Chapter III  REALISM: A SUBVERSIVE STRATEGY

Realism is a much discussed subject in Callaghan criticism. In the early years of his career, critics enthusiastically called him a "realist," as against the mainstream literary production of romances and nationalist literatures in Canada. Realism in general meant a mode of writing which represented a "real" world substantially in fiction—a definition, which led the structuralists and post-structuralists to associate with realism terms such as verisimilitude, semblance and mimesis. Canadian critics such as E. L. Bobak, Desmond Pacey, A.J.M Smith, and John Moss have noted certain characteristic adaptations of realism in Canada independently of its European and American legacies. They acclaim Callaghan as one of the novelists who figures prominently in giving expression to Canadian realism. His later novels, especially those written after the 1950s do not receive the same assessment; they are described as complex, ambiguous, and symbolic. Such an assessment is due to the dominance of thematic criticism, which could not explore some of the innovative strategies in Callaghan's novels: self-conscious moments in his narratives, destabilization of meaning in certain signs, self-reflexivity, transgression of established order, hybridization of forms and of genres. Recently, there has been an increased interest in exploring these issues as could be seen in Gary Boire's analysis of the language of law as an interspersed genre with the genre of Callaghan's short stories; Justin D. Edwards's structural analysis of urban space in Strange Fugitive, Marianne Perz's study of Narrative strategies and Theatrical techniques in That Summer in Paris, etc. With the backdrop of recent theoretical discussion beginning with formalism, followed by New Criticism, structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism and
psychoanalysis, the fictional world emerges as diegetic rather than mimetic. As language expresses through signs that may or may not directly refer to objects, realism in literature has become a problematic issue.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to re-examine realism in Callaghan's novels with a view to moving beyond "the referential illusion" (Barthes's term) created mainly for the purpose of subversion of the obvious meaning. The strategy of developing the dialectics of the centre and the margin is intrinsic to Callaghan's novels. A careful examination of this strategy reveals that Callaghan is an experimental novelist, intensely aware of his resistant activity within a well-established social system. As a result, behind a deceptively simple fictional world that emerges from his novels there is complexity and ambiguity of meaning. The chapter focuses on different means through which the illusion of reality is ruptured in Callaghan's novels with the effective handling of the genre of novel by experimenting with themes and forms. Before demonstrating these objectives of the chapter, it is imperative, however, to understand the emergence of realism in fiction, to find reasons for the prominence of Realism in Callaghan criticism, and to show the inadequacies of such an approach.

Realism was specifically used in association with the nineteenth-century French school of realists, even though it was popular in England and the rest of Europe. An aesthetic description, 'Réalisme' denoted vérité humaine of Rembrandt as opposed to the idéalité poétique of neo-classical painting. It became specifically a literary term when Edmond Duranty began a journal in 1856, Réalisme (Watt 10). In the controversy over the 'low' subjects and allegedly immoral tendencies of Flaubert and his successors, the word 'realisme' came to be used primarily as the antonym of 'idealism.' The opponents
of French realism used it to trace the continuity among all earlier forms of fiction that portrayed low life. The same premise was used with the eighteenth-century English novelists such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding who began the new form of novel in England. ‘Realism’ in their fiction was associated with the low life of the characters they depicted.

Realism became a literary movement in mid-nineteenth-century France when the French realists objected to the above view of their novels and asserted that they presented a more dispassionate and scientific scrutiny of life than had ever been attempted before. They concentrated on an issue that the novel dealt more sharply than any other literary form with an intention to strengthen the new genre of novel with its critical aims and methods: the problem of the correspondence between the literary work and the external reality that it imitates. As Ian Watt said, “the novel’s realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it” (emphasis added 11).

In Realism and the Novel Form, Ian Watt traces the relationship of life and art as an epistemological problem that dates back to the usage of the term in philosophy, by the scholastic realists of the Middle Ages. To them, the true realities are universals, classes of sense perceptions and not the particular, concrete objects of sense perception. The rise of the novel in modern period, however, rejects universals in preference for the particular. Modern realism owes much to the discoveries made by Rene Descartes and John Locke, who claim that the individual can discover truth through his senses. Watt points out that the correspondence between philosophical realism and literary realism is more towards the general temper of philosophical realism, which aims at being critical, anti-traditional, and innovative. The method of philosophical realism is to study the particulars of
experience by the individual investigator, and it gives importance to semantics, to the problem of the nature of the correspondence between word and reality. Watt observes that all of these features of philosophical realism have analogies to distinctive features of the modern novel form, which is traced in the subsequent paragraphs.

