CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

RIGHTING THE CANON

"I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be"

(Eliot 7)

"Since we cannot change reality, let us change the eyes which see reality"

(Kazantzakis 45)

Recent developments in literary theory have marked certain paradigm shifts in literary studies. The cultural contexts of the production and reception of the text have started receiving greater attention. The text is no longer supposed to be a repository of fixed meanings. The changes in the conditions of textual reception make every reading a writing/righting and, conversely, every writing/righting becomes a reading.

This dissertation is not a work on Shakespeare but one on the worldwide phenomenon of "Shakespeare Industry". Shakespeare plays have been a quarry for three centuries of exploiters. One can very well say with Ruby Cohn, "Almost all art builds on previous art, but much modern art builds with previous art" (x). To explain this further, Cohn quotes the
words of Eric Bentley: "All roads lead to Shakespeare, or perhaps it might be more correct to say that Shakespeare leads to all roads" (Cohn 107). The theoretical awakening that happened during the past few decades has revolutionised literary studies and has challenged the traditional ways of thinking about, classifying and interpreting texts. Theory encourages a self-conscious perception of the foundations as well as biases of all sorts of “constructions”. For this theoretical endeavour Shakespeare is the most apt textual locus. Patricia Parker elaborates upon the relevance of Shakespeare as far as theory is concerned:

Shakespeare himself has been not just the focus of a variety of divergent critical movements within recent years but also, increasingly, the locus of emerging debates within, and with, theory itself. . . . Larger theoretical developments have had their echo in what is now amounting to a wholesale reconsideration of the Shakespearean corpus — from the controversy over what constitutes an authoritative ‘text’ for plays which exist in so many versions, to the perception of a kinship between Derridean word play or Bakhtinian heteroglossia and Shakespeare’s own inveterate punning, from the exploration by feminist critics of the differing roles
of women in Shakespeare to the reopening of historical and ideological questions in ways other than a simple return to the static conservatism of Tillyard’s long-influential *Elizabethan Word Picture*. (vii)

Critics, theorists and creative writers, through generations, have spent a lot of their energy on analyzing Shakespeare so as to make him of use to them. The focus of the present dissertation is on the politics behind the ever increasing craze of creative writers to engage their works with those of Shakespeare. It also tries to analyze the various dimensions of the net effect created by these rewritings in the literary world in general. The recreations of Shakespeare are all overtly political. The term "political" refers to the power structures that go not only into the making of the canon but also into the righting of the canon. The "new" writers manoeuvre to unravel the historical and political realities that the texts are assumed to elide or subterfuge. But righting the canon quite often does not help one to escape the power structures. Eventually it turns out to be a reinstatement of the hegemonical hierarchy. The focus of the present scrutiny is to locate the destabilizing attempts on the Shakespeare canon, and the ways in which most of them get co-opted in disguise into the dominant ideologies. This study purposes to chart a site where the
canonical Shakespearean tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear* confront a few of their adaptations like the British dramatist Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, the Malayali film director Jayaraj's film *Kaliyattam*, the post-war British dramatist Edward Bond's *Lear* and the British Women's Theatre Group’s *Lear's Daughters*. Rather than trying to present a comprehensive survey of the whole arena of Shakespearean re-creations, the study concentrates on specific examples.

Jenny S. Spencer has rightly remarked on the new writers’ craze for the classics:

In the twentieth century, self-conscious use of the classics has engendered a strain of plays that might usefully be identified as ‘theatre of quotation’. George Bernard Shaw, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Eugène Ionesco, Tom Stoppard, Bertolt Brecht, and Heiner Müller have all written updated transformations of Shakespearean plots. Jean Paul Sartre, Jean Giraudoux, Jean Cocteau, and Jean Anouilh are perhaps best known for their use of classical Greek material. But not one of them claims to write tragedy. With their modernized settings, interpolated scenes, new characters, modern
psychological motivation, and/or altered philosophical perspective, contemporary adaptations either celebrate the ‘death of tragedy’ or self consciously acknowledge their reduced scope of vision. In most cases, both the humor of the plays and their intellectual force depend upon knowledge of the original, the adaptation sustaining its source text in symbiotic relationship through parody and allusion. Should *Hamlet* disappear from our cultural repertoire, the peculiar power of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* would go with it. Likewise, the intellectual brilliance and polemical depth of Sartre's *The Flies* or Giraudoux's *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place* would be lost without knowledge of the classical material they re-work. (78)

Much of this work is explicitly concerned with the operations of power. At any time in history there is a close interaction between state power and cultural forms. Earlier critical approaches assumed that literary texts had some universal significance and essential truth to impart. But modern critics like the new historicists tend to read literary texts as material products of specific historical conditions. They look at texts of all kinds as the vehicles of power politics. Any story is a society's means
of constructing a narrative which consciously or unconsciously fits the interests of that society, and almost always the story will be in favour of the ideology of the ruling class. Representations of various kinds function to ratify the existing social order. They work by an implied consensus which marginalizes any form of dissent from the social order. If texts are political, reading them also becomes a political activity. It turns out to be a site of contest between competing political ideologies. This dissertation aims at locating the political ramifications of literary interpretation.

Considering the scenario in England, power in early modern England was deeply theatrical. Theatre was a major site for the representation and legitimation of power. In his *Apology for Actors* Thomas Heywood claimed that plays were written and performed to teach "subjects obedience to their king" by showing them "the untimely end of such as have moved tumults, commotions and insurrections" (53). The mission here is to investigate the process of the consolidation, subversion and the final containment of power. Jonathan Dollimore's comment may be broached here as an explanation of the above terms: “The first refers, typically, to the ideological means whereby a dominant order seeks to perpetuate itself; the second to the subversion of that order, the third to the containment of ostensibly subversive pressures” (10).
To elaborate on the concept of the "political", one may take recourse to the formulations of Althusser, as summarized by Howard and O’Connor:

By a political analysis we mean one which examines how Shakespearean texts have functioned to produce, reproduce, or contest historically specific relations of power (relations among classes, genders, and races, for example) and have been used to produce and naturalize interested representations of the real. In speaking of ‘interested’ representations, we do not imply that there is a conscious conspiracy on the part of particular social groups to distort (misrepresent) reality through dramatic fictions. Rather, we mean that reality is knowable only through the discourses which mediate it, and that there is a constant, if subterranean, struggle over whose constructions of the real will gain dominance. Dramatic works, at their moments of production, are implicated in such struggles; and they are implicated each time they are reproduced in criticism or in the theatre. (A criticism which presents Coriolanus as enemy of the people and a criticism which presents him as victim of
lower class envy and ignorance circulate two quite distinct constructions of what would constitute a proper social order within the play world, and probably within the world as well) There is, in short, no way to place drama outside of ideological contestation, ideology being understood as that inescapable network of beliefs and practices by which variously positioned and historically constituted subjects imagine their relationship to the real and through which they render intelligible the world around them. Ideology can never be ‘disinterested’ because it functions to render ‘obvious’ and ‘natural’ constructions of reality which, often in oblique and highly mediated ways, serve the interests of particular races, genders and classes within the social formation. (3-4)

