**Introduction**

Morley Callaghan emerges as an important writer in Canadian literature in the early part of the twentieth century. Critical approaches to Callaghan's fiction display interesting points of departure from the late 1920s to the 2000: from an early enthusiastic realist criticism to religious interpretation; from the influence of the theories of Marx, Darwin and Freud to the discovery of Canadian thematic patterns; from the conventions of modernism to experimentalism. Despite these critical approaches, many of the strategies Callaghan employs in his fiction to articulate the tensions and paradoxes of society remain unexplored. As Milton Wilson has noted, "The special talent of Morley Callaghan is to tell us everything and yet keep us in the dark about what really matters" (81).

The strategy of associating meanings to signs is invariably embedded in the textual dynamics of Callaghan's fiction. Hence, his fiction demands a new way of reading for intelligibility in a multi-cultural society like Canada. It is interesting to note that Callaghan deals with a culture in transition: i) from a puritanical society to a mechanistic and materialistic society; ii) from a homogeneous culture to multicultural society; and iii) from a colonial culture to cultural nationalism. In this process, Callaghan moves away from symbolic order to sign system in his fiction to give expression to the complexities in Canadian culture which will be dealt in detail in the chapters to follow. In his critical biography of Callaghan, Gary Boire notes the influence of transitional moment in the history of Toronto as having a great influence on Callaghan's writing career. Of the crucial "conversions" that Callaghan experiences during the period 1921-1928, the movement of British Toronto towards multiculturalism is the most important,
observes Boire. Callaghan's fiction, from his first novel *Strange Fugitive*, exemplifies transition into multiculturalism and ascribes to it an added significance in his later novel, *The Loved and the Lost*. Towards this, Callaghan makes use of signs and symbols derived from the cultural repertoire. Therefore, his novels invite us to identify different ideologies of Christianity, Law, and the bourgeois community through the cultural codes of contemporary society explicit in his depiction of characters, incidents, and actions. Hence, a semiotic reading of Callaghan's fiction which examines sign systems and cultural codes specific to Canadian culture will be taken up in the later part of the thesis.

The purpose of this thesis, however, is not to examine the semiotic per se, but to re-examine various aspects of Callaghan's fiction such as character, realism and identity with a view to understanding the paradoxes and tensions of the transitional society depicted in Callaghan's fiction. Before highlighting the aims and objectives of individual chapters in this thesis, it is imperative to outline the major critical approaches to Callaghan's fiction and the departure the present study takes.

Edward Morley Callaghan, born in 1903 to a working class, Irish Canadian, Roman Catholic family, belongs to an ethnic minority group in the Toronto of 1900s. In his biography of Callaghan, *Morley Callaghan: Literary Anarchist*, Boire describes the period in which Callaghan was born as "turn-of-the century Toronto" and his family as belonging to a religious and ethnic minority in "the overwhelmingly British, predominantly Protestant community." This time period was "a whimsical moment in Canada's puritan history," as Canada struggled into nationhood following the First World War (Boire 13). Boire also points out that the feeling of "out-sidenedness" (because of ethnic minority) textures "Callaghan's life and written oeuvre," and induces in Callaghan,
a sceptical attitude towards “the value of inherited or authorized explanations” (13, 17). Boire’s observation becomes significant when the later chapters of this thesis examine Callaghan’s choice of marginal characters and his notions on identity in his fiction in the Canadian cultural context.

True to his individualistic attitude, when Callaghan began his writing career, he considered Canada a part of the North American, rather than the European, cultural pattern. Brandon Conron rightly points out that Callaghan did not accept the images of Canadian provincialism that the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century authors of historical romances—John Richardson, Charles G.D. Roberts, William Kirby, Gilbert Parker, Ralph Connor, L.M. Montgomery, Mazo de la Roche—had presented (Morley Callaghan 20). Although Callaghan read British poets when he was young, the primary influences on Callaghan’s literary career were American and European writers (“An Ocean Away” (17-21). In matters of literary style, Callaghan was under the direct influence of the transition, which was taking place in European and American literatures: the disintegration of Victorianism in favour of an emerging modernist experimentalism. Commenting on Callaghan’s literary orientation, Boire writes that Callaghan did not see the stylistic developments of modernist techniques “as an apolitical changeover to the merely new or trendy, but as the artist’s self-conscious move away from mystified ideological imageries which sought an ideological mould of the world” (19). Here, Boire refers to Callaghan’s dislike for British prose models—indication of another kind of colonization—that still influenced Canadian writers at the beginning of the twentieth century and prevented them from dealing with the actual condition of their nation. In his memoir, That Summer in Paris, Callaghan expresses his ideas on what writing should be.
For him, writing should be uncomplicated, transparent, and direct. It should aim at presenting the object as it is. As he says: “I remember deciding that the root of the trouble with writing was that poets and storywriters used language to evade, to skip away from the object, because they could never bear to face the thing freshly and see it freshly for what it was in itself” (19). In other words, Callaghan argues against self-consciously literary language, the use of metaphors, and “calculated charm in prose.”

To a certain extent, Callaghan was able to maintain these literary principles in his early short stories and novels, which led Conron to describe his style as characterized by a rapid reportorial exposition in short, simple sentences with few adjectives; a colloquial dialogue which is hard and fresh and catches the rhythms of North American speech; and compact descriptive passages that often focus on apparently trivial, but actually significant details. The effect thus achieved . . . is thoroughly appropriate to the theme and point of view of the characters as well as being consistent with Callaghan’s functional practice of prose as an aesthetic instrument.

(Morley Callaghan: Critical Views 2)

In his interviews, articles and memoir written in the 1960s, Callaghan expresses his wish to write in an uncomplicated manner, in which words will have a direct relationship with their meanings. Despite Callaghan’s wish for a transcendental relationship between words and their meanings (denoting the material world), there is ambiguity of meaning which will be examined in the individual chapters of this thesis. The determination to achieve a directness and economy of writing, the choice of “apparently trivial, but actually significant details,” and his wish for language “as transparent as glass” led many
critics to associate Callaghan with the realist group of American writers of the 1920s (Callaghan, *That Summer in Paris* 21).