Following Descartes, the new novel opted for “individualist and innovating reorientation” in conceiving plot (Watt 13). The primary goal was to replace the traditional plots that were derived from mythology and collective tradition by non-traditional ones that drew material from Nature or contemporary life. “Originality” and “fidelity to human experience” were the key terms in the invention of a realistic plot. Such a tendency was analogous to Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum*. In terms of character, the general human types acting against a conventionally determined background were completely abandoned in favour of particular persons in particular circumstances. Thus characterization and presentation of background acquired special importance in fiction and distinguished it from other genres and from previous forms of fiction. This notion was again inspired by the philosophic realism that rejected universals and preferred particulars. Description with concentration on singularity and minuteness (Earl of Shaftesbury’s terms against realists; qtd. in Watt 17) became important. One of the several ways of presenting a character as a particular individual in fiction was by giving a proper name (both first and last names) that established the identity of the person. Unlike the historical and typical names of the classical and Renaissance literature, the novel characteristically chose names that resembled the names of the individuals in ordinary life and at the same time were appropriate and suggestive of their personalities.
Closely linked with the idea of individuality is the concept of setting them in a particular time and place. Again, the influence of Locke and David Hume is evident: whereas Locke attributes personal identity to the identity of consciousness through duration of time, Hume locates the source of personal identity in the repository of past memories. Ian Watt opines that since the Renaissance, time is viewed “not only as a crucial dimension of the physical world, but also as the shaping force of man’s individual and collective history” (23). Time has decisive effects on plot and characterization: the novel’s plot, unlike those of previous fiction, is distinguished by its causal connection between past and present events; character is developed in the course of time, in a similar fashion to the growth of individuals in real life. The Classical, Medieval and Renaissance literature focus not on the “temporal flux,” but on the timelessness of eternity, thus emphasizing on “a-historical outlook” (Watt 25). In contrast to this, the novels of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding present personal identity as characterized by the flow of experience through the duration of time. Being the necessary correlative of time, the treatment of space, too, undergoes considerable change in the works of these novelists; characters are set in solid physical environment with a view to establishing verisimilitude.

All the above characteristics of novel contribute to the production of one particular feature of new novel: authenticity in accounting for the actual experiences of individuals. Watt points out that this objective has a close association with one of the important methodological issues of philosophical realism. It is related to the semantic problem of words standing for real objects; philosophy faces the problem of discovering their rationale. The earlier tradition for fiction is mainly stylistic and is not concerned
with the correspondence of words to things. The critical tradition, when Defoe and Richardson begin their new prose style, still prefers language as a rhetorical end in itself. Hence, the language, which restricted itself to a descriptive and denotative use, as in the case of Defoe and Richardson, meets with great scorn. The realistic use of language adopts clear and easy prose for achieving the effects of immediacy and closeness of the text to the description. Such an emphasis on authenticity leads Watt to conclude that language is largely referential in novel than in other literary forms and that "the genre itself works by exhaustive presentation rather than by elegant concentration" (33). This view, asserts Watt, is analogous to what Locke defines as the purpose of language, "to convey the knowledge of things" (qtd. in Watt 33).

