Chapter 1  
Introduction  
In the Interstices of Modernity and Tradition

My memory is again in the way of your history.

In your absence you polished me into the Enemy.  
Your history gets in the way of my memory.

Your memory gets in the way of my memory:

(Agha Shahid Ali 7-8).

The entire theoretical inventory of the present project derives from the common everyday experience in which one is positioned as a listener/narratee to a personal narrative by someone against whom the listener/narratee puts up immense degrees of personal and ideological resistance. However, the very moment the speaker/narrator begins to narrate her/his own past, all the initial ideological and personal distances vanish and the listener/narratee even begins to identify with the speaker/narrator. How does this happen? Obviously, because of the presence of the past in the narrative—a past in which one is not in the least implicated. So, when a person engages in the process of reliving past memories it is usually taken for granted that the past belongs exclusively to the narrator, a domain where the listener has only to assume a passive/silent role, looking back to the narrated past. However such listening may turn out to be an act of political malignity because even silent participation could serve to
revive dominant ideologies. A closer scrutiny of the narrated past would reveal innumerable aporetic spots rendering the ideologically neutral posture vis-à-vis the past invalid.

At this point in time one can observe that modernity as a personal and collective experience has become a thing of the past, and hence, a moment. Then how does it become possible to narrate modernity as a collective experience at the personal level? Who would narrate the momentary past of modernity in these days? Who would listen to such recounting of modernity? If a historian narrates the story of modernity as a past experience, will s/he now find silent/passive listeners? These are the questions which this dissertation attempts to answer.

It is now obvious that modernity has become a moment; a moment of timelessness in the eternal history of permanence. Scholars and critics belonging to diverse disciplines of knowledge do not seem to have taken great pains to examine the transient processes that eventually culminated in making modernity an eternal artifice. It is clear that no moment is eternal, or anything but transitory and momentary. However, the historical discourses glorifying the value of eternity and permanence have been victorious in appropriating and integrating impermanent and transitory moments of modernity into the radius of eternity. It is becoming palpable that this victory is rather a failure: a failure that bears testimony to the inability of history to deal with and narrate the momentariness of modernity. So one might conclude that the moment of
modernity is a strange hybrid of eternity and transience and hence, neither eternal glorification nor transient narration could ever adequately represent the nature of the moment usually referred to as modernity.

It is easy to find a similarity between great emperors and artists on the one hand, and great historians on the other; they have all longed for eternal name and fame. However, unlike that of the historian, the longing of emperors and artists for lasting fame has never conflicted with the basic ethic of their “work.” Hence, the similarity referred to is a similarity with a difference. This differential nature of a similar desire would compel one to contest the foundational norms and claims of the entire discipline which goes by the name History. It is usually inferred that the domain of history is pledged to the making and recording of truths regarding the past, but when history gets obsessed with the notions of eternal value and worth, some of the professed aims of its discursive domain are itself at stake. Besides, the fact that the time of eternity remains un-gauged becomes self-evident. So, eternity may be regarded as a mode of perception that has no footing in the terrain of temporality. Eternity thus becomes an effect or feeling that is created by our sensory and perceptual organs. Most historians seem unaware of this contradiction inherent in the practice of their discipline. People often seek recourse to the memory of their past to sense the feeling of eternity, but no one has ever recorded the experience of eternity.
One cannot afford to ignore the present while discussing the roles that the momentary past and eternity play in conceptualising historical narration. In other words, the function of the present in relation to the past and eternity is an important question. Any historian is bound to reflect upon and explicate how the narrative of the past is related to the present dimension of time, since the present is situated along the borderlines of the past and eternity. What is identified as the present in time will turn out to be the past and later may metamorphose into a moment of eternity. Nevertheless, the amorphous character of the present is still outside the domain of history.

It was Friedrich Nietzsche, the maverick of Western philosophy, who conclusively exposed the vanity of history. In *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life* he observes that even while man condemns the wayward and aberrant life of beasts he has a secret desire for, and even an envy of the beastly existence. Treading the terrain of rationality, man tries to carve out his difference from beasts by remembering and preserving his past. On the other hand, the hallmark of beastly existence is the power to forget everything. This power of forgetting is the elixir which man aspires for but always fails to achieve. Nietzsche sharply attacks the conventional notions of history and insists on restructuring the historical sphere so as to accommodate the present, thus transforming the domain of history into a source of vital energy and force. Nietzsche’s thrust on history as a life force underscores the significance he attaches to the present in the creation of historical narratives. If a historian
wants to approach history as a vital force of life, it is necessary to conceive the ways in which the present exerts its influence upon the domain of history. So Nietzsche’s preoccupation with history turns out to be an affair of *untimely*, rather than an event of timely or eternal, significance.

The momentariness of modernity poses many problems and even threats to the discipline of narrating history since the tendency of that discipline is to consider and register phenomena as moments, rather than attempt to question the momentary character of those moments. “Momentariness” suggests that a moment may not be able to represent all the events of that moment. Actually it is this failure to narrate all events within the fold of an all-inclusive schema of representation that makes a phenomenon a moment. So, when the history of modernity is conceived and narrated as a moment in time, innumerable events and persons of historical importance may escape the process of narration. In this context, one is reminded of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), a leading philosopher who lived in France. Although some of his ideas gained wide currency and popularity among the major circles of French intelligentsia while he was still alive, he could produce something “untimely” that eluded their comprehension. It may be noted in this context that the writings of Bergson have been a perennial source of inspiration and stimulation for later French thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gilles Deleuze. Deleuze has written a work titled *Bergsonism* which attempts to reconstruct the philosophical system of Bergson in a new way. In short, Bergson was able to create his own double;
that is, one aspect of his thought was acceptable to the people of his time while the other aspect remained hidden for posterity to dig out. This trait of Bergson makes him interesting and important to contemporary readers of philosophy. In other words, the partial unacceptability of his thought in his lifetime makes him all the more acceptable now. This logic could be applied to the historical construction of modernity also. It is possible for a historian to build up the narration of modernity as an all-inclusive moment in which s/he could claim that the experiences and feelings of everybody are adequately shared and represented. However, the fact is that many events and personages of untimely importance remain un-registered within such “all-inclusive” moments.