Paradoxically, Callaghan's early short stories and novels were first published in the United States and were well-received there than in Canada. In his "Moral Predicament": *Morley Callaghan's More Joy in Heaven*, George Woodcock aptly identifies Callaghan as having two aspects to his literary life:

As the survivor of the 1920s revolution in American writing whose leaders (his friends) he portrayed so vividly in *That Summer in Paris*, and as one of the leaders (a half-witting one) of the other revolution which in the years after World War II resulted in what we now see as a Canadian literature. (17)

By the end of the 1930s, however, Callaghan's American readership began to recede and he was looked up to by young Canadian writers who were searching for independent writing models apart from outgrown British literary traditions. His early association and correspondence with American writers such as Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Ford, William Carlos Williams, Allen Tate, Sherwood Anderson, and F. Scott Fitzgerald directed critical attention towards his novels to what was to become the new mode of writing in Canada—realism. In 1928, when *Scribner's Magazine* published two of Callaghan's short stories and in its enthusiastic introduction linked him with Ernest Hemingway, to a certain extent—it jeopardized Callaghan's reputation. Many critics, taking lead from this linkage, emphasized the similarities between Callaghan and Hemingway and failed to recognize the differences between them.
In *The Style of Innocence: A Study of Hemingway and Callagahan*, Fraser Sutherland undertakes a comparative study of Hemingway and Callaghan, examining the parallels and intersections in their lives and works. He discerns similar patterns in their professional careers and certain character types in their writings, and he compares and contrasts their short stories and novels. Unlike other critics who blandly labelled Callaghan as imitating Hemingway, Sutherland carefully draws attention to the divergent childhood backgrounds of the two men, their lifestyles, and more importantly, their world views. While recognizing Callaghan's closeness to Hemingway in matters of technique, Sutherland observes that this influence wanes after *They Shall Inherit the Earth*. He makes a pertinent observation that Callaghan belongs to the great stream of modern realistic writing, which began in America with Mark Twain and included such influential writers as Stephen Crane, Sherwood Anderson and Hemingway. Sutherland argues that rather than being merely faithful to the world, this realistic writing is “more specifically a counter-reality to the world from which it is drawn. This new reality is sustained not through blind fidelity, but through intelligent reportage” (37). In Callaghan’s case, Sutherland notes, it is not “skilled reportage” but “moral force” that rendered a distinctive quality to his works. Thus, Sutherland concludes that both Callaghan and Hemingway created their own aesthetics that amounted to a set of separate working principles. As he says: “Though Hemingway and Callaghan each worked it [their aesthetic] out somewhat differently in their art, they began with the same premise” (101). In contrast to Sutherland, Conron rejects any comparison between Callaghan and Hemingway except for superficial similarities. He finds marked differences in the works of the two writers in subject matter, characters and style. Comparing their styles, Conron opines:
The dramatic rigor, the violence and the frequently harsh emotional tone of Hemingway’s nervously electric portrayal are absent. In marked contrast are the wistful lyric quality, the Celtic fancy, the supremely ironic point of view—which can be compassionate or detached—and the intuitive insight into the significance of the minutiae of ordinary life which characterize Callaghan’s presentation. *(Morley Callaghan: Critical Views 3)*

While it is true that Callaghan, along with other contemporary American writers, found himself writing in the style of modern realistic writing, a careful examination of realism in Callaghan’s novels in Chapter Four reveals his experimentation within realist conventions.

There is little disagreement among critics in considering Callaghan’s stories and novels realistic written up to 1937. There is, however, a great divergence in critical views regarding novels written from the 1950s onwards; many critics find these novels complex, highly symbolic and ambiguous in meaning. Woodcock relates the change in Callaghan’s fiction written after 1950 to the change in the form of the novel. As he notes, “abandoning the *récit*-like form of his best period, he [Callaghan] has sought the complexity of the classic realistic novel” *(Lost Eurydice 99)*. Critics have offered other reasons for the ambiguity of meaning in Callaghan’s fiction and these reasons will be explained when the major critical approaches to Callaghan’s fiction are discussed in the following pages.

Callaghan, no doubt, found a congenial interest in American writers when he, like them, was attracted to European writers such as Flaubert, Dostoevsky, Chekov, Tolstoy
and Turgenev, with an intention of taking a departure from literary traditions. Initially, Callaghan related himself with these writers in their search for North American form and diction, North American preoccupations and a North American voice. Malcolm Ross suggests that as a result of the search for an independent writing style and themes “Callaghan broke open for us the egg-shell of our cultural colonialism” (78). In this sense, Callaghan’s first six novels from 1928 to 1937—Strange Fugitive (1928), It’s Never Over (1930), A Broken Journey (1932), Such Is My Beloved (1934), They Shall Inherit the Earth (1935) and More Joy in Heaven (1937)—have been assessed as North American. In these novels, sordid and violent aspects of life are drawn with minute detail; central characters are dominated by naturalistic influences of either heredity or environment; and narrative is characterized by fresh, vivid and simple prose style with colloquial dialogue. The British critic William Walsh distinguishes the pattern of violence in More Joy in Heaven as belonging to the North American tradition of crime fiction and gangster films of the era. Justin D. Edwards examines Strange Fugitive as the first Canadian urban novel informed by the early twentieth-century discourses and representations of the modern North American city, as found in novelists such as Fitzgerald, Theodore Dreiser, and John Dos Passos. In his view, Callaghan presents the 1920s Toronto in the model of American urbanism, which used urban spaces as “both setting, and subject” (217). Realistic representation of the city is concomitant with “a desire to combat the mysteries and otherness of this [city’s] elusive ‘spatial metonymy’ by fixing its protean changes within the confines of a coherent narrative form” (217). Accordingly, Callaghan manipulates the urban topography by textual devices such as
“borders, boundaries, taxonomies, structures of differences” to control the threatening features of Toronto (214).