To a certain extent, conventional stability is being shaken by the Shakespearean re-creations. Some plurality and proliferation of meaning do happen. But what is amazing is the fact that those texts which really subvert the canon still remain highly marginalized. The present work endeavours to discover the hidden pockets of ideology and power structures behind such a phenomenon. The texts under discussion with
the exception of *Lear's Daughters* do not succeed in imprinting a permanent unsettling effect on the dominant discourse. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Lear* definitively derive Shakespeare's meaning and re-establish him in the English academy by finding a place for themselves in the curriculum. They do not create a disruption in the linearity of English discourse and this is why they have got readily canonized. *Kaliyattam*, the film version of *Othello*, also follows suit. It has become a popular film in Malayalam, winning prestigious awards and thus placing Jayaraj on par with Shakespeare. Taking into account the patriarchal ideology in the plays, one finds that its overarching discourse gets challenged only in *Lear's Daughters*. However, it being a radical work by a group of women trying to question the Shakespearean "constructions" of subjectivity, *Lear's Daughters* has not received the canonical acceptance the male re-creations have easily won. It has not got an entry into the status of the main stream productions. This work is centred on an analysis of the way meanings shift and develop during the "reception" processes which take place in new cultural contexts.

The title of the dissertation puts in perspective an Indian woman's position as a reader vis-à-vis the texts under scrutiny. A post-colonial woman reader is always in a marginalized position, decentred from the
patriarchal as well as colonial discourses of literary production and reception. However, though paradoxically, such a marginalized position gives a vantage point to her to look at the politics behind the modern adaptations of the canon of Shakespeare. The term "reception" is used here in a different sense from the general reader-response jargon. This analysis considers any offshoot or adaptation of a text as a kind of reception. This can be termed active reception since the reader here becomes a writer — a subject or an agent who authors meaning. But, as regards canonized texts, every reception is basically a reading. The possibilities of that reading becoming a writing or righting are explored here. Reception is a multilayered process — the authors of the texts under discussion, the audiences of their performance texts and peripheral groups like Indian women who are constructed as "subjects" in the process of reception, become readers or receivers here.

Today, literary and cultural theory questions and contests the preferred readings of the institutionalised canon and the very belief of an ahistorical, trans-cultural and apolitical truth that literature is supposed to represent. Any talk on literature and language will have to deal with issues of social differentiation, cultural hegemony, ideology, gender issues, subjectivity and other related concerns. The modern critic has
therefore to position herself/himself within specific cultural, historical, political and linguistic situations for her/his functioning.

An explanation of the meaning of the term "subject" seems necessary here. Theory receives the word "subject" in its multiple connotations. In grammar, the term stands for a word, phrase or clause which indicates the person or thing that performs the action of an active verb or that receives the action of a passive verb. It also means a dependent, someone ruled by a monarch or government. Thus "subject" can act as both subject and object depending upon the context. Traditionally, "subject" was accepted as the individual human being possessed of valid self-knowledge and is self-actuating. The conventional view of subjectivity is presented by Bill Ashcroft thus: “The individual self was separate from the world and could employ intellect and imagination in understanding and representing the world. The autonomous human consciousness was seen to be the source of action and meaning rather than their product” (220). This belief ignored the significance of social relations and the role of language in forming the self. Contrary to this idea, the modern concept of subjectivity replaces individual autonomy with the concept of the production of the human subject through ideology, discourse or language. New theorists consider
ideology as an autonomous entity and not as a mere product. The idea of the autonomy of ideology was put forward by Louis Althusser in his famous essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". According to him, the "subject" is constructed by ideology. He disagrees with the classical Marxist notion of the subject being determined by the economic forces of production. He shows the ways in which literature can produce individuals in order that the forces and relations of production may continue. He says:

Subjects are ‘born into’ ideology, they find subjectivity within the expectations of their parents and their society. It provides them a sense of identity and security through structures such as language, social codes and conventions. In ideology, the subjects also represent to themselves ‘their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there’. (37)

Althusser says that Ideological State Apparatuses "interpellate" subjects in a particular way. By inviting the subject to occupy a stipulated social role, a certain definite subjectivity is imposed on her/him. Catherine Belsey says that the destination of all ideology is the subject, ie, the
individual in society. It is the role of ideology to *construct people as subjects*. (1980, 58)

The multifarious ideological mechanisms whereby the subject is constructed during the reception processes of the master canon of Shakespeare are being analyzed here. In this context, bringing in the concept of discourse would be a worthwhile enterprise. It is through language that particular subjectivities are produced. Language enables the speaker to present herself or himself as “I”, the subject of a sentence. People get constructed as subjects through language. Althusser says: “And so it is literally true that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. If one really thinks about it, one will see that there is no other objective testimony to the identity of the subject except that which he himself thus gives about himself” (226). Language performs this function through stipulated discourses. For Foucault a discourse is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known. The world is not simply "there" for representation. The world comes into existence only through representation, which itself is in fact a discursive formation. It is only through such a discourse that speakers and hearers as well as writers and readers get an awareness about themselves, about their place in the world
and thus enter into a particular subjectivity for themselves. This subjectivity compels the body and the consciousness into the reproduction of the conditions of production.

According to Foucault, it is through consumption that ideologies proliferate in social formations. About the power of Foucault's unsettling assumptions Michel de Certeau writes: "Hunting through the forests of history and through our present plains, Foucault traps strange things which he discovers in past literature and uses these for disturbing our present securities" (1986, 91). De Certeau also asserts that a text should be seen as having no pre-determined relation to an outside world. Its position within the world is historically contingent and shifting. The text in fact produces the context. A text’s reception occurs differently at different historical moments. Thus consumption becomes as important as production. The real production of discourses occurs in the consumption of texts.

Consumption often takes place under the illusion that consumption itself is a strategy to enter into the domains of power. The consumer is often very passive. "Reading" makes the reader a passive consumer. Reading is an act of "silent production" in which the contingent social and
historical forces which have produced the reader go on to recreate the text in highly specific ways. De Certeau writes:

The reader insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation; he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body. Ruse, metaphor, arrangement, this production is also an invention of the memory, works become the outlet or product of silent histories. (1984 xxii)

Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey expresses their opinion on the role of literature in the creation of individuals as subjects:

Through the endless functioning of literature's ‘texts’ literature unceasingly ‘produces’ subjects, on display for everyone. So, paradoxically using the same schema we can say: literature endlessly transforms (concrete) individuals into subjects and endows them with a quasi-real hallucinatory individuality. (10)

Not only readers but also the author and his characters get subjectified in the process. Stephen Greenblatt, the famous new historicist, says how he began his Renaissance Self-Fashioning with an intention to explore "the
role of human autonomy in the construction of identity". But as the work progressed, the emphasis fell more and more on cultural institutions like family, religion and the state and, eventually, "the human subject itself began to seem remarkably unfree, the ideological product of the relations of power in a particular society" (256). Whenever the subject writes, the subject is written also. Though texts like *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Lear* belabour to create a free subjectivity, ultimately what is being constructed is a contingent category. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, forever, resist to be centralized, and Lear, quite ironically, turns out to be the epitome of the "true tragic" hero.