Again from the vantage point of the present moment of/in history, it is not difficult to make the apocalyptic statement that the history of modernity has almost reached its end. However, the history of modernity offers a peculiar climax with multiple exits and closures and hence, the plural form “ends” would perhaps be more feasible than the singular “end.” Apart from the pluralistic aspects of the word “end,” it also evokes some semantic ambiguities, since the word “end” also means “aim” or “goal.” So one has to conclude that with the end of modernity, not only has the project of modernity come to an end, but so also have its professed aims and intents. However, for the time being, one may subscribe to the view that modernity has come to its inevitable and imminent closure. Such a view would naturally explain some of the premises often associated with the word. Therefore, the initial proposition
could be that a certain way of conceptualising the historicity of modernity is now almost a thing of the past.

Modernity is often conceived and deployed according to the representational logic by which anything can be rendered visible by the mere fact of being represented. On this basis it is usually taken for granted that people of different identity labels would get political justice through the machinery of representation. The logic of representation presupposes certain grand events, like the Renaissance or the French Revolution, with great personages, such as Erasmus and Robespierre, at its centre. These must invariably figure among the major parameters of historical discourse. Besides, basing themselves on the logic of historical necessity, the “modern” historians of modernity would array a series of socio-political events like the Reformation, Enlightenment and American Revolution and would claim that all these historical events commonly and universally refer to the self-same locus of modernity. But a close reading could reveal that all these happenings have different milieus of time and space.

The interrelatedness between time and politics has a deep-rooted base in the philosophical discourses of the West. It goes without saying that the angle from which the philosophers of antiquity viewed time differed considerably from that of the modern philosophers. Ancient Greek philosophy considered time as subordinate to the movement; it had no control over the movement. The Latin word “cardo” quoted by Deleuze (Kant vii) denotes precisely this.
The advent of modernity changed this situation: movement was made subordinate to time. Time is now taken to be an eternal phenomenon, not subject to any changes or alteration in accordance with movement. The ideas which Immanuel Kant propagated in his magnum opus *Critique of Pure Reason* crystallise the essential core of the new time/movement philosophy.

The scrolls of the past usually get unfolded in the forms of memory and history. Memory is taken to be personal and subjective while history is considered to be impersonal and objective. However, if one longs to capture the wayward, meandering and labyrinthine moments of the past through memory it becomes imperative that one should encounter history. Such an encounter may testify that history is an inter-subjective and intra-personal affair. The hue of time has always been painted as a line. Hence, there is an assemblage of Palaeolithic, Primitive, Ancient, Medieval and Modern colours of the past. All these colours of the past move and congregate together, marching uni-directionally along the lines of succession, inheritance and progress. And now the picture is almost clear; the Primitive Age gives way to the Medieval and the Medieval in its turn is overtaken by the Modern. Then, what about the age that succeeds the modern? Most historians and scholars belonging to diverse disciplines of human and social sciences are wilfully silent upon this question. The silence of these intellectuals underwrites the assumption that Modernity is permanently and eternally valid. However their silence silences nothing but itself. Those who are disillusioned with the
avowed claims of modernity would go further, questioning the very foundational norms of modernity. As far as these sceptics are concerned, the ideas of eternity and permanence are nothing but insular territories which are yet to be mapped.¹

However, it is to be acknowledged that all these sceptic questionings of modernity accrue from incredulity relating to the accepted and normalised notions of time. The modern conception of time and temporality is based on the principle of succession and hence, each and every stage in the development of human society could be rendered visible by means of representational logic. And such logic would presuppose that an age is different from another owing to its difference in time. For example, one could posit an imaginary timeline A-B in which A stands for the period ending in A.D. 500 and B stands for the period from A.D. 501 to A.D. 750. Here, the temporal markers and the age-labels do co-exist with each other rather interchangeably. A is A because it is representative of the periods up to A.D. 500 and vice versa.

The problem of periodising various ages in history could be illustrated by referring to the case of William Shakespeare. In the estimates of literary historians, Shakespeare is a product of Renaissance, writing in the age of Queen Elizabeth I and hence, he can be called an Elizabethan dramatist or a Renaissance playwright. But any elementary history of the English language will record that the language in which Shakespeare wrote was modern English and that, he may therefore be regarded as a pioneer of modern English. So
Shakespeare the user of the English language was “modern,” but Shakespeare the historical personage or litterateur was an Elizabethan or Renaissance man. The incongruity of this representation of Shakespeare has not yet received scholarly attention. However, it shows that the words “modern” and “modernity” in literary historiography are somewhat inconsistent and arbitrary.

It is necessary at this point, to explicate the conceptual bases and theoretical foundations of the title of the present study: “The Difference of Modernity and The Repetition of Tradition in Nineteenth Century Kerala: A Critical Study of Missionary Narratives and Colonial Administrative Writings.” The intellectual sources of this title have been the writings of Gilles Deleuze (works such as *Difference and Repetition*, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, co-authored by Felix Guattari). So the initial hypothesis of the present project is fashioned in a Deleuzean vein; that is, it examines the differential assemblage of the various forces, processes and desires that contributed to the discursive construction of modernity in Kerala. According to scholars, modernity is purely a modern phenomenon; that is, modernity is in no way answerable to any of those domains which it has branded and labelled as non-modern or traditional. Here, that claim is to be interrogated and contested, and an attempt will be made to expose the non-modern elemental forces that went into the making of modernity. It is also possible to approach the central problematic of the thesis as an endeavour to explore the historical foundations of political modernity in Kerala, to examine the way in which the conceptual
understanding of political modernity is mediated through historical narratives. While discussing the history of political modernity in Kerala, it is usually taken for granted that the empowerment of people belonging to marginal or peripheral communities and castes is a reality here only because of the emergence of modern institutions and practices. However, this approach to modernity becomes meaningful only on the condition that it is dictated and mediated by certain premises and norms of historiography. As a result, unravelling the mechanics of such a normative historiography turns out to be an essential thrust of the present study.