While Justin D. Edwards associates urban realism in Callaghan’s novels with the American avant garde writers, Woodcock and Victor Hoar observe that for Callaghan, writing in the tradition of literary realism, the choice of form and content became important and that alone distinguished his adaptation of this technique. Accordingly, he chose the parable form—evident in the “triptych” (Woodcock’s term) novels of the thirties (Such Is My Beloved, They Shall Inherit the Earth and More Joy in Heaven)—because its simple structure corresponds to the dominant moral concerns of these novels. As Victor Hoar points out: “Like so many of his contemporaries in the tradition of literary realism, the Canadian had become concerned that the form of his narratives be included in the total moral point of view. The way a story was told was important to such writers as what was told” (3). In Woodcock’s view, too, the simplification of style in Callaghan’s novels leads to the expression of fictional realism. Woodcock, however, differentiates between the objectives of moralist writers (from Bunyan to Swift to Orwell and Gide) and classic realist writers (Flaubert, Tolstoy, Turgenev, etc) and situates Callaghan’s literary objectives, until the 1930s, in the former group of moralists. Accordingly, he commends the moralist allegories of the thirties as the best of Callaghan’s novels and concludes: “his view of style is essentially moralistic, and every one of his work fails or succeeds according to the success with which he manipulates the element of parable within it” (Lost Eurydice 93). There is a significant shift from the examination of realism in Callaghan’s novels under the influence of American writers to an attempt to give expression to a characteristically Canadian adaptation of realism. John
Moss describes this shift while compartmentalizing the fictional production of Canada under different headings in four critical anthologies under the series *The Canadian Novel*, which traces the development of Canadian fiction from its origin to the present day.

Moss considers realism in Canadian literature synonymous with Modernist fictional conventions. In his Introduction to *Those Modern Times*, the third book in his series, Moss defines the Canadian modern as a transitional phase of novels written between the early Canadian classics and contemporary postmodern novels. He includes Callaghan along with Frederic Philip Grove, Martha Ostenso, Sinclair Ross, Hugh MacLennan, Elizabeth Smart, Ethel Wilson, Ernest Buckler, Sheila Watson, and W.O. Mitchell as writers who provide a link between the past and the present; whose novels “are modern but not contemporary . . . immediate, dynamic, relevant, but redolent of times that have slipped away” (7). Moss draws attention to the ironic nature of realism in Canadian fiction while denoting realism as one of the precepts of modernism: “But realism, ironically, has come to mean romance—in which the moral, social or psychological predispositions of the author are exercised, but the illusions of objectivity, autonomy and rationalism are sustained” (10). He is of the opinion that romantic realism begins with the novels of Grove and remains as the dominant mode to the present day. Other critics, too, see Callaghan as the foremost Canadian novelist who gave expression to distinctly Canadian realism. The fourth chapter of this thesis, while acknowledging the contributions and developments in the examination of realism in Callaghan’s fiction, aims at moving beyond such interpretations. The chapter focuses on the considerable change in Callaghan’s use of urban space from the American realist fiction to the manipulation of urban space for subversive purposes in his later novels.
The years between 1928 and 1937 were extraordinarily productive for Callaghan; during this time he produced seven novels and two short story collections. From the late thirties for nearly a decade Callaghan underwent a fallow period in creative activity and confined himself to producing two plays that were never published and became an active participant in CBC radio programs. His second phase of writing career began with a fictionalized account of the University of Toronto, *The Varsity Story* (1948), and a novel of particular interest to juvenile readers, *Luke Baldwin’s Vow* (1948). The publication of *The Loved and the Lost* (1951), which won a Governor General’s Award, marked a fresh period of creativity. Critics regard *The Loved and the Lost* and the novels produced after it as more complex and ambiguous—*The Many Colored Coat* (1960), *A Passion in Rome* (1961), *That Summer in Paris* (1963), *A Fine and Private Place* (1975), *Close to the Sun Again* (1977), *A Time for Judas* (1983), *Our Lady of the Snows* (1985), *The Man with the Coat* (Novella 1987), and *A Wild Old Man on the Road* (1988). As Woodcock puts it, Callaghan’s “apprenticeship among Americans was assimilated into his lengthening experience of Canada and Canadian publics and produced a new, more Canadian way of writing” (“Moral Predicament” 26). He cites *More Joy in Heaven* as a precursor to novels in which Callaghan deviates from North American world to a more Canadian way of writing. Woodcock’s observations are pertinent in examining Callaghan’s desire to identify himself as a Canadian writer.

Apart from Callaghan’s endeavours to forge a North American, and later, Canadian identity, the biblical allusions, biblical titles and religious symbols in his fiction prompt religious approach. Critics such as Malcolm Ross, Hugo McPherson, Glenn
Clever, Ronald Sutherland, and Margaret Joan Ward examine Callaghan's fiction from a religious perspective. McPherson describes Callaghan as:

a religious writer—not one of the apologists who defends traditional religion by contriving convenient modern exempla, but an artist who looked searchingly at his experience (including the potent -isms and -ologies of the day) and concluded that the temporal world cannot be self-redeemed; that human frailty is bearable only in the light of divine perfection. (61)