Recent developments in psychoanalysis, semiology and popular culture also focus on the functioning of ideology in the construction of the subject. In this connection, Bertolt Brecht's distinction between “classic” realism and “critical” realism is notable. Both denote a reflection of reality, but classic realism naturalizes, or rather conceals, the conventions on which it depends, thus obscuring dynamic contradictions that could lead to radical change. Classic realism supports the dominant ideology through covert ways. It represents reality and human nature as ahistorical, eternal or essentially unchanging. Classic realism employs narrative continuity and audience identification to masquerade this constructed
reality. The audience is assumed to be a fixed, unified group rendered immobile in the act of seeing. Today, one knows very well that the audience themselves are not a unified, undifferentiated whole, but vary in gender, over time and across cultures. The audience of Shakespeare or the audience of the new adaptations of Shakespeare, too, are not constituted solely of a white, male community. The project of creating a stable meaning for everyone is not viable. One cannot attempt to forge all these differences into an unchallengeable oneness. The different identities must be considered with due regard for each. For example, Desdemona has an identity situated in the cultural backdrop of Venice, but a "global theorising" is being done when Jayaraj transplants that identity into an entirely different Kerala setting.

There has always been an intense nostalgia for the past and its treasures. In *Performing Nostalgia* Susan Bennett remarks on this craze for the past: "The Past, in the present, has become a powerful trading economy on a global scale" (15). That is why the greatest number of adaptations have always been on Shakespeare. Marketing strategies are always "consumer-driven" (Robins 27). In his significant study, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said reminds us that more important than the past itself is its bearing upon cultural attitudes in the present. It is
worthwhile to analyse why the global consumers travel to and through the past. Loventhal gives a seemingly valid reason for this recourse to the past: "A perpetual staple of nostalgic yearning is the search for a simple and stable past as a refuge from the turbulent and chaotic present" (21). Thus it is a dissatisfaction with the present that forces writers to go on a tour to the past. Bennett again remarks:

[I]t would be possible to choose almost any moment or moments from the historical past, from the very recent to the most distant, and to locate performance texts which recreate those histories in and for the present. But the performances which attach to the signifier Shakespeare add up to the most intensive and most obvious re-use of the past since Shakespeare's plays form, as Terence Hawkes has stated, one of the central agencies through which culture generates meaning (21).

The articulation of "Shakespeare" functions, as Peter Erickson has suggested, as "the last line of defence in the protection of a cultural ideal" (4), and so Bennett argues that it is thus not at all surprising that this site is an over determined and over invested real estate on which the various obsessions, fetishizations and dislocations of the past can be staged.
Writers often look at the past as a united coherent whole and at the present as a shattered one. The fact of the past too being equally incoherent and discordant is often obliterated. All efforts to salvage the past through recreations can only be viewed as a mere acceptance of the past hierarchies.

Canonization and de-canonization are fashionable catch-cries today. The concept of the canon can be explained by borrowing the definition put forward by M.H. Abrams:

In recent decades the phrase literary canon has come to designate in world literature, or in European literature, but most frequently in a national literature those authors who, by a cumulative consensus of critics, scholars and teachers, have come to be widely recognized as ‘major’ and to have written works often hailed as literary classics. These canonical writers are the ones which at a given time, are most kept in print, most frequently and fully discussed by literary critics and historians and most likely to be included in anthologies and taught in college courses with titles such as ‘World Masterpieces’, ‘Major English Authors’, or ‘Great American Writers’. (19-20)
Abrams emphasises that the decisive formative influences behind "canon formation" are the persistent influence of, and reference to, an author in the work of other authors and the widespread assignment of an author or text in school and college curricula. Judged by these standards Shakespeare is the undisputed centre of the English literary canon. "English thought" is diffused through his international influence on subsequent writers. He is arguably the most canonical and culturally pre-eminent of subjects. Until recently Shakespeare's texts were accepted to be stable and authoritative entities having immanent meaning in them. His plays were supposed to have a universal meaning irrespective of the time, context and the nature of the spectators. Shakespeare has become part of the manner in which millions of people, consciously or unconsciously, imagine and fantasise and think about the world. James H. Kavanagh opines:

To discuss Shakespeare is to discuss the study of English itself. The word 'Shakespeare' is less the name of a specific historical figure than a sign that has come to designate a vaguely defined, but fiercely defended, set of characteristics that function as the touch-stone of value for what we commonly call the 'English literary tradition'. (144)
In traditional criticism no one could ever conceive the possibility of a performance text of Shakespeare or an adaptation becoming an individual creation. They would be considered mere interpretations of the "original" meaning that Shakespeare infused into his texts. Terence Hawkes elaborates on the rigidity of the interpretation of Shakespearean plays:

Traditionally, critics, producers, actors and audience of Shakespeare have assumed, with Ophelia, that the ‘meaning of each play is bequeathed to it ab initio’ and lies — artfully concealed perhaps — within its text. Each account, or production of the play, then offers to discover and lay hold of this meaning, hoisting it triumphantly, like buried treasure into view. It is as if, to the information which used to be given in theatrical programmes, ‘Cigarettes by Abdullah, Costumes by Motley, Music by Mendelsohn’ we should add ‘Meaning by Shakespeare’. (3)

Hence Bulman says, “Actors and directors are therefore interpreters rather than makers of meaning” (1).

Getting liberated from the literary clutches of Shakespeare appears to be a tough task for the successors. How can one aspire to write great
plays when Shakespeare has already written the greatest dramas in the English Language? This is a rhetorical question asked by many of the new writers. Shakespeare is thus assigned with a univocal and monolithic significance. Kate Chedgzoy cites a small section of the verse prologue to Dryden's play *The Enchanted Island*, an adaptation of *The Tempest*, to prove how Shakespeare as an artistic precursor entirely pre-empted and absorbed his followers:

Shakespeare, who (taught by none) did first impart
To Fletcher *Wit, to labouring* Johnson *Art*.

*He Monarch-like gave those his subjects law,*

*And is that Nature which they paint and draw.*

*If they have since out-writ all other men,*

*'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakespeare's *Pen* . . .

*But Shakespeare's Magick could not copy'd be,*

*Within that circle none durst walk but he.* (Chedgzoy 25)

While training pupils in the theatre, the instruction used to be to master "The Master" in order to prove their talents. Even non-Anglo actors with strong indigenous performance cultures were ready to form their voice, stance, expressions and gestures to match with a Shakespeare
performance. Shakespeare was thus the gold standard of dramatic art. As a result, there developed a conviction that a non-European's or a female's rendition of a Shakespeare text can never be "authentic", and it thus constructed their inferiority. In most universities Shakespeare used to be taught in a rather formalistic, ahistorical way, just dispensing the "meaning" of the major plays. He would be presented as the master dramatist. Some kind of neat arrangement of his plays would be provided so as to trace the evolution of his “thought”. Texts, when taken as concrete entities with no connection to history and society, give the impression that Shakespeare never ages. Through a "close reading" of the plays one is given the belief that Shakespeare is the bearer of universal truths. Critics like E.M.W. Tillyard and study guides like Brodie's Notes, Longman's York Notes etc. promoted the "Golden Age" view of Shakespeare's Theatre.