It might be appropriate now to examine the conceptual logic behind the phrase “the difference of modernity” in the title of the present study. On a literal plane, the concept of difference is a mode of perception by which we perceive and realise the cluster of differences produced and proliferated by the discursive and non-discursive apparatuses of modernity. As a consequence of this perceptual realisation, we come to a clear understanding of the distinctiveness of modernity in relation to tradition. In the absence of these differential markers it will not be possible for us to demarcate the legitimate domains of modernity from their illegitimate counterparts. In other words, the rubric of modernity which is inclusive of all its positive and negative dynamics makes it different from other forms of political ideologies and discourses. The political changes and differences brought into the societal being of Kerala are taken to represent the legitimate domains of modernity. In this view, the
liberation, emancipation and progress which are usually observed to have been brought by modernity to the low caste people in Kerala, are identified as the difference of modernity.

On the other hand, “the repetition of tradition” is always portrayed as inimical to “the difference of modernity,” something destructive, which is always and everywhere trying to quash the differentialities of modernity. In the conventional lexicon, the concept of repetition is often coloured in a negative manner. Most often, we tend to look upon the notion of repetition as a disrupter of all that is new and different. This prejudice against the phenomenal process of repetition is deeply rooted in the polemic of Western thought right from the time of Plato. However in this study the concept of repetition is seen to have both positive and negative qualities. Negative repetition would refer to the recurrence of a motif that could dislodge and destroy the differential elements of modernity. Positive repetition, on the other hand, refers to those instances of recurrence that would strengthen and add to the differentiality of modernity.

The term “tradition” is introduced here pointing out its ambiguity, since it often deviates from its inherent meanings when, for example, it is used in different contexts to refer to such concepts as the “Indian tradition,” the “Brahminical tradition” or even the “Dalit tradition.” However, the term, in the context of this study, weans itself away from such underpinnings. The notion of tradition, as viewed in this thesis, is essentially a Brahminical preoccupation. The subaltern people do not have a tradition at all. Tradition is
conceived and constructed as an essential part of linear history and on that basis, the experiences and perceptions of those who lived in the past could be handed down/over to succeeding generations and thus perpetuated. However, the memories and the experiences of the subaltern people are rather fragmentary and therefore non-linear and schizophrenic. The effects of such subaltern pasts and memories are to be expressed by means and methods other than the linear. These pasts cannot be accumulated at a point or transferred along the lines of time. So the term “tradition,” here, refers exclusively to the tradition of Hindu-Brahminical ideologies. The study intends to expose the logics and practices through which this tradition recurs to subvert the difference of modernity.

However, the fact that the subaltern people have also struggled against the norms of modernity cannot be ignored. It is to be emphasised that the resistance of subaltern people to the project of modernity can never be described as traditional. The present study is born out of the conviction that the discipline of history has to generate new nomenclatures and vocabularies to register the episodes of subaltern resistance.

The various discourses of modernity, such as history, anthropology, sociology and other social and human sciences, have supplied their different versions of tradition; and so, tradition could be studied as an effect of modern discourses. Modernity, in the theorisation of its foundational claims, has evolved certain parameters to gauge elemental forces that may be categorised
as either “non-modern” or “anti-modern.” Such forces that vitiate the purity of modernity are usually labelled as “traditional” elements or factors. However an argument developed in response to this definition is that such labelling is due to the misperception on the part of modernity that defines everything contrary to its sanctified dictates as “traditional.” What we come to know and possess of the nature and function of tradition largely remains a discursive construct of modernity. As a consequence, quite often the very idea of tradition exists as an extended ancillary category of modern discourses. To be more precise, modern discourses have tried to construct a homogenous and linear picture of Indian tradition. And these discourses have always dumped all instances and events of resistance on the part of subaltern societies into the semantic radius of “tradition.” This tendency is criticised vehemently in this dissertation and the need for a new nomenclature to describe subaltern interventions in the field of political action has been emphasised.

The historical narratives on nineteenth century Kerala have been selected as the discursive site for exploring the interaction between the difference of modernity and the repetition of tradition. This selection was made on account of the accessibility and transparency of the historical narratives of the period. In that aspect, perhaps, nineteenth century Kerala comes closest to the image of the “classical age” in the writings of Michel Foucault (Order 58-70). Moreover, this period can be easily rendered to positivistic scrutiny by the empirical and objective methods of modern historiography. So, it should be
possible to find out the borders and frontiers that separate the terrains of tradition from that of modernity and also to detect the elements of being that constitute the differences between Brahmin and non-Brahmin and human and non-human. Again, the transition from the days of antiquity to modernity is often rendered with clear-cut barriers. Looking at a timeline of nineteenth century Kerala, one can easily pinpoint the end of antiquity and the advent of modernity.

The medium through which the differential and repetitive natures of modernity have been studied is constituted by the discursive representations on nineteenth century Kerala, mainly compiled by missionaries and administrators during colonial rule. The representations produced by missionaries are referred to as “narratives” whereas the administrative accounts are described as “writings.” However, the difference between the two is defined in a narrow sense. The use of the term “narrative” implies that the compilations of the missionaries are rather more personal and informal than the accounts of the administrators. Most of the missionary narratives presuppose a reader-audience community that would participate in the process of narration, but in the administrative writings such a motif is most often absent, and where it occurs, the reader/audience is positioned as a subject community, bound to obey the rules and dictates implied/laid down in the writings. Besides, the missionaries could create their narrative world in an introspective manner by which only the Christian God could intervene in the process of narration, while the
administrators had to submit their writings to the authority of empirical rationality for objective scrutiny.

The texts taken for analysis are of varied nature since they include diverse writings in various disciplines. However, for convenience these texts may be broadly classified into two: missionary narratives and administrative writings. The rubric of administrative writings includes *The Travancore State Manuals* compiled by V. Nagam Aiya (1906) and T.K. Velu Pillai (1940), *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. VI by Edgar Thurston and *The Statistical Memoir of Malabar and Travancore*, Vol. I by Lieutenants Benjamin Swain Ward and Peter Eyre Conner. The missionary narratives examined are *The Land of Charity: A Descriptive Account of Travancore and its People* and *The Native Life in Travancore* by Samuel Mateer, and *The Slayer Slain*, a novel by Mrs. Richard Collins.

All these texts have been studied in the backdrop of clearly defined contexts. For example, the missionary narratives are referred to in connection with the uprising of subaltern people in Travancore. The administrative writings have been examined with a view to explain how the upper caste Hindu elite gained hegemonic ascendancy in shaping the historical narration of Kerala modernity.