McPherson's article, "The Two Worlds of Morley Callaghan—Man's Earthly Quest" from which the above passage is quoted, is considered the standard religious interpretation of Callaghan's work. According to McPherson, Callaghan has "wrought out a fictional form in which the surface events function simultaneously as realistic action and symbolic action, revealing both the empirical and the spiritual conflicts of his protagonists" (62). He judges Callaghan's novels according to the success with which this duality is handled. The duality, as a fictional device, is fundamental to Callaghan's perception of the "interdependence of the spiritual and empirical realms" (62). Such a religious view leads McPherson to regard many of Callaghan's novels as ironic parables and to consider him a fundamentally religious novelist. In his Introduction to Such Is My Beloved, Ross dexterously analyses "the traditional symbolism of Catholic art" as reflected in the novel and describes it a "religious novel" (v). Callaghan's ironic vision is embodied in "a threefold (yet unitary) set of symbols: the mystical body; the bridal body; [and] the sacramental, sacrificial body" (viii).
While the fact that Callaghan is a Roman Catholic prompts many critics to situate him in that tradition, the rigorous religious interpretation of his novels fails to perceive the iconoclastic tendency that is basic to his vision as a writer. In an interesting interview with Robert Weaver, Callaghan remarked, “I don’t sit down to write religious novels. [. . .] The last thing that’s in my mind is to write religious books” (138). In her 1979 article, “Callaghan and the Church,” Judith Kendle draws attention to the seriousness of Callaghan’s quarrel with the Church, and emphasizes the aesthetic nature of his views. While acknowledging Callaghan’s indebtedness to the Catholic tradition, Kendle points out the dominance of aesthetic philosophy to orthodox doctrines of Christianity. Accordingly, “just as Priest is supplanted by Artist, faith is transformed by aesthetic philosophy and traditional religious symbolism put to literary, as opposed to devotional, use” (16-17). She argues that the expression of Callaghan’s aesthetic philosophy “in terms of religious symbol or jargon betrays ironic distance as much as their source” (16). The insights Kendle provides are significant. A close examination of his novels, particularly those written after 1950, reveals Callaghan’s interest in exploring the problems related to the process of writing, the role of the artist and creative imagination. In works such as That Summer in Paris, A Passion in Rome, A Fine and Private Place and A Time for Judas, Callaghan is less concerned with moral issues than with questions concerning art, artist and reader.

Until the 1950s realism was the predominant concern in the critical approaches to Callaghan’s fiction. The significant departure Ross and McPherson took in the late fifties led this critical stream to a different direction. These two critics provided a religious interpretation, which continued to interest other critics in the following decades, as could
be seen in the subsequent work by critics such as Hugh Hood, Tom Marshall and Robert Kroetsch. In the 1960s, however, as a departure from staunch religious interpretation of Callaghan’s novels, humanism or Christian personalism became the focus of critical interest.

F.W. Watt and Desmond Pacey draw attention to Christian humanism as not only a development in Callaghan’s philosophy but also as a fourth position from which to approach his fiction. They trace the movement from realism and naturalism to radicalism to Catholicism to a kind of individualism or personalism propagated by French philosopher, Jacques Maritain. In the second edition of the Literary History of Canada, Pacey is of the opinion that Callaghan, as a Christian personalist, stresses “intuition and moral freedom” rather than “reason and moral discipline” (202). Maritain’s Christian personalism gives supreme importance to the human person, his soul or spirit and its earthly development in self-sacrificial love, which is considered the proper role in God’s design. This role often puts man in conflict with human institutions such as the state, society and even the church in its earthly establishment. Thus “the true destiny of the individual,” says Pacey, “will be sainthood; and the saint will often seem uncommonly like a sinner and will always be something of a puzzle and embarrassment from any merely logical or human point of view” (202). Contemporary critics such as Boire, Woodcock and Patricia Morley acknowledge and assess the influence of Maritain’s theocentric humanism on Callaghan.

Callaghan had read Maritain in his undergraduate days and met him personally in 1933 through his friend, Manny Chapman when Maritain was a visiting professor at the University of Toronto’s Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. The trio discussed topics
ranging from Aquinas to prostitution, from art and morality to the nature of sainthood. Critics have assessed these discussions as shaping the three famous parable novels of the thirties—*Such Is My Beloved, They Shall Inherit the Earth* and *More Joy in Heaven*. Common to all these novels, the critics claim, is Maritain's conception of sainthood, which Pacey sums up above. While characters such as Father Dowling, Kip Caley and Michael Aikenhead are considered guilty according to the norms of society, they are not guilty in the eyes of the novelist. Boire draws attention to an important element in Callaghan's fiction when he points out that Callaghan shares Maritain's interest in the possibility of a saint who lives spiritually under material conditions and thus creates, in the above novels, "allegories of resistant spiritual anarchism" (71). Thus, the protagonists of these novels, Boire stresses, bear resemblance to Maritain's theological construct: "they are saints whose personal morality runs counter to the flimsy moralities of the social world" (72). Boire's views are insightful, because they trace the roots of Callaghan's anti-puritanical, individualistic, and anarchistic protagonists. Although Maritain's influence is strongly detected in Callaghan's novels of the mid-thirties, critics continue to find it even in the later novels, where protagonists persistently adhere to individual morality and codes of behaviour instead of subscribing to societal laws and codes. Woodcock marks the influence of Maritain on Callaghan as playing a crucial role in the latter producing a "new, more Canadian way of writing" ("Moral Predicament" 26). In particular, Woodcock notes, Callaghan was influenced by Maritain's liberal Thomism that viewed "the human person as transcending the political community in a Christian society and of the arts as one of the legitimate ways of acquiring knowledge of reality" (26). Thus, he suggests that conversations with Maritain shaped the philosophic
content of Callaghan's novels from 1934 to 1937, while his contacts with American writers helped shape their form. Woodcock is highly critical of Callaghan's later novels in which he does not find this compatibility between content and form.