Any text is a product as well as a “producer” of power, a reflection as well as an agent of social relations. The title “Rewriting Shakespeare” plays on both the negative and the positive connotations of the term rewriting. On the one hand, it signifies the possibility of producing Shakespeare differently. On the other hand, it can also stand for a mere repetition, though not of course a conscious one. The principal institutions
through which Shakespeare’s plays are disseminated in modern times are academic publishing, theatre, film, television and education. Of these, education appears to be the one that places the most stringent constraints on acts of radical reinterpretation. In fact educational institutions can act as sites capable of making effective political intervention. Radical interpretations can be included in the curriculum. The canon can be widened to produce Shakespeare differently in the classroom including works by women and ethnic-minority writers in traditional courses.

Present day developments in literary and cultural theory have marked a drastic shift from the accepted notion of the superiority of a Shakespeare play. The universality claim and the transcendental intentions of the plays are widely challenged. The whole concept of the Canon is already under attack from various quarters. The canon of Shakespeare, as any other literary canon, is accepted to be a manifesto of the existing power structure. Theorists believe that by imposing radical changes on the canon one may dismantle the power structure. With the support of the theories of Barthes, Foucault et al, numerous attempts have been made to "re-read" Shakespeare. Terence Hawkes, too, supports this endeavour of re-reading. He argues, "For us, the plays have the same function as, and work like, the words of which they are made. We use
them, in order to generate meaning . . . Shakespeare doesn't mean: *We mean by Shakespeare*" (1992, 3). Theorists claim that traditional assumptions about universality and continuity in the performance history of Shakespeare's plays are themselves cultural constructs. They are all complicit with the power hierarchy.

The idea that meaning is made rather than found is definitely not a new one. It is rooted in the European thought of the time of Vico. Saussure argued that meaning is an effect of difference. It depends on the relations of difference between one term and another within the language. Language itself is the location of discourses. Catherine Belsey, a very perceptive modern Shakespeare critic and cultural historian, opines in her book *The Subject of Tragedy*:

The problem with the meanings that we learn — and learn to produce — is that they seem to define and delimit what is thinkable, imaginable, possible. To fix meaning, to arrest its process and deny its plurality, is in effect to confine what is possible to what *is*. Conversely, to disrupt this fixity is to glimpse alternative possibilities. A conservative criticism reads in quest of familiar, obvious, common-sense meanings, and thus reaffirms what we already know. A
radical criticism, however, is concerned to produce readings which challenge that knowledge by revealing alternative meanings . . . (166-67)

Belsey continues by presenting the ways in which subjectivity is created through Shakespearean tragedies. Earlier, the text was regarded as autotelic, an entity which always remains the same from one moment to the next. In Belsey's formulation, every "reading" is the creation of a new meaning. Each reader tries to make the text mean for her/his own purposes. Each reading therefore can be termed as a re-writing/righting of the original. The element of subversion is evidently present in this process. The text which was taken to be the repository of a single meaning gets deconstructed. The result is the creation of a number of texts. The author no longer occupies an authoritative position. S/he loses control on the text. The reader becomes a co-author in creating new texts. Today one knows that every text contains a large number of gaps and fissures in it. The author may or may not have done it consciously. A conscious reader can discover these gaps. The modern attempt is to read a text in such a way as to identify the missing details and thus re-read it so as to fill in the gaps. Harold Bloom views re-reading as an act of mis-reading also. A
deliberate shift from the beaten paths is the proclaimed aim of every new reading.

Shakespeare has never before had a wider audience than now. His plays are performed on amateur and professional stages throughout the world. In Ruby Cohn's opinion, "Paradoxically, some of our contemporaries cherish Shakespeare for his relevance to us, whereas other contemporaries remould him into relevance for us" (ix). E. Howard and O'Connor also express a similar concern: "Probably more than any other figure in western culture Shakespeare has been used to secure assumptions about texts, history, ideology and criticism . . . He functions, in many quarters, as a kind of cultural Esperanto" (4). On the other hand, there are also critics who go to the other extreme of disclaiming their navel ties with Shakespeare. This is also an untenable position. The quest here is to make an inquisitive adventure into the intertextual ramifications involved in the adaptations of Shakespeare.

In his *Royal Shakespeare: Theatre and the Making of Ideology*, Alan Sinfield explores Shakespeare's ongoing currency as an agent of royal power. Possession and knowledge of Shakespeare texts is treated as an evidence of empowerment. Modern writers have an Oedipal relation to Shakespeare. They do not admit that their relation to Shakespeare is one
which gives sanctity to them also. English departments at major universities, where Shakespeare was the essential core, have changed their titles to terms like "Textual Studies". Shakespeare is scoffed at as nothing more than another of those dead white males whose work had too long dominated the literary canon. Shakespeare is still studied, but in a very different light. In his work Shakespeare in the Movies Douglas Brode quotes the critic Jack Kroll's comment on this anti-Shakespearean attitude: "This is an age apparently determined to debard the Bard, who has been called names like 'a black hole . . . a verbocrat' by scholars burying him under a lava flow of deconstructionism, new historicism, neo-Marxism, genderism and other ismatic attacks" (11). There has arisen a theoretical resistance to the very idea of canon. One must note that canon often means not just the text in question but the received readings of it, its normalization as a cultural icon or familiar construct. The rewriting of Shakespeare can be seen as a key location for the exploration of culture and its transmission. One must historicize the text in order to grasp its continuing implication in a variety of cultural practices and institutions in which the authority of Shakespeare is appropriated to serve particular political ends. Historicizing the text thus comes to mean not only locating it within the coordinates of Renaissance culture, but mapping its uses at subsequent moments of reception and reproduction.
In the 1989 report made by Brian Cox on English teaching the author commented that many teachers believe in the ability of Shakespeare's work to convey universal values whereas other teachers point out that evaluations of Shakespeare have varied from one historical period to the next, and that hence pupils should be encouraged to think critically about his status in the canon. On the basis of an interview with Cox, Susan Leach in her book *Shakespeare in the Class Room* gives out Cox’s four main reasons for wanting Shakespeare in the National Curriculum:

First, the belief that the kind of 'great' literature written by Shakespeare encompasses wisdom; second, that 'these great works' are part of our cultural heritage, are central to our culture, and that every child has the right to be introduced to them; third, that Shakespeare uses language in a way beyond that of any other writer; and lastly, that Shakespeare has greater insight into human character than other writers. Additional reasons are that the history of the development of the English language is intimately bound up with Shakespeare's language. (22-23)

Leach then rightly criticises this attitude of Cox:
A plethora of questions is provoked by these views: Whose culture? What wisdom? Who defined it as wisdom? In what ways are these works central to our culture? What does Professor Cox mean by cultural heritage — the heritage of which people? How has this language of Shakespeare been influential? The juxtaposition of notions of 'cultural heritage', 'birthright', 'greatness' and standard English imply their own ideological provenance and at a time of anxieties about standards, ideas of national identity and access to a universally understood version of English, indicate a paternalist establishment perspective in contemporary challenges. (22-23)

