience’s reception of it” (qtd. Eagleton Marxism 62). According to Brecht a writer should avoid “lulling the audience into a state of passive acceptance” (Selden 91) and “the illusion of reality must be shattered by the use of alienation effect” (91). Selden observes that Brecht’s idea of rejecting orthodox realist methods for shaking audiences from their passivity into active engagement is motivated by his “dedicated political commitment to unmasking every new disguise used by the protean capitalist system” (92). Eagleton remarks that Brecht’s ‘epic’ theatre exemplifies Walter Benjamin’s theory of revolutionary art as the one “which transforms the modes, rather than merely the contents, of artistic production” (Marxism 62).

1.2.1. Salient Feature of Marxist Literary Criticism

1. Class struggle defines human history as the conflict between those who own the means of production and those who work for the means of production. Capitalists who are driven by profit motive own the means of production which ultimately results in exploitation. So, Marxist literary critics felt compelled to highlight the prevailing class struggle to highlight exploitation.
2. From the ‘economic base’ emerges the ‘superstructure’ that is, law, politics etc. which legitimize the power of the social class that owns the means of production. Therefore, writers have to create awareness among people about the role of superstructure that serves the privileged class.

3. Social change can be created only through the revolution of the proletariat working for the means of production. Therefore, Marxist literary criticism enables the readers to understand a work of art from the societal point of view.

4. Art is also included in the ‘superstructure’. Therefore, to understand literature, the readers have to understand the total social process at the time of the production of the text.

1.3. Neo-Marxist Literary Criticism

The formation of Institute for Social Research (the Frankfurt School), in the University of Frankfurt had been influential in the development of Marxist theory. The founder of this School, Felix Weil, an orthodox Marxist, actually wanted to develop cross disciplinary research which was not allowed by the University. Exiled in 1933 the School was temporarily located in New York before returning to Frankfurt in 1950. Andre Bowie asserts that this School, because of its attention on both ideological and aesthetic issues underlying literary texts, became popular in the English-speaking nations. Apart from revealing “the repressions and omissions in literary texts, the Frankfurt School theorists also try to highlight the utopian possibilities which they think such texts can involve” (Waugh ed. 189). Without completely rejecting the central role of economic issues, theorists of the School such as Max Weber, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, tried to
find the answer for the question “why the result of technical change seemed increasingly to contribute to barbarism, rather than social progress?” (190).

In his essay “The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction” (1936) Walter Benjamin argues that in the modern society art is reproduced (aided by photography and radio transmission) and artists have lost their ‘aura’. Instead, the new methods of artistic production using technology and its consumption have changed the role of art “making it open to politics” (Selden 94). The democratizing effect of art by making it easily accessible to common man because of reproduction, according to Benjamin, will undefined the relationship between art and society.

Andrew Bowie remarks that “like Brecht, Benjamin claimed that new forms of art … are capable of having an active effect on political thinking of the working class …” (Waugh ed. 193).

However, Theodor Adorno differs from Walter Benjamin by his pessimistic view on the role of culture industry in bringing about a change in the existing political set up. Disillusioned by the rise of Stalin in Russia and Nazism in Germany, Adorno wants to find out the roots of these disasters. Together with Max Horkheimer, he critically analyses the reason for the world’s descent into barbarism in Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947). They identify the role of ‘culture industry’ in keeping the people ignorant of their plight instead of enlightening them. “The culture industry misuses its concern for the masses in order to duplicate, reinforce and strengthen their mentality, which it presumes is given and unchangeable” (Bernstein ed. 99). Furthermore, the commercial nature of ‘culture industry’ results in the emergence of ‘mass culture’ which standardizes culture, making it a commodity instead of promoting diversity and innovation. “Mass culture” has, therefore, become
another part of the “apparatus which makes people submit to the imperatives of the economic system” (Waugh ed. 195). Realising the potential of mass culture to make people conformists, Goebbels, then, prescribed it “in the form of an iron romanticism for totalitarian purposes” (Bernstein ed. 66).

The growing popularity of structuralist movement in Europe during the middle of the twentieth century resulted in the emergence of Structuralist Marxism. While both Marxist and Structuralists acknowledged that men cannot be understood without the consideration of their social existence, the former considered man as a representative of his position/class in the social system the latter insisted that “individual actions and utterances have no meaning apart from the signifying systems which generate them” (Selden 95). While Structuralists regarded these structures were as “timeless and self-regulating system” (95), Marxists viewed them as “historical, changeable and fraught with contradictions.” Structuralist Marxist recognizes the contrary tendencies between the social structures caused by their uneven development. Louis Althusser, a French Marxist Philosopher, focused on the social influences that are responsible for such contradictions, thereby emphasizing social oppression, not mere economic oppression.