From the above discussion it is clear that Watt associates the rise of novel in the eighteenth century as a distinctive genre with realism as its characteristic feature. More specifically, Watt uses the term, "formal realism" to denote the narrative incorporation of an implied premise in the novel form in general: that the novel is an authentic report of human experience. Watt, however, draws attention to a tendency among realists and naturalists that resulted in a widespread distaste: the tendency to forget that "the accurate transcription of actuality does not necessarily produce a work of any real truth or enduring literary value" (35). Although different literary forms imitate reality in different ways, the formal realism of the novel allows a more immediate imitation of individual experience, which has been the main reason for its popularity. In Watt’s opinion Tobias Smollett, Laurence Sterne, and Fanny Burney are the prominent novelists in the tradition of writing novels in the realistic mode after Richardson and Fielding.
Watt's observation on Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* is singled out here, because it achieves two purposes: on the one hand, it provides an interesting contrast to the structuralist and poststructuralist approach to the same novel; and, on the other hand, what it regards as a departure from novel convention is actually the contradiction within realism. In turn, such observations help us discern similar contradictions in Callaghan's novels. Sterne's narrative mode, says Watt, subscribes to all the aspects of formal realism described above, but it is more a parody of a novel than a novel. He notes that Sterne possesses a "precocious technical maturity" and treats ironically many of the narrative methods of the new genre. In Watt's view, the naming-convention of formal realism receives an ironic treatment when Sterne tells in the novel how his central character was named and how it is a symbol of its bearer's unhappy destiny. The same aspect becomes an interesting aspect of semiotic study for Harold Fisch (discussed in the previous chapter) who analyses Sterne's unique way of reducing the foundation of character to the name itself. In Fisch's analysis, proper names determine character rather than acting as "adventitious appendage" to character as a substantial human being. Names are fixed, while character in the sense of inwardness of a person is changeable. However, Watt's analysis links the elusive nature of Tristram in the novel with the author's treatment of the time dimension in narrative. He connects Sterne's treatment of time with those of his predecessors. In making everything that occurs in the mind as occurring in the present, Sterne achieves the vividness of scenes in the manner of Richardson's present tense form. Also, by making Tristram Shandy recount the story of his own life, he comes closer to the longer temporal perspectives of Defoe's autobiographical memoir. Finally, he adopts Fielding's method of correlating fictional time with external time-scheme, that is, the
chronology of the history of the Shandy household is consistent with the dates of such historical events as Uncle Toby's battles in Flanders. Watt comments that Sterne, without being satisfied by this skilful handling of time, goes to the extreme level of enacting the logic of the ultimate realist premise of a one-to-one correspondence between literature and reality. He proposes to make an absolute temporal equivalent between his novel and his reader's experience of it by providing an hour's reading matter for every hour in his hero's waking life. (332)

Watt, however, points out that it is a forlorn enterprise, as Tristram needs more than an hour to write down an account of an hour of his own experience. He thinks that Sterne takes the temporal requirements of formal realism more literally than his predecessors and achieves a subversion of the proper purposes of the novel. He also notes how Sterne's flexibility in the treatment of the time-scheme prefigures the rebellion against the tyranny of chronological order in the conduct of narrative, which Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf make in their novels.

Watt's observations are illuminating, as they expose the self-conscious moments, which, in themselves, undermine realist principles. Sterne's handling of characters and their naming, and his treatment of time illustrates such moments, which parody the conventions of realism in an age when realism is in vogue. He makes Tristram an elusive character to prove that identity is not a simple issue, and that it cannot be known completely. When the commissary asks Tristram—"And who are you?" he can only reply, "Don't puzzle me." One of the axioms of realism is to establish a strong identity of
characters in the novel, but Sterne parodies that very notion. Because of the subversion of realist conventions of the novel, Sterne receives renewed critical acclaim in the twentieth century, as a precursor of moderns. The discussion of character as sign and subject in Callaghan’s novels in the previous chapter has already demystified the notion of character as a unified individual. The examination of self-conscious and self-reflexive moments, components of the narrative, and the blurring of genres in Callaghan’s novels in the present chapter reveals the use of realist conventions for subversive purposes.

Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* becomes the focus of interest in the structuralist and post-structuralist critique of realist tradition. What Watt calls as the “precocious technical maturity” in the handling of time, narrative method and character, in fact, becomes tour de force for structuralist and post-structuralist analyses of the very premise of language and its relation to reality. They describe Sterne’s innovative methods as metafictional techniques through which the novel creates levels of fiction and reality with a subversive aim. Through these techniques Sterne’s novel questions the very assumption of realism that truth and reality are absolute terms and knowable. Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* is the predecessor of all self-reflexive and postmodern fiction of the contemporary period in challenging conventions of realism, by being within those same conventions. As Alison Lee points out: “Metafiction often contains its own criticism, and the novels which play with Realist codes criticize, as this [Julian Barnes’ *Flaubert’s Parrot*] one does, their own use of them. More generally, they call into question the basic suppositions made popular by nineteenth-century Realism” (3). It is too early to talk about the subversive tendency within realist fiction that Alison Lee is pointing at in the above paragraph. The topic will
be discussed in detail after a comprehensive understanding of the term ‘realism’ in literature.