It is necessary to list the main propositions that form the hypothetical framework of the present study. The first of these argues for the need to conceive of “modernities” in place of an all-inclusive monologic “Modernity.”
In other words, it is no longer possible to consider modernity as a universal and monolithic category of thought, a singular entity. The second hypothesis is that linear history as a mode of narrating the story of modernity has reached an impasse. Linear history was the product of Enlightenment rationality and empirical objectivism. The realities which we encounter and experience at present, however, are beyond the pale of Enlightenment norms and conditions. So it might be somewhat awkward to cling to a model whose spatio-temporal abode lies so far removed from our own. The third argument posits that no holistic and total representation of modernity is possible. Modernity is viewed here as an experience which has passed through myriad forms of fragmentary and momentary visions and encounters. Any attempt to totalise or integrate these into confined and organic structures would be futile. The final argument is that categorical periodisation and generic classification are impossible in history and literary criticism. In the domain of history, such a notion acts against the temporal logic that divides historical time into categories such as Ancient, Medieval and Modern, and in literary criticism, it would negate the practice by which literary works are classed as social novels, historical romances or subaltern novels.

However, the site of the present project is identified as the cluster of differences offered by the project of modernity. It has often been observed (with an implied premise of universal validity) that modernity as a political project has been positive and constructive in empowering the subaltern people.
If, however, an analysis of the effect of modernity on the traditionally hegemonic classes in Kerala is undertaken, it would be revealed that modernity has been greatly beneficial to them too. The main crux of the study is precisely this: that the same project has performed and served multiple and, antithetical functions.

The theoretical and methodological formulae adopted in the present project have been derived from the contexts made possible by post modern re-readings on the nature and function of history. In the modernist world of historical thought, the functional roles and the veracity of history have never been interrogated and in consequence, a monolithic conception of history has been legitimised. But now it is widely accepted that history is a heterogeneous entity opening up innumerable possibilities for various different conceptions and imaginings. What is usually referred to as “History” in normal parlance is actually a construct carved out in the domain of the human sciences. However, the discursive constructedness of history has never been given enough attention in modernist readings.

It is now necessary to explicate the problematic from which the entire logical structure of the present dissertation is derived and constituted. The term “problematic” too perhaps needs some clarification since it has its roots in western philosophy. The term has a place in the logical system of Aristotle in which it primarily stood for a variety of possibilities that could be deduced from a particular proposition. In that direction, the term could be understood as
a form of modality that opens up the avenues of possibility expressed by auxiliary terms like “may” and “possible.” Later, the term “problematic” appears in the expository writings of existentialist-phenomenologist thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The presence of the “problematic” is further discerned in the fields of “contemporary philosophy of science, viz. to indicate the common thrust or direction of theoretical inquiry implied by the posing of a whole group or ensemble of problems in a particular scientific discipline” (Chatterjee 37).²

However, the term “problematic” as used here is very much a modified version of Louis Althusser’s conception of the same as laid out and developed in his radical re-readings of Marxist philosophy. Althusser’s theoretical exposition of the “problematic” is closely allied to the critical or interpretive strategy which he named “symptomatic reading.” So in the conceptual universe of Althusser, the term “problematic” refers to “the theoretical or ideological framework in which a word or concept is used, to be recovered by a “symptomatic reading” of the relevant body of texts” (Chatterjee 37). To be more precise, an author while writing a text represses and omits various elements and voices, or s/he makes a number of omissions and absences in her/his work, which in reality forms the kernel of her/his discourse. These can be found out only by adopting the posture of a psychoanalyst who reads the symptoms of the patient so as to fix the root cause of the mental illness from which the patient suffers. A comprehensive study of a text could never be
possible only by concentrating upon those things which the author has
included, expressed and represented. One has to seek out and unearth the
omissions, absences and exclusions made by the author to chart out the
problematic of the text. In other words, the concepts and words used by the
author refer to the ideological and theoretical parameters which define the
literary articulation-production-representation of the text and all these
parameters inhabit the space which may be defined as its “problematic.” The
problematic is thus constituted through the repertory of absences, omissions,
exclusions and marginalities on the one hand and presences, inclusions and
centralities on the other hand, and all of them could be tracked down with the
aid of a symptomatic reading.

Keeping these views in mind we may venture to explain what the
“problematic” means in relation to the study of modernity, or what exactly the
nature and function of “problematic” in a discussion on modernity is. While
going through the historical interpretations on Kerala modernity, one will be
baffled by the fact that most of the historians and compilers of Kerala
modernity remain unaware of the epistemological mechanism which makes
possible the use of their discursive tools. Even while formulating and
documenting the history and events of modernity, these writers remain
unconscious of the ideological pre-requisites which make modernity as well as
their articulations on it possible. In other words, the academic historians of
modernity posit their interpretations within the frameworks of empiricism and
objectivism; most of them are eager to collect and preserve facts and figures related to modernity, but at the same time, they remain ignorant of the ideological practices which legitimise such empiric and objective studies as authentic and authoritative. So, the present study may be described as an attempt to explore and fix the unconscious layers that contributed to the making of historical narration of Kerala modernity.

The problematic of the present study is constituted by a set of seven different but interrelated frames: World-History, Hegemony, Fragmentation, Personae, Causality, Labour, and Hybridity. All these terms have been analysed and defined by various thinkers over different periods of time and therefore, they elude the grasp of strict categorisation based on either theoretical orientation or chronological specificity. However, these concepts occur here not in their pure or actual forms, but rather in modified and altered forms according to contextual demands. Even though each and every frame in the problematic co-habits and co-exists with all others at the same time, all of them possess a considerable degree of autonomy too.