For an Indian woman the Eurocentric view of Shakespeare contributing to "our" culture is something that makes her subject to a set of overbearing social norms. This necessitates a critique of these preferred assumptions on the centrality of Shakespeare. It is pertinent here to ask what Shakespeare means to a peripheral being. Does a rewritten version of Shakespeare contribute in any way to at least a reassessment of her marginality? Terence Hawkes expostulates on the necessity of creating alternative Shakespeares:
In concrete historical terms Shakespeare can never be ‘our contemporary’ except by the strategy of appropriation, yet the protean values which subsequent generations of critics have discovered in the text themselves can be demonstrated to be in large part the projections of their own externally applied values. The resounding failure of successive traditions of humanist criticism to articulate critically the ensemble of assumptions upon which their perceptions rest makes it clear that what is now needed as a matter of extreme urgency are new kinds of Shakespeare criticism which are thoroughly self-aware and which actively resist those traditions whose main strategy for dealing with the threat they pose is one of domestication. Such forms of criticism will, in the final analysis, liberate these texts from the straightjacket of unexamined assumptions and traditions.

(1985, 25)

Many modern writers share the opinion of Hawkes and have attempted to provide Shakespeare plays with “plural approaches” and “multiplicity of readings”.
Finding an apt name for Shakespeare rewritings is difficult. In her classic book *Modern Shakespeare Offshoots* Ruby Cohn provides us with a number of names like abridgments, adaptations, additions, alterations, ameliorations, distortions, interpolations, modifications, mutilations, revisions etc. “Adaptation” seems to be a more widely accepted term because of its large scope.

The word ‘adaptation’ is taken from the Latin ‘adaptare’, which means to fit, to make suitable. ‘Adaptation’ as a concept can expand or contract. Writ large, adaptation includes almost any act of alteration performed upon specific cultural works of the past and dovetails with a general process of cultural re-creation. More narrowly, adaptations can be radical alterations of the shape and significance of another work, through verbal and theatrical devices, so as to invoke that work and yet be different from it so that any adaptation is, and is not, Shakespeare. (Fichlin and Fortier 4)

Most adaptations are interested merely in adjusting or accommodating the original work to the tastes and expectations of their own readership or audience. “Appropriation” might be a suitable word in the present case.
For Fischlin and Fortier, “‘appropriation’ suggests a hostile takeover, a seizure of authority over the original in a way that appeals to contemporary sensibilities steeped in a politicized understanding of culture” (3). Thomas Cartelli says, "Appropriation as I understand it here both serves, and works in, the interests of the writer or group doing the appropriating, but usually works against the avowed or assigned interest of the writer whose work is appropriated" (15).

Those who want to question Shakespeare can pose the argument that his own works are not original. In fact, he himself was an adapter. He culled out existing material from various sources and crafted them into “new” artistic creations. But Shakespeare enthusiasts clamour that his adaptation was so skillfully done that the unsurpassed originality and sanctity of his texts have always been acknowledged. There is even a cultural taboo on trying to alter them. However, there was a large outpouring of Shakespeare adaptations during the Restoration period. The adapters took it almost as a way of showing respect to him. This continued during the next few generations also. It was in the second half of the twentieth century that a high point in the adaptation of Shakespeare was witnessed. It made its appearance in such varied forms as prose narratives, poems, works of fine art, comic books, opera libretti, film
scripts and so on. Adaptation is thus central to Shakespeare's work and to his continuing cultural presence. Shakespeare adapted his source texts, and now his “adaptations” are adapted in an enormous range of cultural contexts.

The concept of “intertextuality” was developed in France by Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. Graham Allen explains the concept thus:

. . . [F]rom its beginning the concept of intertextuality is meant to designate a kind of language which, because of its embodiment of otherness, is against, beyond and resistant to (mono)logic. Such language is socially disruptive, revolutionary even. Intertextuality encompasses that aspect of literary and other kinds of texts which struggles against and subverts reason, the belief in the unity of meaning or the human subject, and which is therefore subversive to all ideas of the logical and the unquestionable. (45)

Intertextuality suggests that all writing, like all cultural production, is an inter-weaving of already existing cultural material. For Barthes any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it. Graham Allen elaborates on the concept of intertextuality by referring to the arguments of Barthes:
There are, in Barthe's intertextual world, no emotions before the textual description of emotions, no thoughts before the textual presentation of thoughts, no significant actions which do not signify outside of already textualized and encoded actions; we feel and think and act in codes, in the cultural space of the déjà, the already spoken, written, read. The modern author, whom Barthes styles the modern scrip tor, does not, in writing the book, release a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but rather arranges and compiles the always already written, spoken, and read into a 'multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash'. The text is, then a 'tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’. (73)

Thus we can say that all production is always reproduction. Any recontextualization involves reworking and alteration.

This happens even when the writer tries to be faithful to her/his sense of the original. Analyzing it from the view point of reception and reader-response theories also shows that the meaning of texts gets changed when they appear in new conditions. Graham Holderness
comments about this situation: “Shakespeare is here, now, always, what is currently being made of him” (50). One may argue that all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose. The conclusion is that importance must be given to how the “new” works are received, rather than to how they are produced. Thomas Healy also airs the same notion when he comments:

The conservative world of textual editing has come to accept that the Shakespeare canon is not firmly set and that many plays exist in different versions, even within the period of their origins. The image of Shakespeare as a historically situated agent starting out from the title page of the First Folio and laying claim to the texts within it has been replaced by the Protean Shakespeare: a body of artefacts (texts, performances, visual images, accounts) whose limits are unfixed and which is able to appear in apparently endless guises, each one capable of proclaiming a Shakespearean authenticity because, no matter how many shapes Shakespeare is pursued through, there is no final state in which 'he' may be proclaimed as resting.(209)
Those who adapt Shakespeare do so with varying intentions. Some of them try to subvert and overthrow his power whereas some others depend on Shakespeare's canonicity for asserting their own attempts. Shakespearean characters are moved through non-Shakespearean stories. Till the 1980s almost all the adaptations provided traditional readings of Shakespeare. But after the 1980s the trend was towards offering radical readings. These subversive readings are the most fascinating of all. Bertolt Brecht termed this effort as a “counterplay”.

Adapting Shakespeare has indeed become an industry today, which can be termed "Shakespeare Industry”. Helen Tiffin calls this rewriting venture a "canonical counter-discourse". Gilbert and Tompkins, citing the opinion of Tiffin, write in their book *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*:

Rewriting the characters, the narrative, the context and/or the genre of the canonical script provides means of interrogating the cultural legacy of imperialism and offers renewed opportunities for performative intervention. These are not, however, strategies of replacement: there is no attempt to merely substitute a canonical text with its oppositional reworking. Counter-discourse seeks to
deconstruct significations of authority and power exercised in the canonical text, to release its stranglehold on representation and, by implication, to intervene in social conditioning. In fact, performance itself can be counter-discursive. (16)

The counter-discourse strives to destabilize the power structures of the originary text. Approaching Shakespeare adaptations for counter-discursive functions will validate the stance taken up in this study.