Critical views on Christian humanism in Callaghan's fiction are important, for they help us identify the strange combination of sinner-saint figures in Callaghan's novels. What is of significance, however, is the emphasis on Callaghan's anarchistic, individualistic and anti-puritanical protagonists. They are not merely characters created to suit Maritain's philosophy of sainthood, but signs constructed to comprehend the duality in the fixed identities of certain roles in society. By bringing together diametrically opposed meanings in one figure, Callaghan accentuates the divided self of a human subject. Callaghan's characters are best approached as "subjects" in the sense of the term used in recent critical theory of psychoanalysis. Humanism, which flourished in nineteenth-century England and Europe, believes in a transcendental, unified self, whereas Callaghan's humanism focuses on the split in personality by exposing the conscious expectations and unconscious desires in his characters. His characters enact the drama that takes place when ego comes into conflict with the established symbolic order. Callaghan's interest lies in an understanding and acceptance of the division in the self, which can never be unified and the endless signification of meanings that results due to the division. In this light, Callaghan seems an extremely radical writer whose novels need to be approached with the insights provided by recent theoretical explorations of the conscious and the unconscious selves in the human personality, the dominance of ego and its adherence or non-adherence to the symbolic order. The third chapter of this thesis deals with these issues.
Boire finds transgression and anarchistic spirit central to Callaghan’s novels. Callaghan is not merely interested in sinner-saint figures but in the ambiguity of meaning in other binary oppositions such as honour/dishonour, loyalty/betrayal, crime/innocence, disorder/order, and so on. While one meaning is preferred at the expense of the other in this binary opposition, Callaghan’s characters enact the tension created in undermining the binaries and in exposing the presence of one meaning in the other. In this sense, art does not merely become “one of the legitimate ways of acquiring knowledge of reality” (Woodcock, “Moral Predicament” 26), but one of the profound means of producing counter-reality that exposes what is hidden in the ideologies of society. Hence, we find in some of Callaghan’s novels subversive narrative which ironically exposes the ideology behind the fixed notions. This is the reason the outcasts of society become central characters in Callaghan’s novels. No doubt, Callaghan found a congenial spirit in Maritain, but the temperament was his own.

In the 1970s, critics such as John Moss, D.G. Jones, Margaret Atwood, Dick Harrison, Hugh Hood, Isobel McKenna and others discern Canadian types in Callaghan’s novels. In Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature, Jones cites Callaghan’s novels as enacting the opposition between reason vs. emotion or “the garrison vs. the wilderness” (Jones extrapolates from Northrop Frye) or nature vs. culture, “the persistent preoccupation” of many Canadian novels. In a chapter entitled “Eve in Dejection” Jones suggests that Peggy Sanderson in The Loved and the Lost is an example of those feminine figures in Canadian literature who represent the creative, potent forces of nature and offer themselves to protagonists. In contrast to her, Jim McAlpine represents society and the official culture, which are divided against
themselves. As Jones points out, “It is in terms of these figures and the reaction of the various protagonists to them that the quarrel between nature and culture continues to work itself out” (43). However, as pointed out earlier in this Introduction, Callaghan’s purpose is not merely to present the conflict between binaries, but install and undermine such binaries. McKenna argues along the same line, characterizing Callaghan’s portraits of women old-fashioned, either “Eve in modern dress” or “martyrs.” Her approach is linked with religion when McKenna says “Callaghan sees the Christian virtue of self-negation as the women’s role” (77). Harrison observes that both Canadian and American novelists work their literary symbols in creating images for the Canadian/American experience. Accordingly, the Canadian archetype is different from “the American Adam,” who is “a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentiality” (162). He describes the Canadian Christ as a central redemptive figure: “unlike the American Adam he stands not at the beginning of a new history but in the midst, carrying the weight of an imperfectly understood past history and uncomfortably aware of his own implication in its sins” (161-162). He includes Callaghan’s protagonists in Such Is My Beloved and The Loved and the Lost as examples of the kind of redemptive figures (“a helpful unifying thread”) to be found in “a great diversity of Canadian novels” (162).

Proceeding along the same line, Hood accentuates the difference between American and Canadian archetypes. In “Moral Imagination: Canadian Thing,” Hugh Hood cites Callaghan’s More Joy in Heaven as “a strange blend of the Christian gospel and the biography of a real life bandit, not an aesthetically successful mythic presentation of a Canadian hero” (94-95). Claiming that Canada preserves the moral and religious instincts of the seventeenth- and the eighteenth-century England and France, Hood
suggests that Canadians are not “hero-worshippers.” Callaghan’s attempt at the myth of
the gangster as tragic hero (as in American fiction) and his failure to create one testifies
to the fact that Canada has missed out on the Romantic Movement and revolutionary
ideology. In Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction, Moss suggests that “the
themes of spiritual, moral, social isolation in Morley Callaghan’s novels more readily
relate to theological principles by far than to patterns of Canadian exile” (110). However,
he chooses an analysis of Callaghan’s “tableau of frozen deer” from They Shall Inherit
the Earth in Part II, “The Geophysical Imagination,” to support his thesis that “the
conditions of Canadian geography reflect rather than determine moral vision” (116).
Ronald Sutherland argues that Callaghan’s protagonists, along with those of MacLennan,
Margaret Laurence, Grove, Ross, André Langevin and Hubert Aquin, are examples of the
“old hero” or “loser” prevalent in Canadian fiction prior to 1970.

The attempts to see thematic patterns and images in Callaghan’s fiction contribute
to the assertion of his place in the larger milieu of Canadian literature. What remains
unnoticed, however, is the deconstructive strategy that Callaghan employs in his novels
not only to expose the fixed notions of a particular ideology, but also to undermine the
oppositions created by such an ideology. By choosing marginal characters in a dominant
society, Callaghan is not simply attempting to create “the myth of the gangster as tragic
hero,” or giving expression to the “old hero” in Canadian literature, but instead is
exploring the implications of ideological clash in a transitional society. In novels such as
Coat and A Time for Judas, Callaghan exploits the subversive realm created when
marginal characters come into clash with cultural authorities. Callaghan’s interest lies in
exploring the tension created in such a clash and leaving the ironical implications to readers’ interpretation rather than resolving the tension.