Now we may deal with each of the frames that forms the problematic of Kerala modernity in detail. First among them is the frame of World-History. This idea has been introduced by the German Idealist philosopher G.W. Hegel. Hegel expresses his key notions on history in *The Philosophy of History*. This work contains a series of lectures he delivered to the students of University of Berlin during 1822-1830. The book appeared posthumously in 1837 and it was
made out of Hegel’s own lecture notes. This book proposes the idea that the trajectory of history follows the dictates of the reason, and the natural and normal development of history shows the unfolding of the Spirit. In that context, this work can be considered as the natural corollary of the principles which Hegel had already advocated and elaborated in his major philosophical treatise *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Hegel divides the form of written history into three different types: original, reflective and philosophic. Referring to the historical narratives of Herodotus and Thucydides, he goes on to explain the peculiarities of the original mode of historical writing. It mainly includes the records of those events, actions and situations mostly experienced and perceived by the historian. The main hallmark of this kind of history is that the spirit of history unfolds synchronously with the spirit of the historian. Moreover, the historian moving along the lines of original history would attempt a mental or “internal conception” of the events and actions that take place in the external world (1). Here, Hegel proposes some exceptions to original history by omitting certain categories such as legends, folk songs, ballads, tales, and traditions, because they represent “dim and hazy forms of historical apprehension” characteristic of people “whose intelligence is but half awakened” (1). Original history is applicable only for those who are self-conscious and distinctive. The major limitation of original history is that it exists only as an “uncorrupted transcript” of time (2). That is, it cannot move backward or forward from the time in
which it is conceived and written. Besides, the historian of such histories can neither transcend nor surmount his zeitgeist. He has to remain confined within the boundaries and limits of the historical periods with which he deals. As a result, the practitioners of such historical modes can never assume a systematic world-wide view of history.

Hegel, then introduces reflective history as the second mode for imagining and recording historical times and events. Unlike the original method of history, this could move beyond and transcend the limits of the present and hence, the historian would be able to overcome the spirit of his times. The main feature of reflective history is that the historian of such accounts need not be a participant in the events and actions he describes. Hegel describes three species of reflective history: Universal, Pragmatic and Critical.

Universal history refers to that kind of writing which attempts a systematic and holistic view of the “history of a people or a country, or of the world” (3). This mode being reflective, the investigator can have his own distinct and unique spirit, different from the spirit of the times he is talking about. In other words, this kind of historical imagination, in contrast with that of original history, allows room for the investigator to evaluate past events, deeds and societies.

Writings of the second type, Pragmatic historical writing, can be considered ideological or theoretical, since historical accounts fashioned in this manner have a clear-cut ideological agenda of their own. Pragmatic histories
are didactic in nature since such historical narrations try to impart moral lessons to the readers. Practitioners of this type will revivify events from the past, which they will infuse and invest with present day significance. The intention would be to ensure that such portraits of the past yield contemporary moral lessons. However, Hegel scorns pragmatic history, observing “that peoples and governments never have learnt anything from history” (4).

Critical history evaluates existing historical accounts and derives general theories on the writing of history and can be described as “History of History” (4). Hegel attacks this species too because these accounts merely interpret history and are not really history.

Finally, Hegel comes to his area, “World-History,” and explicates how it diverges from all other varieties of history. By World-History or Philosophic History, Hegel simply means the thoughtful consideration of history. According to him, Thought precedes everything. But, in the domain of history, Thought has no vital role to play since the apparent aim of that discipline is to reproduce actual facts and realities. So, it is quite clear that in history, Thought functions subordinate to facts and figures. However, in the realm of philosophy, the reverse is the case; here, Thought overdetermines all other factors. So, there is an initial contradiction between the domains of the historiographer and the philosopher. And it is to bridge this hiatus that Hegel proposes the Idea of World History.
Hegel believes that Reason is the Sovereign of the World and hence, the history of the world would yield a rational process. So, Reason remains the Substance of the Universe and it is through the mediation of Reason that all realities attain being and existence. Hegel then correlates his idea of Reason with the Idea of Spirit. He observes that the Spirit is the driving force behind World History.

Hegel goes on to explicate the nature and function of the Spirit in relation to World History. He defines the essence of Spirit as freedom. If the essence of matter is provided by the external force of gravity, the essence of Spirit is given by the internal principle of freedom. Hegel says that Spirit is self-sufficient since its centre is derived from itself. Hegel concludes his lectures by saying that World History is an avenue for embodying the Spirit.³

It has been clarified that the preoccupation of the present study is the history of colonial modernity as manifested in the nineteenth century scenario of Kerala. So naturally any attempt to define and explicate the concept of history would make an encounter with Hegel inevitable because he is credited with having expounded an all-encompassing system of world history. His coinage and use of the term die Weltgeschichte or World History is the product of the general milieu of European Enlightenment. Besides, the specific discursive conditions of German Idealism have also helped Hegel to expand the scope and meaning of the term. So it is very likely that the British
colonisers’ project to imagine and write a history of Kerala will have been influenced by the Hegelian world-view.

The second frame in the problematic of this study is the frame of Hegemony. The word hegemony etymologically owes its origin to the Greek “egemonia,” and the root of which is “egemon,” meaning “leader” or “ruler” (Williams 144). In the lexicon of nineteenth century politics, this word simply meant political predominance or domination of one country over other countries. However, with the outbreak of the Bolshevik revolution in Soviet Russia the term hegemony has attained deeper Marxist connotations and has been given a pivotal role in the philosophical edifice of Marxism. The use of this term could be traced back to the writings of Marxists like V. I. Lenin in which it referred to the political leadership of the proletariat during a revolutionary situation. By this, Lenin means that in all instances of revolutionary processes, the proletariat should take over the duty to protect and safeguard the rights and privileges of other subject and oppressed classes. So it is obvious that in the conception of Lenin, hegemony means the leadership of the proletariat in all class struggles.

But with Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist thinker, the classical and orthodox boundaries of the notion have been re-drawn and it attained new directions and implications. Gramsci makes use of the term “hegemony” to denote and register the failure of classical Marxism. According to the dictates of conventional and orthodox schools of Marxism the inevitable socialist
revolution should take place at the turn of the twentieth century in Europe, but this never happened. In order to explicate the reasons for this phenomenon, Gramsci suggests that in a capitalist political scenario power operated not merely by means of force and coercion, but also through persuasion and consent. So the dominant classes in a capitalist society could generate their own hegemonic culture through which they sought and gained the consent of the working class people. As a result, the values and norms of the bourgeois culture got the status of being the normal and hegemonic values of society as a whole. In consequence, a reflection-identification link had been forged between the working class people and the hegemonic class.