The Shakespeare industry has a long and rich history, which is traced by Jean I. Marsden:

The Restoration and eighteenth-century produced one of the most subversive acts in literary history — the rewriting and restructuring of Shakespeare's plays. We have all heard of Nahum Tate's 'audacious' adaptation of *King Lear* with its resoundingly happy ending, but Tate was only one of a score of playwrights who adapted Shakespeare's plays. Between 1660 and 1977, more than fifty adaptations appeared in print and on the stage, works in which playwrights augmented, substantially cut, or completely rewrote the original plays.
The plays were staged with new scenes, new endings, and underlying all this novelty, new words. (1995, 1)

An adaptation is always in some sense a distortion of its source. More recent playwrights, for instance, have written alternative plots or intercut the staging of a Shakespeare play with another plot. They have also written texts that precede or follow the Shakespearean source. For example, Fischlin and Fortier mention *Harlem Duet*, Djanet Sears's blues version of *Othello*, which shows Othello with a first wife and serves as a prelude to Shakespeare's *Othello*. Shakespearean adaptation in this mode is not about faithful adherence to the narrative or performative conventions of traditional Shakespeare, but about the degree to which the playwright can transform that material and reshape conventions in such a way as to expose the orthodoxies that support the tradition. Charles Marowitz has warned us against the practice of idealizing Shakespeare:

I have to confess that some of the most contemptible people I have ever known have loved Shakespeare, and I have found them very hard to take. It is like sharing your bed with bigots, junkies and bores. For many of them, Shakespeare was a confirmation of their world-view. The Christian Universe was memorialised in his work and, from
his sentiments, they would easily justify their bourgeois smugness, their conventionality and their pompous morality. For them, it was as if Shakespeare wrote only so that they could quote his aphorisms, on their calendars. (1991, 17)

As stated earlier, this study intends to make a political analysis of some Shakespearean texts and their uses in culture. Presenting Shakespeare as the bearer of universal truths serves an oppressive function. However, all readings produced outside the dominant ideologies are branded as illegitimate. For them, entering into the world of legitimate Shakespearean adaptations seems a difficult endeavour. Feminists and third world critics struggle hard to find a place for themselves in the counter-discursive Shakespeare industry. Present day critics like Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin associate Shakespeare with colonialism. They say:

Anglo-American literary scholarship of the last two centuries offered a Shakespeare who celebrated the superiority of the 'civilized races' and, further, colonial educationalists and administrators used this Shakespeare to reinforce cultural and racial hierarchies. Shakespeare
became, during the colonial period, ‘the quintessence of Englishness and a measure of humanity itself’. (1)

European imperialist discourses theorized the human subject as male and white. Anti-colonial and feminist struggles consider Shakespeare as a site asserting such a subject and hence an arena of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. They challenge the “meta-narratives” that have excluded and marginalized the experience and cultures of the underprivileged. Language too is considered a tool of domination and a means of constructing identity. Thus "reinterpreting Shakespeare's plays became, at least for some critics, part of the business of reinterpreting and changing our own world" (Loomba and Orkin 3). Those who rewrite Shakespeare try to question the logocentric idea of theatre and replace it with one in which performance becomes the site of cultural and aesthetic contestation.

For performance critics, the actor's body is also a site of complex cultural negotiation. There has been an accepted theory that Shakespeare has to be acted “naturally”. Opposing this conventional idea of performance, Bulman says: "The idea that an actor serves merely as a conduit for Shakespeare's voice – much like a ventriloquist's dummy – is analogous to the belief that there is immanent meaning in his texts which
productions should try to discover, the belief that Shakespeare can 'speak for himself' with transcultural authority" (7). Such beliefs are particularly problematic for actors in post-colonial societies. For them Shakespeare's texts often function as foreign objects that articulate imperialistic values of domination. Bulman elaborates his concern once again:

Unfamiliar, densely encoded and authored elsewhere, those texts would seem to invite resistance in the form of 'unnatural' — that is, unregulated and potentially dissident — modes of performance. Those post colonial actors and directors who seek to replicate the hegemonic practices of British theatre, therefore, and especially of the Royal Shakespeare Company, do so at the expense of their own cultural identity. The sheer weight of tradition leaves them unable to make Shakespeare their own. (7)

Modern studies have already accepted that actors are ideological constructs. Western actor-training schools and theatre-company apprenticeships tend to train the students strictly to follow the set readings of so-called representative dramatic texts situated within their historical context. Issues like politics, linguistic barriers, competing ideologies, differences in race, nation, class, gender etc. are often considered too
irrelevant to be included in the curriculum. Today, critics, especially the post-colonial ones, look at Shakespearean acting and the training towards it as highly ideological. For post-colonial actors, Shakespearean texts should not be value-free, atemporal, transcendent masterpieces that can yield up their meanings through direct and conventional acting. For them, acting must serve as an expression of their own people, their culture and mental make up. But it is quite paradoxical that, even today, the Western institutional and pedagogical practices suggest that even the post-colonial actors should disavow their particular historical conditions and thus become no different from the Western style of acting. Post-colonial actors have to understand that Shakespeare is not, and can never be, their contemporary. This is true in the case of modern writers also who try to adapt Shakespeare for a contemporary audience. Shakespeare belongs to the West and not to the post-colonial nations. The modern writers must learn to say “no” to the so called elements of “current relevance” in the Shakespeare plays. Denis Salter’s opinion in this regard is of great significance:

This means, saying ‘no’ to miscegenation (Othello), ‘no’ to racism (The Merchant of Venice), and ‘no’ to ethnocentrism (The Tempest), even while recognizing how certain
contestatory performance traditions — Paul Robeson’s Othello, Henry Irving’s Shylock, David Suchet’s Caliban, for example — have sought to overturn these kinds of monovalent textual readings. (115)

As part of the counter movement, theatre has started challenging this hegemony by employing multicultural casting, experimentation with non-western styles of acting and introduction of alternative cultural values. Some of these will be touched upon in the analysis of Kaliyattam. India has a very rich tradition of theatrical conventions formulated by Bharata in his Natyasatra. Jayaraj is successful in employing it in the Shakespearean context. The main thrust of the analysis is to find out whether, as a post-colonial director, Jayaraj has succeeded in “de-naturalizing” the Shakespearean play, or whether he succumbs to the role of an agent in legitimating the privileged and cultural perspective of an elite.

Today one may take the freedom of translating Shakespeare into an intercultural idiom. Divergent cultural material may be incorporated into the texts, and they may even be turned into pastiche or collage in opposition to the grand literary and theatrical narratives that they were accepted to be. Bulman opines that such an attempt will surely result in
more playfully eclectic productions in touch with a ludic sensibility which

duseum-like productions of Shakespeare have lost. He adds:

Analogously, post-structuralist theory is liberating

performance critics to act in a similar way: they delight in

finding no fixed authority to which the theatre may appeal

and revel in the jouissance of their own subjectivity.