From the late 1970s into the 1980s there have been attempts to approach Callaghan’s fiction in new ways. From the early comparison with Hemingway, critics move towards finding similarities between Callaghan and other Canadian writers. Often he is compared with MacLennan, Hugh Hood, Grove and Hugh Garner. John Orange points out similarities between Callaghan and Hood in prose style, tone, intention, and form, but concludes that “Callaghan is more a moralist than a metaphysician, and clearly Hood is much more interested in the language of philosophy than Callaghan is” (123). Moss and Ralph Heintzman compare Callaghan with MacLennan. While Moss analyses the visions of the two authors in a chapter of Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction called “Callaghan and MacLennan,” Heintzman compares and contrasts the two writers’ presentation of the individual and the society. As Heintzman notes:

While Callaghan celebrates the exile, the outsider, MacLennan explores the bonds of nature and society. While Callaghan is captured by the virtues of detachment, of resistance to social control, and of the fierce passion that shatters all restraint, MacLennan’s imagination is fired instead by history, by culture, by the social contract, by family love, and by the wholeness of man in nature. (2)

Moss reaches similar conclusion when he observes that Callaghan puts more focus on “the common patterns of life, the psycho-moral dimensions of personality, not on the behavioural texture of those living it” (219). Although these comparative studies are
insightful in bringing out the similarities and contrasts between Callaghan and his contemporaries, they pay less attention to the strategies Callaghan employs in his fiction.

The 1980s brought two significant publications of criticism on Callaghan's fiction: a special Callaghan issue in the Journal of Canadian Studies and the publication of papers presented at the Callaghan Symposium at the University of Ottawa. The essays published in these two collections aim at offering different perspectives on Callaghan's fiction. Ina Ferris's "Morley Callaghan and the Exultant Self" is a probing analysis of Callaghan's novels in which she claims that Callaghan is more than "an explorer of social problems, a teller of Christian moral parables, or a creator of modern spiritual quests," because "the primary impulse of his narrative is an asocial, secular obsession with the assertion of the self" (13). Ferris initiates a new approach to Callaghan's novels when she examines the working of "an explosive ego" and its movement toward self-assertion as the underlying structure of Callaghan's novels. In the second chapter of this thesis, I move beyond Callaghan's assertion of the self in order to examine the dramatization of the conflict when ego is caught between the codes of the symbolic order and the drives of the unconscious. With the help of the recent theoretical explorations in the realm of conscious/unconscious and signifier/signified, the chapter analyses Callaghan's characters as subjects rather than as complete individuals.

The papers presented at the seventh annual University of Ottawa Canadian literature symposium, April 24-25, 1980—aimed at offering a variety of important and untried perspectives. In "Literature and Journalism: The visible Boundaries," Leon Edel systematically presents the permanent influence of "the diluted cultural and also provincial world" of Canadian journalism of the twenties on Callaghan and his writings
He is of the opinion that Callaghan should probably be compared "with James T. Farrell, perhaps Sherwood Anderson, in some measure with John Dos Passos" (22). In "Morley Callaghan and the Great Depression," Daniel Aaron places Callaghan's fiction of the Depression era in the American context, leaving Hemingway, the much-discussed influence on Callaghan and considering Thornton Wilder and Nathanael West. Comparing Callaghan's Such Is My Beloved with West's Miss Lonely Hearts and Wilder's Heaven's My Destination, Aaron is of the opinion that "only in Callaghan's novels does the author successfully depersonalize himself and enter calmly and disinterestedly into his characters, the pleasant and the unpleasant alike" (35). Barry Cameron and Larry McDonald challenge critical stances on Callaghan which paid attention to traditional sociological and thematic concerns. In "Rhetorical Tradition and the Ambiguity of Callaghan's Rhetoric" Cameron characterizes Callaghan's novels as "rhetorical structures or discourses that use the established conventions of parable and figural typology" (67). Arguing that Callaghan's primary intention is always didactic, he includes the theoretical discussion of the relevant conventions of the didactic rhetorical tradition and examines The Loved and the Lost from such a perspective. Larry McDonald criticizes the bulk of Callaghan criticism, which "is mired in the slough of Christian Personalism" and proposes to approach Callaghan's first five novels through the "new 'sciences of man'," the theories of Darwin, Marx and Freud that seem to exert great influence on Callaghan. Patricia Morley's "Morley Callaghan: Magician and Illusionist" explores the shift in emphasis in Callaghan's literary vision as reflected in the fiction of the seventies. The later work is less concerned with God, "Christlike figures" and
traditional “saintly women”; instead, it plays “with such concepts as the illusion of reality, the reality of illusion, and the magic wrought by human imagination and art” (59).

The other important critical works, which try to explore new avenues in Callaghan criticism in the 1980s are by E.L. Bobak, Robin Matthews, Donald R. Bartlett, Wilfred Cude, and again John Moss. These critics have tried to assess the significance of Callaghan’s writing in the overall Canadian literary scene. In “Seeking ‘Direct, Honest Realism’: The Canadian Novel of the 1920s,” Bobak suggests that Callaghan’s writing, with the publication of Strange Fugitive, marks the beginning of realism, a new literary technique in the Canadian novel. As he notes: “When the book [Strange Fugitive] is viewed against the background of the sunshine novels, the romances, and the imperfectly realized realistic works of the period, Callaghan’s innovativeness is startling” (99).