Gramsci stresses the need for developing a counter-culture on the part of the working class people so as to combat the hegemonic projects of the bourgeois culture. By making this proposition, Gramsci was giving a death blow to the economic determinist model of conventional Marxist philosophy. All the dogmatic schools of Marxism gave importance to the base structural constituents in the process of making a revolution but Gramsci was pondering over the possibility of a revolution by inducting effective changes into the mould of the super structure. He charted the draft plan for a comprehensive theory of hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks* which he finished while under incarceration during the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. According to it, the process of gaining a hegemonic position depends upon three factors; intellectual, moral and political. The first two factors closely refer to the
phenomena of leadership and consent while the third one is related to force, subjugation and coercion. In other words, it is the task of the leaders and intellectuals to generate consent from the mass to formulate a hegemonic project whereas the political instruments are aimed at achieving the same purpose by means of forceful and coercive apparatuses.

The Gramscian notion of hegemony has received wide acceptance and acknowledgment from the scholars working in the field of Indian history. For example, Ranajit Guha, the pioneering intellectual in the formation of subaltern studies collective, has modified the Gramscian model of hegemony to explain the power dynamics of British rulers in India. In *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* Guha argues that neither the British colonisers nor the indigenous elite could generate the support and consent of the Indian masses. On account of this fact, Guha observes, the conditions of British rule in India could be characterised as “dominance without hegemony.”

The third frame that comes under our discussion of the problematic is “Fragmentation.” This term can be seen to exist in an antagonistic relation to other terms like “totality,” “unity,” “integrity” and “identity.” The phenomenon of fragmentation became the cynosure of critical engagement with the emergence of post modern re-thinking on modernity. Jean-François Lyotard and other acclaimed post modernists argue that with the ascent of post modernity, all the grand or meta narratives, which could be characterised as the
hallmark of modern discourses, have lost their significance, because they are ineffective in engaging and theorising the situations of a fragmented world. This argument is actually directed against the systemic trajectories of western philosophy. Immanuel Kant’s critical philosophy of faculties aimed at the production of a linear project to understand the world on a universal scale. Hegel, too, was trying to systemise all events and things within the hermeneutic circle of speculative dialectic philosophy. All the major thinkers and systems of western thought have tried to develop a monolithic, linear and homogeneous world view in such a way that would never allow room for any disruption or disintegration. However with the outbreak of two world wars and the expansion of capitalist modes of production, the experiences and events of Europe and America began to flow over the boundaries set by these grand models of systemic thought. This crisis in western society exposed the limitations of critical and speculative faculties of philosophical engagement and it finally led to the emergence of a fragmented world.

However, the phenomenon of fragmentation as charted out in this dissertation argues that the experience and occurrence of fragmentation were somewhat congenital with the project of modernity itself. However, the epistemic systems of modernity like history, sociology and anthropology have never acknowledged this. Instead, they tried to conceal the fact of fragmentation by building up systemic structures of totality and integrity. In the traditional life world, the people believed that everything was structured
into total and perfect unities and hence, they faced no crisis at all. But with the coming of colonial modernity this picture was distorted. The new forms of governance and knowledge dislocated and disrupted the locus of unity and totality in the traditional life world. As a result, chaotic and heterogeneous pictures regarding the life world began to be developed and circulated. However, the disciplinary discourses of modernity have failed to notice and register this phenomenon of fragmentation.

The frame of Personae can be considered as an off-shoot and result of the process of fragmentation. Etymologically, the word “personae” derives from Latin in which it simply means “masks.” The concept has wide circulation in literary studies where it is applied to refer to the hidden or multiple selves of the characters in a novel or a poem. Robert Browning, the eminent Victorian poet, has made excellent use of personae as a literary device of narration in poems like “Porphyria’s Lover,” “My Last Duchess” and “The Ring and the Book.” Later this technique received wide attention and appreciation from modernist poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. One can see the use of this device in novels also. Many novelists have constructed their alternative selves in their works so as to either propagate the author’s world view or to narrate the events that take place in the novel. Fyodor Dostoyevsky has done it in Notes from the Underground and The Brothers Karamazov. Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce and William Faulkner have all made their own versions and varieties of this technique.
However, personae as used in the context of this study on Kerala modernity is completely separated from its literary moorings and conveys certain political meanings only. In the traditional milieus of living and thinking, all persons were invested with integrated and unified identities. The traditional life world being linear, the identity of a particular man or woman also remained the same for all, irrespective of the contexts. But in the modern world the situation is entirely different; here, each and every human being has different selves and identities in accordance with situations. The formation of civil society has increased the pace and momentum of the disintegration of personal identity. Now each person is forced to enact out a particular role in a particular milieu, say for example, the identity of a man in his family would be that of a husband and father, but if he enters into government service as an official he has to perform a very different role from that of the family man. So the frame of personae is used here to capture the dialectic clash between tradition and modernity and to investigate what changes actually occur to the identical traditional selves of man and woman with the spread of modernity.

The next frame which is introduced here as Causality is dealt with using various other terminologies such as “structural causality,” “causation,” “overdetermination” or “determination in the last instance by economy” and “cause-effect” paradigm. The basic or primary implication of this frame is that a master-grand cause is available for explaining all the phenomena occurring all over the world. In that aspect, this can be considered as the inbuilt property
of classical views on colonial modernity. Karl Marx was a major exponent of this frame. This theory has two directions; one that argues that if a change is inducted into the structural edifice of a society, it will naturally bring about overall changes and effects into that society and the second one, which postulates that all the effects; social, economic, cultural and historical, that one notices in a particular society could be explained by referring back to a primal cause. To be precise, the thinkers of causality argue that if the economic structure of the society is altered it will result in changes in all walks of life, religious, cultural, aesthetic and political. And in turn, if we want to have a clear picture of a particular change in a particular domain, for example the change in aesthetic value, we just have to track down the changes to the economic base of the society.

The sixth frame that engages our attention is Labour. In the theoretical lexicon of modernity, the process of labour is often looked upon and deployed as a universal and secular category. As a result, labour appears in most historical accounts as an inherent property of the capitalist mode of economic development. However, recent researches on the history and politics of south Asian countries expose the vanity of such arguments. Now it appears that so many factors other than the modern and the secular intervene in the labour process. In other words, it is no longer possible to consider labour as a universal denomination since it is subject to change and modification in accordance with differences in region, caste, class and gender.
This initial observation on the nature and function of labour leads us to consider another category which is usually referred to as non-economic or unpaid domestic labour. By this we simply mean labour which cannot be rendered into the economic terms of capitalist logic since labour activities performed under this rubric elude the cognitive grasp of the capitalist laws of development and progress. Domestic labour is representative of this kind of labour. It is often argued that domestic labour, being performed within the home, need not be taken into account at all. In most cases, this is performed by women and it is often integrated into the “womanly being” as their natural duty. Besides, all patriarchal ideologies build up their logics to valorise labour done by women without pay.