Insisting on the indeterminacy of meaning and on the radical

contingencies which affect performance, critics themselves

become performers who, in their acts of translation, play at

constructing ‘Shakespeare’. This critical self-consciousness

sharply divides them from their forbears in the Shakespeare

revolution. (8)

Modern performance criticism claims an escape from the authority of the
text and also from the question of faithfulness and betrayal. For example,

Kaliyattam, one of the texts under scrutiny here, links the story of Othello

with Kerala’s native cultural art form Theyyam and thus makes an attempt

at breaking the conventional Shakespeare performance. Lear’s Daughters

presents an androgynous Fool, thereby interrogating the conventional

norms of gender demarcations. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

portrays a modern Hamlet, who in his costume and manners differs from
the royal Hamlet. In short, the Shakespeare canon is intentionally challenged in these adaptations. It will be a fruitful exercise to make a foray into the extent to which these modern writers have succeeded in making a lasting dig into the heart of the Shakespeare canon. Bertolt Brecht questioned the productions and reproductions of Shakespeare. His contention was that the plays were concerned with sheer individualism, concentrating on an isolated hero. He argued that the plays paid no attention to the social causes of a catastrophe or to people as social beings. He explained:

The great individuals were the material that produced the form of this drama, the so-called dramatic form; and dramatic means: in tempestous movement, passionate, contradictory, dynamic. What was its aim? You can see it clearly in Shakespeare. Through four acts Shakespeare drives the great individual, Lear, Othello, Macbeth, out of all his human connections with family and state out on to the heath, into total isolation, where he must show himself great in his ruin. . . . The object of the exercise is the great individual experience. Later times will call this drama a drama for cannibals. (149)
Brecht felt that such a performance of Shakespeare is of little value to modern spectators, especially in the post-war period. Compared to Lear or Hamlet they are small people who are controlled by the behaviour of the collective mass around them and not by fate or their personal characters. For them the presentation of exalted heroes is of no use. Thus one can easily see that Brecht is in defence of altering Shakespeare to suit the needs of the ones at the receiving end. The present scrutiny tries to find out whether Stoppard and Bond are able to carry forward the enterprise initiated by Brecht when they encounter Shakespeare. This becomes more valid in the case of Bond’s Lear which directly follows the epic theatre of Brecht. When a play is rewritten, it has to say something meaningful to modern spectators, rather than merely pay tribute to a respectable cultural heritage.

Brecht also criticises modern directors who ignore the gulf between the past and the modern times. Usually, when plays of other periods are performed, the distance, the gap and the differences between the original and recipient cultures are annihilated. But the aim of the director must not be to bring out what is common with our own time and thus represent human nature as timeless and unalterable. Brecht says in the Short Organum:
We must drop our habit of taking the different social structures of past periods, then stripping them of everything that makes them different, so that they all look more or less like our own, which then acquires from this process a certain air of having been there all along, in other words of permanence pure and simple. Instead, we must leave them their distinguishing marks and keep their impermanence always before our eyes, so that our own period can be seen to be impermanent too. (36)

Following Brecht, Margot Heinemann says:

So Lear’s rage is not to be represented as timeless and universal, but as related to its time (Zeitgebunden). To feel its full impact we have to be aware of Lear as patriarch, father, feudal monarch, maddened by a defiance he has never been taught to expect either from daughters or from servants. We have to observe this not simply from Lear’s point of view or even from Kent’s or Cordelia’s (that is, from within the society), but from our own, which does not accept the whims of princes as sacred; and we may need a nudge to ensure this. . . . So again, Othello’s jealousy is not just a universal
passion, but is set in a particular possessive, competitive world. He doesn’t only possess Desdemona, he also possess a post as general, which he has not inherited as a feudal general would, but won by outstanding achievements, and presumably has snatched from someone else; he must defend it or it will be snatched from him. (241)

Hence our focus is on whether the adaptations or alterations are in fact designed for a particular audience, at a particular time and culture.

Feminists, too, try to challenge the received notions of the canon. They try to recover and acknowledge women's history, literature and other accomplishments which have been suppressed by the works of the great male writers. They look at their own subjectivity and identity as products of the patriarchal discourse. In her book *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* the famous Indian critic Ania Loomba compares the patriarchal notions on literature and women:

Literature is a private activity and women are the private life of men; literature is universal and all women are the same; literature is mysteriously produced, women too are irrational; literature is both divinely inspired and a useless activity, women are goddesses or whores; both literature and
women are potentially dangerous and, following Plato, to be excluded from the male Republic. These arguments reinforce the patriarchal association of male with rational, and female with instinctual. Despite these analogies, women are at the same time disadvantaged as producers of literature because of their exclusion from the privileged spaces supposedly occupied by literature. So the canonical author as well as the academic hierarchy are predominantly male. . . . (23-24)

Feminist theories try to break this male dominance in literature as well as in culture. Terry Threadgold’s explanation of how the new theorists try to expose the various ways in which femininity is being constructed is worth mentioning here:

This dialogic response of feminist theory to the scientific metalanguages of patriarchal theory, and the fictional objectivity of patriarchal textual productions (including masculinities of various kinds), results in attempts in feminist writings and theories to name and specify identities and the positions from which texts are written, read and made. These recognise that 'identity' is discursively
produced and that it is not one; that it is a network of multiple positions, constructed in and through many chains of signification, always realised in texts, enacted and performed, read and written, heard and spoken in verbal, visual, graphic, photographic, filmic, televisual and embodied forms, to name just some. (5)

If female identity is culturally and discursively produced in and through diverse chains of signification, it goes without saying that ever new identities are in the process of construction in every reading or performance in a changed cultural context.

Shakespeare's portrayal of women is highly problematic for a modern female reader. Women are given a very scanty space by him. In the “magnificent” world of tragedy they are often figured as “unnatural”. In tragedy, which is conventionally thought to be the genre "most capable of transcending the historical moment of inception, and of representing universal truths" (Dollimore 9), women characters are only shadowy figures. Carolyn Heilbrun has accused Shakespeare of conservatism and phallocentrism. She says:

. . . [T]he facts are clear enough: Shakespeare, who encompassed all the world, was himself a victim of its
essential restrictions upon experience for women, even as he recognized the dangers of these feminine restrictions upon men. Shakespeare did not conceal male weakness or villainy, but he did fail to recognize the possibility of female autonomy and growth. (182)

Even to this day the Shakespearean injunctions to the women characters are often quoted in daily life as a reminder to women to know their position in the society. Women in Shakespeare are not granted even the power of voice. They are mere constructions of the all powerful male discourse. Laura Mulvey contends that Shakespeare's texts direct the male gaze and thereby attempt to co-opt female audiences too. Feminist theorists see the body as the object of male gaze. Mulvey argues that the visual pleasure derived from watching a film is based on the fact that the spectator is constructed as primarily male. This is true in the case of theatre performances also. Cordelia, who is a silent pawn in the hands of both the father and the lover, is an excellent example. Ophelia is mad and Gertrude is a lustful and negligent mother. Desdemona is a deviant daughter. These portrayals have their roots in the patriarchal stereotyping of femininity which is continually reiterated by generations of stage and screen representations.
The main thrust of the present attempt is to explore the possibilities of alternative readings that can successfully combat the preferred versions handed down through patriarchal discursive formations. The difference in the experience of women's lives must enable them to produce alternative readings. Feminisms of various political and theoretical persuasions have been arguing that it should be possible to effect paradigm shifts of a major kind by rewriting the theories, narratives and stories of patriarchy to reveal their gaps and fissures and the binary logic which structures them. In Threadgold's opinion, this argument depends on "the prior argument that all texts — whether theories or the semiotic system of patriarchy itself — are constructions, stories told (or lived) from someone's interested perspective" (16). It may be said that the various feminisms have the intention of a revolution, a radical rewriting of the observed world, a rewriting which is quite unlike the accepted paradigm. Threadgold quotes the opinion of E.A. Grosz on what a feminist text might be and might accomplish:

The text will render visible the patriarchal or phallocentric assumptions governing the contexts in which it works, and question the power of those assumptions in the production, the reception and the assessment of texts. A feminist text
will in some way problematise the standard masculinist ways in which the author occupies the position of enunciation, challenging the ‘authoritative position of the one who knows’. A feminist text will not only challenge the patriarchal norms within which it works, but will help to produce new, sometimes unthought, discursive spaces – new styles, new forms of content, new ways of arguing, new genres – to contest the limits of current modes of textual production and reception and current modes of understanding these. (89)

Female writers feel that what is needed is a negation of a single all-encompassing totalizing framework with preconceived categories and boundaries to keep all the women in their “proper” places. Donna Haraway once said, “The production, of universal totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now” (149). In her book on feminism and deconstruction Diane Elam speaks of the possibility of “undecidability” for women: “The affirmative potential of feminist politics is that such politics takes the undecidability of the multiple determinations of women, the clash of virgin, whore
mother etc. as the aporetic space within which a freedom arises”(84). Theorists argue that every text has to be contextualised. Threadgold says:

Decisions about context cannot be made in advance or made once and for all for all texts. They have to be made again every time, in every case, if we are in fact to be able to imagine the spaces of otherness, the differences, which a preconceived theory may very well inhibit us from seeing.

(111)

In spite of all these propositions, the modern scenario still leaves us doubtful about the possibility of “new” readings. Does it happen? Are women able to cut through the universal ideas of femininity? To get an answer one must analyse the complexity of the ideological environment in which a text was originally produced, and in which it continues to be produced in different historical periods. Lear's Daughters makes an attempt in this line. The aim of this joint venture by women is to challenge the universality claim of the ideas promulgated by King Lear and fix them to the time and culture of its inception. They try to look at Lear's daughters from a different light so that they are provided with ample ideological reasons for their weird behaviour. They cannot be taken to be representatives of "daughters" everywhere and at any time. The case
of Lear's daughters is only a specific one evoked by the circumstances. Sharon Ouditt says that creations like *Lear's Daughters* are certainly doing a function of intervention into the existing paradigm. Her opinion on a feminist reading of Shakespearean women is this:

As such they read against the grain of a predominantly patriarchal and conservative cultural inheritance in order to undermine the tendency to represent women in terms of common stereotypes and to shed some historical, cultural, analytical light on the particular circumstances in which femininity has been constructed. (105)

However, one finds that the dominant discourse is so highly restrictive that the play gets marginalized. The order of discourse and the organization of a society are usually controlled and delimited by procedures of exclusion. Certain things cannot be said. Or rather, they are not permitted to be said. The various categorizations in the society construct some discourses as inaudible and outside reason — for example, the discourses that grant voice to women.

This dissertation falls into five chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. The Introduction (Chapter 1) provides the theoretical framework for the analysis. The second chapter tries to open up the
politics behind the adaptation of *Hamlet* into *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. The third chapter concentrates on what happens when *Othello* is uprooted from its native setting and planted in a very different one. The fourth chapter compares and contrasts a masculine adaptation and a feminine adaptation of *King Lear*, ie, *Lear* and *Lear's Daughters*. The Conclusion, ie, the fifth chapter, winds up the arguments of the entire dissertation and points to the inefficacy of the attempt at decanonizing Shakespeare.

These are days vibrant with postulates of post-theory. One finds that “chronotopicity” is a suitable concept to analyse Shakespearean rewritings. The concept was originated by Bakhtin and perfected by Pierre Bourdieu. “Chrons” means time and “topos” means place. The effort here is to fix the chronotopicity of the adaptations. Considering *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, we find that it involves a shift in time alone. The setting is the same as that of *Hamlet*. What evolves eventually is a perspective set four centuries later. Hence the title, "Hamlet Then, Hamlet Now". In *Kaliyattam* what happens is a shift in place. The viewpoint and insight conveyed are the same as those of *Othello*. However, one cannot forget the fact that it is transported to an entirely different place and setting. Any text exists in a time-place
framework. This forms the rationale for the title "Othello There, Othello Here". The terms “Then”, “Now”, “There” and “Here” are employed here not as rigid, concrete terms but as fluid ones for contextualizing the textual sites. Jeremy Lane’s explanation of the concept of post-theory throws more light on this:

. . . ‘Post-theory’ would imply an ability to transcend or move beyond the limitations and weaknesses of 'Theory'. The desire to challenge and transcend that set of theoretical concerns which dominates the intellectual field at any one time is of course entirely laudable. Yet the mode of this transcendence seems to be somewhat paradoxical; what we might term the chronotope of Post Theory would seem typically to involve a moving beyond which is somehow also a return, as Young so tellingly put it, 'to the old certainties of the everyday world outside'. It might be argued that such a chronotope suggested less a willingness to engage critically with a set of theoretical concerns than a certain nostalgia for those certainties which 'Theory' has apparently undermined.

(90)
Similar is the case of Shakespearean adaptations also. When they strive to "move beyond" the Shakespearean meaning, what ultimately happens seems to be a "return". Shakespeare can be taken to be a "doxa", an ideological representation of space and time. "Doxa", by its nature, implies "circular" rather than "linear" time. The fourth chapter juxtaposes a male reading and a female reading of *King Lear*. This explains the title “His Lear, Her Lear”. The first chapter, “Righting the Canon” refers to the corrective mission on the part of modern writers, and the last chapter “Canonizing the Righting” focuses on how the “righted” texts, though they aim at de-canonization, eventually constitute a new canon, which in itself reflects the older canon. The arguments here may be concluded quoting Pierre Bourdieu’s comments on the motive behind the rewritings of the canon:

‘A field of opinion’ or 'universe of discourse' opens up, the site of a struggle between 'heterodoxy' and 'orthodoxy', between the dominated classes who seek to challenge the status quo and the dominant who seek to restore 'the primal innocence of doxa' through the imposition of orthodoxy. Once again, this has a very close equivalent in Bakhtin's account of the competing forces of 'centrifugal' 'polyphony'
or 'dialogism' and the 'centripetal' forces of 'monologism', which 'serve to unify' and centralise the verbal-ideological world. (MC Quillan et al. 94)

What we need is a real heterodoxy, a real centrifugal dialogism. The attempt here is to conduct a search for such heterodoxy, to find out if any actually exists.