Moss goes a step further in including realism within Canadian modernism and placing Callaghan firmly within the conventions of modernism along with other novelists mentioned earlier in this Introduction. In A Reader’s Guide to the Canadian Novel, Moss regards Callaghan as “a genuine fixture in the Canadian firmament” (38). Meanwhile, in his comparative study, “Callaghan, Joyce, and the Doctrine of Infallibility,” Robin Matthews calls for a close attention to Joyce “as a source and influence in matters of style and ironic form as well as, perhaps, in matters of situation and character” (286). Donald R. Bartlet disagrees with critics such as Edmund Wilson, McKenna, and Woodcock who consider Callaghan’s heroines martyrs, saints, or types and draws attention to their complexity and the duality of their character. In his opinion, the heroines’ personalities and roles help to elevate the novels above psychology and sociology into the tradition of “tragic literature.” In Wilfred Cude’s “Morley Callaghan’s Practical Monsters: Downhill
from Where and When?” Callaghan is seen as a novelist who ceaselessly probes the “dichotomy between reason and emotion.” Like D.J. Jones’s observation of the opposition between nature and culture, garrison and wilderness in Callaghan’s fiction, Cude’s attention to the presence of binaries is interesting in the light of the argument of the present thesis that examines Callaghan’s strategy of setting up binaries and at times undermining them.

Criticism of the 1990s moves in different directions altogether, offering multiple perspectives on Callaghan’s fiction with three full-length books and a number of articles that re-examine the old issues, unravel hidden implications, and remind critics that Callaghan’s writing still “mystifies, puzzles, irritates, and confounds” readers (Boire, Morley Callaghan 118). Boire begins the era of fresh insights on Callaghan’s writing with his biography, Morley Callaghan: Literary Anarchist, and many journal and book articles. The present thesis has not only benefited from the details that Boire provides on Callaghan’s life, career, and writing but is also indebted to Boire’s highly innovative approach in his essay, “The Language of the Law” to Callaghan’s “radical experimentations with both the language and genre of short story form” (75). Boire considers Callaghan a “postcolonial writer” whose resistance activity is evident in “mixed genres, bastardized forms” and “transgressive hybridizations of tale, vignette, romance, journalistic profile, Christian parable, and realistic sketch” (77-78). Woodcock and Orange contribute to Callaghan criticism through their extensive treatment of two of his novels, “Moral Predicament”: Morley Callaghan’s More Joy in Heaven and Orpheus in Winter: Morley Callaghan’s The Loved and the Lost respectively. These two books present a comprehensive understanding of the critical reception, form, structure, character
and situation, irony, style of the two novels in particular, and of Callaghan’s reputation as a writer, his personality and his literary principles in general.

Recent critical essays by Russell Brown, John Metcalf, Edwards, and Marianne Perz examine hitherto unexplored areas in Callaghan’s fiction. Perz’s “Staging That Summer in Paris: Narrative Strategies and Theatrical Techniques in the Life Writing of Morley Callaghan” discovers that Callaghan “dabbled in techniques of the stage” when he wrote his memoir *That Summer in Paris* (96). She argues “Callaghan creates a narrative personal for his voice that performs the same tasks as a casting director, a lighting designer, and a costume designer” (96-97). Her observations become relevant in the third chapter of the thesis which aims at examining self-conscious moments and role-playing as essential to Callaghan’s fiction. In “Strange Fugitive, Strange City: Reading Urban Space in Morley Callaghan’s Toronto,” Edwards establishes that Callaghan’s construction and manipulation of urban space in *Strange Fugitive* is in the tradition of early twentieth-century discourses and representations of the modern North American city. Callaghan’s uniqueness lies in using certain textual devices “when adapting American models of urban representation to confront 1920s Toronto” (214). The insights Edwards provides also become important in the third chapter where I argue that construction and manipulation of urban space in Callaghan’s fiction is closely associated with the polemics of centre/margin dichotomy and is used as a device to confront and subvert the ideology that is responsible for the existence of such a dichotomy.

Brown’s article “Callaghan, Glassco, and the Canadian Lost Generation” treats Callaghan’s memoir, *That Summer in Paris* and John Glassco’s *Memoirs in Montparnasse* as attempts to counter the American writers’ monopoly over the Paris
myth (which proposes the Paris literary circuit of the twentieth century as an extension of America) and to situate “Canadian authors within the emerging modernist tradition” (86). While he draws parallels between American and Canadian expatriate writers with the help of these two narratives, he also points out the subversive nature of Callaghan’s memoir, which is not only “an exploration of Callaghan’s ambivalent feelings about these myths” but is also “a protest against the very myths that it helps perpetuate” (89).

Metcalf’s “Winner Take All” is an attack on Callaghan’s language and style. Metcalf attacks severely the major critical appreciation of Callaghan’s writings and denies Callaghan any important place in Canadian fiction. Answers to Metcalf’s doubts, questions and critical remarks have been met with appropriate analysis, discoveries and appreciation in critical works and articles that have been published since 1993, the year of publication of Metcalf’s article. As a step further, Callaghan’s fictional strategies and fictional aspects can be explored in the light of recent theoretical formulations, since such an exploration reveals hitherto unknown meanings.

The theoretical basis for this thesis is largely derived from the shifting trends in the concept of signs, meaning and identity in literary theory and criticism. While it is true that literature occurs only because of signs that have referential meanings, there has been a radical change in the belief that signs and their meanings in a literary work are fixed. The Saussurean concept that sign is a binary entity, consisting of a signifier and a signified, and therefore a fixed meaning has undergone a great transformation in the hands of poststructuralists and postmodernists. A sign, in these theories, becomes something that denotes multiple meanings and defers fixity constantly, as meaning differs depending upon the context in which the sign is used. Jacques Derrida first dislocated the
metaphysical concept of the presence of a referent in a sign and argued that presence implies absence and vice versa. It was he who showed a way of combating this paradox in a sign. His deconstructive strategy aims at showing that the presence of a referent in a sign is needed conceptually only to show its absence. His views are similar to those of Mikhail Bakhtin, who pointed out that it is impossible to eradicate ideology from any system, but it is possible to subvert that ideology, thereby alerting us to its authority. In this sense, Callaghan’s fictional narratives are subversive; he makes use of archetypal symbols only to deconstruct and then subvert the meaning attributed to them. While on the surface level his narratives depend on realist conventions, on a deeper level they subvert these realist conventions.