The seventh and the last frame, Hybridity, is directly taken from the post-colonial writings of Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. However the use of the term here greatly differs from common usage since they employ this term mainly to problematise their diasporic existence in western countries. In the present study, the term “hybridity” is applied against the reign of genre/period classification in the fields of literary studies and historiography. As per the norms of genre criticism, a novel may be categorised as social novel, historical fiction, political novel, crime thriller, etc., depending upon the dominant threads of its narrative framework. The same can be observed in relation to the rule of periods in the domain of historiography where time is divisible into Antiquity, Middle Ages and
Modernity based on certain criteria for evaluating periods and ages. Against this tendency, it is argued here that instead of resorting to strict regimentation of genre and period it would be possible to consider a work of art and a particular age as an abode of heterogeneous and multiple genres and periods. It is possible to detect some elements of hegemonic appropriation in a work which is deemed to be a subaltern novel just as it is possible to detect the presence of feudal remnants in an age of modernity. So no genre or period exists as a pure category, but only as a hybrid.

In order to put the basic premise narrated above into motion, several critical theories and their practitioners have been dealt with specifically. For the sake of analytical convenience, the theoretical approaches charted out in the present study can be classified as belonging to three paradigms; the paradigm of Difference and Repetition, the paradigm of Hegemony, and finally, the paradigm of Cause and Effect.

The paradigm of Difference and Repetition is constituted with the aid of the writings on the subject by Gilles Deleuze, the French philosopher who is often associated with the second wave of post-structuralism after Derrida and Lacan. He has expressed his key ideas regarding it in the work titled *Difference and Repetition*. According to Deleuze, the entire system of western philosophy spanning the period from Plato, via Hegel, to Heidegger, always tried to repress the element of difference and instead attempted to discern difference between, rather than difference in itself. In other words, the leading schools of
western philosophy deployed a series of conceptual categories like sameness, identity, resemblance, similarity, or equivalence, so as to capture all the differences within the purview of their philosophical systems. Deleuze’s philosophical project of difference is directed against these identitarian systems of western thought.

Repetition has also been treated similarly. Most philosophers have defined repetition in comparison with and contrast to the notion of generality. Generality is always defined in terms of equivalences and resemblances and hence involving the possibility of being exchanged. But as far as Deleuze is concerned repetition is a rare phenomenon that defies the rules of exchange and substitution. The singularity of repetition can never be exchanged with any other term of reference. The Deleuzean idea of repetition would become clearer if we make a critical engagement of his views on the notion of simulacrum, which he deploys against the Platonic Idea. Deleuze observes that Plato’s notion of copy is actually directed against the category of imitable forms, namely, simulacra-phantasms. As far as Plato is concerned, copy is a permissible form of reality since it comes close to the Real and the Idea. The existence of copies does not threaten the notions of Idea and the Real, but copies would subsist on them. So he has left room for the existence of the copy-icon dyad in his system. But, the simulacra-phantasms dyad remains aloof from the domains of the Real and the Idea, and it supplements the reality
in such a manner that would disrupt and overturn the order of the Real and the Idea.

These Deleuzean ruminations on the idea of difference and repetition are helpful in a discussion of modernity, since the pervasive tendency among the historians of modernity in Kerala is to deploy modernity contra tradition and to explain the differences between them rather than attempting to find out and encounter the differences existing within the project of modernity in Kerala. The histories of modernity with their unique, distinct and singular differences are yet to be imagined and written. Hitherto, all the historical narratives on modernity in Kerala attempted to pin down and project the differences of modernity in relation to an antagonistic term of reference like “tradition” or some other term in lieu of tradition.

The next paradigm which engages our attention here is that of Hegemony. This has already been introduced and explained briefly while delineating the problematic of the present project. Now, it is necessary to explicate the interpretation of hegemony as followed in this study. Instead of viewing hegemony as matter of either consent or persuasion, it is attempted to be looked upon as a category of relating, or making a connection, with an alien conceptual universe. The concept of hegemony as used in the present study draws close to the theoretical system of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics, they look upon and define hegemony as a relational concept; how a group of
people relate themselves to an alien differential system of values, beliefs, ideas and practices. In Kerala, modernity came as colonial import by the British rulers, and the values and norms contained in the project appeared quite strange to the people. So, it became necessary for the people to establish relations with this different and alien system. So hegemony in this context becomes how one relates her/himself to something which appears as different and foreign.

The final paradigm under consideration is the Cause-Effect. This paradigm is developed out of the critical engagements that question the usually accepted linear interpretation of the cause-effect model. One such tendency comes from the new historicist writings of Stephen Greenblatt which clearly contest the linear equation often applied to forge an organic bond between cause and effect. Modern historiography takes it for granted that the originary/original causes of all historical incidents could be explored. Moreover, it tries to believe that all happenings are the specific effects of certain and definite causes. For example, modern historians say that the concept of the individual is purely a making of modernity. Here is a direct and linear relation between individual and modern ideology. But Greenblatt argues for the possibility of overturning and reversing the natural order of cause and effect. He says that it is often possible to view effects as giving birth to causes. This underscores the possibility of perceiving causes through the lens
of effects. Instead of analysing the concept of individual by prioritising modernity it is also possible to approach modernity via individual.

Now we may attempt to lay out the route map of the present study; the ways and means through which the engagement with modernity progresses and develops. The ways and means of this journey are varied and complex. Differences and repetitions take place everywhere and so, it becomes a difficult task to track them down. The only viable option is to make the journey a meandering one as the subject in question demands and deserves. As a result, at some places the ways join together leading to junctions and arterial paths and at certain others they contradict and diverge.