The interpretation of social as well economic oppression of people aided by culture industry, mass media and the role of technology in the mode of production results in the birth of Neo-Marxism. While classical Marxism was preoccupied only with economic base discrediting the role of diaelectrical process like politics, religion, culture, mass media etc., Neo-Marxism acknowledged their roles as co-determining factors that influence social life.
Neo-Marxist criticism is concerned with the role of ideology, and culture, in the analysis of a work of art that were not given prominence by Marxist Literary Critics. Marxism gives importance only to the economic base, and the role of superstructure in supporting the base. Instead, Neo-Marxist criticism gives equal importance to economic and cultural factors. It is based on the analysis of economics, politics, and cultural elements that influence a writer during the production of a novel. Neo-Marxism senses the relationship between society and culture in more complex terms, and concludes that the causal relationship between base, and superstructure is inadequate to understand the function of the society.

Louis Althusser’s concept of ideology establishes him as an important figure in the evolution of Marxist Literary Criticism. Rejecting the Marxian notion of “false consciousness”, he asserts that “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (36).

Althusser, also, introduces the term “interpellation” which rejects the idea of viewing individuals as self-conscious, autonomous beings whose actions can be explained on the basis of their beliefs and preferences. According to him, “… the individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects ….” (50). Chandler explains the function of ideology as follows:

Ideaology functions to constitute individuals as subjects. Individuals are interpellated primarily through ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ (ISAs) including the family, schooling and the mass media. It is through ISAs that people gain both a sense of identity and an understanding of reality.

Similarly, the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’, meaning leadership or dominance, influenced the English Marxist critics such as
Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton. Gramsci, in his essay, “The Formation of Intellectuals” explains that the dominant group, by virtue of its position and function in the world of production, exercises social hegemony which results in the “spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (Prakash ed. 61).

Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton in Great Britain, and Fredric Jameson in the United States are the major Neo-Marxist influences on literary theory. Williams asserts the role of literature in Culture and Society 1780-1950. According to him, “Literature is quite obviously … a social activity, and values do seem to lie in the writer’s access to certain kinds of energy which … have a more-than-literary origin, and lie in the whole complex of a writer’s relation with reality” (268). He also acknowledges that in a Socialist society, the availability of basic cultural skills result in the emergence of “actual response to the whole reality” (274) as “… hegemony is always a process …. not, except analytically, system or structure” (Literature 112).

It is a realized complex of experiences and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis … It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concept of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice. (112, 113)
Extending Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’, he remarks, that culture is always political and should be understood by its relationship with society. According to him, if we agree with Marx that “existence determines consciousness” (274) we cannot “prescribe any particular consciousness in advance unless … the prescribers somehow identify themselves with “existence”. In this context, he argues that “… ‘socialist culture’ of the future has been no more than a Utopian habit” and should not be taken seriously. But it was practiced in Russia where “the kind of literature appropriate to the new society has been commonly defined in advance, as an authoritative prescription” (273).

On the contrary, Terry Eagleton remarks that “the populism and reformism which marred his (Raymond Williams’) works were … the product of a political moment” (34). He also, affirms that the intellectual synthesis taken up by Williams was forced upon him by the “non-availability of a revolutionary tradition and the paucity of working-class ideology” (34).

Marooned between Stalinism and reformism, personally and theoretically divorced from a politically becalmed working class, the early New Left movement to which Williams belonged was constrained to piece together its own eclectic theory and strategy in response to an objective political break …. The absence of mass working-class struggle at that time … and the upsurge of a literary Left-reformism to replace revolutionary theory, were structurally related moments. In Williams’ work, paradigmatically, the one absence nurtured and confirmed the other. (34)

Eagleton is inspired by Althusser’s view that “… what art makes us see … is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself
as art …” (qtd. Eagleton *Criticism* 83). Furthermore, Eagleton that “the text … establishes a transformative relation between itself and ideology” and helps us understand the “usually concealed contours of ideology from which it emerges” (82).

During the 1960s, Fredric Jameson, an American neo-Marxist critic, was inspired by Adorno and Frankfurt School. Jameson’s work on culture, architecture, film and literature typifies the collapse of disciplinary boundaries taking place in the realm of Marxist, and postmodern culture theory. Brewton remarks that Jameson’s work investigates “the way the structural feature of Capitalism – particularly the transformation of all culture into commodity form – are now deeply embedded in all of our ways of communicating.”