Since the theorization of the relationship between signifier and signified, there has been a significant change in understanding and writing about literary works. Any literary work that claims to provide a direct or transcendental relationship between words and world has been identified as nothing but an ideological entrapment. This awareness has led to a re-examination of various aspects of literary works and has also initiated a new way of understanding the concept of identity. The earlier humanist belief that man is a unified being and thus possesses a definite identity is no longer commonly held. Since Sigmund Freud’s discovery of the unconscious and Jacques Lacan’s exploration of its implications for language and human personality, there have been radical changes in the conception of literary character. Character as a representation of a living being and thus possessive of a fixed identity is now considered illusory. More importance is given to writers who, in addition to creating this illusion, remind readers of characters’ (as well as the written text’s) constructed nature.
In this context, Callaghan’s novels provide an opportunity to explore their latent aspects with a view to understanding his use of signs, his use of ambiguity of meaning and a new concept of identity that emerges from his novels. Chapter One of my thesis explains the reasons for approaching various aspects of Callaghan’s novels from the recent theoretical explorations on such concepts as signs, meaning and identity. The theoretical basis for this study traces the linear development of the revolution that has taken place in the conception of language and its effects on literature and criticism from New Criticism to post-structuralism. It brings out the differences and similarities in comprehending meaning in a literary work among these approaches and tries to derive relevant tools and concepts for the discussion of Callaghan’s novels. Although semiotics is at the root of understanding the concept of signs, the present study makes use of points at which semiotics intersects with other approaches such as structuralism, deconstruction and post-structuralism. The conclusion of this chapter outlines the theoretical framework chosen for the present study, which is largely dependent on the study of signs and their meanings in Callaghan’s fiction in order to arrive at a larger understanding of the question of identity in the Canadian cultural context.

Chapter Two examines and reassesses one of the important aspects of Callaghan’s fiction—character. While characters in Callaghan’s fiction have been analyzed as allegorical, realistic, archetypes of Canadian thematic patterns, and as modern alienated individuals, an important strategy used in the construction of character remains unexplored. When taken in totality, characters from various novels display a unique feature that helps us distinguish particular characteristics of the culture to which they belong. This chapter proposes and theorizes that Callaghan’s characters are best
approached and explained as signs and subjects (as in recent poststructuralist and feminist readings) rather than as individuals with a coherent self. Such an approach answers the long-standing question of ambiguity and complexity that critics have noted in Callaghan’s characters and redefines the concept of self. Chapter Two provides a brief survey of various theoretical approaches to literary character in order to cast a new framework for analyzing Callaghan’s characters. The analysis of characters from novels such as They Shall Inherit the Earth, Such Is My Beloved, No Man’s Meat, It’s Never Over and A Time for Judas illustrates substantially that Callaghan has created subversive marginal characters not only to combat the dominant ideology of his times but also to give expression to the changing values in a transitional society. The construction of subversive characters has serious effects on Callaghan’s fictional mode, which is discussed in the third chapter.

Callaghan’s own statements and his early association with the twentieth-century American realist writers have led critics in the direction of arguing that Callaghan’s novels are written in realistic mode. Chapter Three re-examines realism in his fiction in order to ascertain that Callaghan’s narratives make use of realist conventions with an aim to subvert them. Such a tendency links Callaghan with the later postmodernist movement in Canadian literature, a fact that has never been discussed in Callaghan criticism. Two of Callaghan’s novels, The Loved and the Lost and A Fine and Private Place are analyzed to illustrate self-conscious moments, self-reflexivity, transgression, interspersion of different genres, and theatrical elements. This analysis reveals that Callaghan incessantly probes the dialectics of centre/margin, sacred/profane, closure/openness, black/white, good/bad, etc., by dislocating oppositional meanings; by hybridizing genres; by
embedding other discourses such as law and performance in his texts; and by undermining oppositions. The chapter also traces the development of realism in literature and its discontents in structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructionist and postmodernist theories. It arrives at the conclusion that unlike realistic fiction, Callaghan's narratives resist any kind of naturalization of meaning in the established order. Such conclusions prompt us to examine another important element in Callaghan's fiction, identity, which becomes the focus of the fourth chapter.

Identity is one of the major preoccupations of Callaghan's fiction, as his characters struggle to comprehend a tangible identity for themselves and for those around them in a transitional society. Chapter Four reconstructs the concept of identity in Callaghan's fiction within the Canadian cultural context. It surveys briefly the trajectory of the dialectics of the quest for Canadian identity from the pre-confederation years to the present situation, as articulated in Canadian fiction written during this period. The survey discerns a significant shift in the conception of identity from the postcolonial situation to the postmodern condition in Canada: the attempts to create a homogenized National Identity give way to the construction of a heterogeneous, discursive and pluralistic identity. The study of Callaghan's novels, too, identifies a shift in Callaghan's views regarding identity in novels written prior to 1960 and in those written after that period. The concern in his early novels is to articulate the crisis of identity in a split subject caught in the power structures of society, whereas the emphasis in his later novels is to affirm the mysterious, unpredictable, constantly signifying, and fluid nature of the self. Thus, Callaghan's novels become metaphoric analogues for the dialectics of the quest for identity in Canada. Also, the shift identified in Callaghan's fiction prompt us to examine
the means and strategies Callaghan employs to deal with the issue of identity. The examination compels us to reassess Callaghan’s place in Canadian literature, since we discern an inclination in Callaghan’s writing towards postmodernist strategies and preoccupations, though in a lesser degree.

The novels chosen for this study are determined by the concerns of individual chapters rather than by their chronological sequence, except in the fourth chapter, which examines a shift in the concept of identity from Callaghan’s early novels to his later novels.