The journey begins with the notion of personae; how a historical personage like Marthanda Varma acquires different incarnations and forms depending upon the nature and function of the discourse in which he is mentioned. So, the administrators who nurtured certain native inclinations in their mind opine that he is modern, while the foreign administrators who came here with their colonial ambitions say no to his modernity. This incongruity between two representations makes him a persona. In order to crack the secret code of modernity which remains hidden in the imagistic montage of Marthanda Varma, re-readings of diverse historical writings such as *The State Manuals*, *Thiruvithamkoor Charithram* (“History of Travancore”) and *Videseeyya Medhaavithwam* (“Foreign Dominance”) are made. As a result, some of the positive values of modernity are restored and this restoration being
essentialist in nature and function, acts as an impasse to the general ethos of the thesis. So the impasse leads us to the historical reproductions of the Shanar revolt, an instance of subaltern resistance that took place in nineteenth century Travancore. Engagement with the history of this rebellion reveals the other side of modernity, a modernity which is repressive, oppressive and suppressive in character. Here, the earlier hangover of essentialism would be overcome. The final motif will be the same as the initial one—the motif of personae. Here, the missionary debates on civilising missions and their influence on the characterisation in a novel, namely, *The Slayer Slain*, would be examined.

Chapter 2, “Problematising and Periodising the Proto-history of Modernity in Kerala: Some Critical Negotiations,” focuses upon the constructed aspect of modernity with special reference to the formative processes of Kerala modernity. For this, the very originary/original sources of Kerala modernity are unravelled and made problematical. In that direction the commonly accepted notion that modernity in Kerala began with the reign of Marthanda Varma is contested and to counter that claim it is argued that such conceptions of modernity stem from the hegemonic influence exerted by Brahminical scholars on the institution of historiography. To prove this, the textual and event genealogies of that hegemony would be explored. The term textual genealogy refers to that corpus of historical writings which projects Marthanda Varma as the maker of Kerala modernity and those which challenge such a projection. *The State Manuals* of Nagam Aiya and Velu Pillai attribute
modernity to Marthanda Varma whereas the writings of Ward and Conner, and Mateer, are presented as denying such historical narrations. The term “event genealogies” refers to those political events and incidents which give primacy to heroic representations of Marthanda Varma. Consequently, it is argued that the image of Marthanda Varma is a product of the Malayali Memorial, a political event that took place towards the end of nineteenth century. This part of the thesis is somewhat defensive of the positive claims of political modernity. In this chapter, the dialectic between tradition and modernity is rather dominant since the modern projections of Marthanda Varma are seen here as traditional while the attempts to counter this are considered modern.

The most important feature of the chapter is that it gives special attention to the genre of historical writings on the origin and genesis of modernity in Kerala, a rather unexplored area. For this purpose, early writings on Travancore history like Pachu Moothathu’s *Thiruvithamkoor Charithram* and P. Shungoony Menon’s *A History of Travancore from the Earliest Times* will be analysed. Besides, the entire notion of time and temporality would be re-defined; how the nineteenth century conception of time, temporality and historicity stands apart from our notions of the same.

All the above mentioned problems will be approached from clearly defined theoretical positions. Most prominent among them would be the theories on hegemony as developed by Laclau and Mouffe. Hegel’s project of World-History and Ranajit Guha’s response to it will be discussed in detail.
Another important theoretical frame to be discussed is on time and temporality. In that direction, Dipesh Chakrabarty’s idea of provincializing Europe will also be mentioned.

Chapter 3 “Caste, Body and Colonial Modernity: The Shanar Revolts 1822-1899,” discusses the historical procedures through which the instance of Shanar rebellion has been recorded and documented in the narrative registers of modernity. Here the dichotomy between missionaries and administrators will be stressed as the former were supportive of the subaltern cause while the latter always tried to repress the marginal voices of the subaltern communities. The conventional studies on the subject describe it as a victory of modernity and these accounts are reluctant to acknowledge the non-modern factors which worked behind the victory. In order to unearth those aspects of non-modernity, a critical re-reading of the historical estimates by scholars ranging from Robert Hardgrave via R.N. Yesudas to N.K. Jose is undertaken. Besides, an interpretation of Thurston’s entry on the Shanar community in Castes and Tribes of Southern India is also presented.

The search for non-modern elements of modernity ends in an encounter with the representations of Muthukutty Swamikal, a “sagely” figure who contributed immensely to the political mobilisation of the Shanar community. The modern narrations on the history of Shanar resistance have omitted this episode, characterising the Swamikal as a hypocrite and a fraudulent trickster.
This illustration of Swamikal has already been discussed by M.S.S. Pandian. However, this chapter exposes the limitations of Pandian’s approach.

To explicate the dynamics of historical narration, special attention is given to the difference between transition and transformation. Modernist re-enactments of the Shanar rebellion prioritise the motif of transition, while the present study points out the possibilities of the mode of transformation.

Chapter 4 “Mapping the Figural Cartographies of Subaltern Representation: The Slayer Slain and the Missionary Discourses on Personality,” examines the narrative peculiarities of missionary representations in detail. The initial dichotomy between missionaries and administrators in relation to the subaltern resistance is narrowed down and it is argued that in case of narrating the history of subaltern people, missionaries were in no way better than the latter. To serve that purpose, a novel entitled The Slayer Slain is singled out and its various operational machineries are opened up. This novel is written by an English lady named Mrs. Richard Collins who was engaged in the missionary activities in South Travancore. In order to discuss the peculiarity of The Slayer Slain, various frames of analysis such as domesticity, personae, fragmentation and hybridity would be introduced. This novel will be treated as a donor of logic of integrity and totality. Besides, the cartography of feminine resistance will be mapped.

For methodological exigencies, Deleuze’s readings on Foucault, and Kumkum Sangari’s re-working of the non-economic labour will be used. Then,
an attempt to place this novel within the milieu of Malayalam literary history will be made. For this, Dilip Menon’s re-evaluation of the so called low caste novels in Malayalam in the book *The Blindness of Insight: Essays on Caste in Modern India* will be examined.

**Chapter 5**, the concluding chapter of the project, reviews and makes an overall assessment of the research work done so far in this dissertation.
NOTES

1 The credit goes to Shihabuddin Poythumkadavu, a new generation short-story writer in Malayalam, for having coined this beautiful but thought-provoking imagery in one of his well known stories “Bhoopadathil Kaanaatha Dweepu [The Unmapped Island],” in Thiranjedutha Kathakal [Selected Stories], (Kottayam: DC, 2010) 61-5.


3 Hegel 10.


5 Anderson 14-16.

M L A Handbook seventh edition does not prescribe any specific format for inserting translations of foreign titles as in-text citation. Hence, the general rule for giving translations of foreign words is followed here.