Jameson is influenced by Lukacs’ concept of ‘reification’ which means transformation of a human being, process, or abstract concept into a thing. This commodification was considered one of the reasons for the ills of the society, and particularly under Capitalism, “human powers and creativities seemed to escape human control and take on lives of their own.” (Roberts, *Fredric* 39) For example, ‘market forces’ are considered a natural force instead of man-made force; commodities, rather than, human relationships:

People desire not social harmony and justice but rather wide-screen TV or DVD player. The ‘wholeness’ of social life is shattered into sporadic dispersions of specialized, machine-like or technical objects and operations, each of which has the potential to assume a near-life of its own and dominate actual human beings. (39)
Jameson believes that ‘reification’ is even more relevant to understand today’s world, than when Lukacs formulated it in the 1930s. To understand the triumph of Capitalism in the modern world, the understanding of commodification is required. The changing of everything into a commodity is particularly evident in art and culture. It is not that only art gets reified (for example a piece of music being turned into millions of CDs), but the every day actual human interactions themselves get metamorphosed. Today we rely heavily on commodities to reveal even our basic human emotions - “…the only way one human being can express love for another human being is by entering into the whole world of commodities, by buying things from small gifts all the way up to houses” (39).

Our world, thus, shrinks to reified things like CDs, DVDs, mobile phones, laptops, ipods, cars, houses etc. We define our world with these commodities, and remain blind to the fact that we should live in a society which ideally, is based on human interactions. Roberts highlights the observation of Jameson in *The Ideologies of Theory* (1998) that art has an important role to play and is able to “resist the power of reification in consumer society, and to reinvent that category of totality which is systematically undermined by existential fragmentation on all levels of life and social organisation today” (41).

Jameson’s notion, that art must resist the commodification of life, is influenced by Adorno who believed that culture had been poisoned by Capitalism, and turned into ‘the Culture Industry’, an all-embracing Capitalist commodification of art that reduced everything to the level of a third grade movie, or a pop-song. Adorno attacked the popular American culture of the 1930s and 1940s for being dull
and repetitive, feeding the people with little variation of the same oppressive stories of love and adventure to diffuse their revolutionary instincts.

Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth is that they are just business made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their director’s incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed.

1.3.1. Salient Features of Neo-Marxist Literary Criticism

- Literature may be a part of ‘superstructure’, but it is not a mere passive reflection of the economic base.
- It helps us to feel, and perceive the ideology from which a work of art originates.
- Culture plays a crucial role in spreading the ideology of the dominant class. But it has its own existence, and in turn influences the ideology.
- Social change is possible by creating awareness among the people about the decadence of human values by popular culture.

Neo-Marxism, thus, can be considered a movement which does not give importance only to the economic deterministic theory of classical Marxism, and incorporates the sociological views developed after Marx to provide a more holistic view on social class structures. Marxist and Neo-Marxist theorists looked for social concerns in literary writings.

Marxist and Neo-Marxist criticism enable the reader to analyse Science Fiction, which is generally considered futuristic, and establish their social relevance.
Science Fiction, like any other work of art, can not be produced in a vacuum. Moreover, it is not a mere fantasy. It can be effectively used to criticise the contemporary society. Krishnamoorthy highlights the advantage of Science Fiction in criticising society as follows:

Serious writers … can not help making their works reflections of contemporary values, masked in some cases and overt in others…Science fiction has a specific advantage as a vehicle of satire …. When most other writers felt gagged from social criticism in the McCarthyite fifties, Science Fiction writers continued to criticize society unmuzzled because of the freedom that this mode offered. (4)

The second chapter traces the scope for the study by surveying the development of Science Fiction and the contribution of Huxley, Orwell and Bradbury to it. Chapters III to V analyse respectively, Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* and Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* using Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches. A knowledge and understanding of the Marxist and Neo-Marxist approaches have enabled this researcher to identify the similarities in these novels written during different decades, highlighting the subtle differences in the socio-cultural matrix. To make this study more incisive, the researcher attempts to analyse these novels using the tools of Marxism and Neo-Marxism such as political administration, class consciousness and inequality among classes, propaganda, thought-reduction, mutability of the past, suppression of individuality, popular culture, education and language, and family values. The findings help establish these writers as committed to critiquing their contemporary society and explaining its shortcomings. They highlight the necessity of awakening to the social reality, failing
which the evil consequences suggested in these novels are likely to overtake us. They, thus, cry out for instant individual, social, and political measures to ensure future human life in the planet.