The simple dictum that realism portrays things as they are, that is, by objective and concrete details of actual life, poses innumerable difficulties and makes realism a problematic term. Realists seem to aim at a literal transcription of reality into art. Lee points out that such a premise is contradictory, because “as soon as there exists a frame for reality, anything that is within that frame ceases to be “reality” and becomes an artifact” (5). Even the most objective vision of the visible world will change when it is enclosed within an artistic work.

The relationship between life and art is of the most interesting preoccupation in the history of literature. Mimetic orientation of art has been discussed since the time of Plato and Aristotle. Plato is not in favour of the poet in his Republic, because art is far removed from the truth, and the poet imitates things whose essence he hardly knows about. In Plato’s view, the poet with his imitation deludes people and corrupts them with a false view. Plato’s imitation is not as same as Aristotle’s mimesis. For Aristotle, the poet is a creator, because he does not simply mirror reality, but creates plots that probe into human action. In Aristotle’s view, the poet is a fiction maker and is different from the historian who concerns himself with particulars. Aristotle’s preference is more for artistry than for documentation.

The mimetic issue in literature has always been a largely debated one; it has never disappeared from the critical scene. As seen with the French realists, objectivity in matters of style and democratic impulse in choosing the subject-matter have been the hallmarks of the genre of novel. When Watt described the new genre of novel, he insisted
on the all-inclusiveness of the novel: "If the novel were realistic merely because it saw
life from the seamy side ['low' subjects], it would only be an inverted romance; but in
fact it surely attempts to portray all the varieties of human experience, and not merely
those suited to one particular literary perspective. . . " (11). Thus many of the eighteenth-
and nineteenth- century realists use characters drawn from everyday life. Such a tendency
is closely related to their precept of faithful reflection of ordinary life.

One of the important realist issues is to resolve the dichotomy between the
internal and external approaches to character by combining both. The relation between
the individual and his environment dictate the basic terms of realists' enterprise. Hence,
although novelists give different degrees of importance to internal and the external
objects of consciousness, they never completely reject either (Watt 335-336). This is
closely related to the epistemological problem—Descartes's dualism. Dualism, says
Watt, dramatizes the opposition between different ways of looking at reality, but it does
not lead to any complete rejection of the reality either of the ego or of the external world.
According to Watt, the full maturity of the novel is achieved when the novelist combines
these two ways harmoniously, as Henry James, Jane Austen and other nineteenth-century
novelists did.

Although Watt associates realism with the rise of the novel and calls Defoe,
Richardson and Fielding as the first realists, realism becomes a full-fledged movement in
the nineteenth century. Novelists such as Walter Scott, William Thackeray, Anthony
Trollope, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, to name but a few, have all
been described as realist writers. In Europe, the great tradition of the novel as exemplified
in the works of Honore de Balzac, Stendhal, Leo Tolstoy, Émile Zola, and Maxim Gorki
has also been described as realistic, but with an emphasis on the organic unity between realism and popular humanism. Watt’s discussion of realism emphasizes on particularity, originality, fidelity to fact in the construction of plot, presentation of characters and setting, and authentic situation. In their discussion of European realism, critics, however, have associated realism with penetration of “great universal problems of their time” and with the depiction of “the true essence of reality as they see it” (Lukács 13). In “Preface” to Studies in European Classics, Lukács rejects naturalism as “false objectivity” and psychologism as “false subjectivity” and upholds realism as the “true, solutionbringing third way,” because a true great realist is the one who probes into the “organic, indissoluble connection between man as a private individual and man as a social being, as a member of a community” (8). It is this organic connection between man and society that allows Lukács to connect Marxism with realism, as he argues that Marxism has a great respect for classical heritage, which depicts “man as a whole in the whole of society” (5). Realism, Marxism and Classical literature are similar in their common objective to render “adequate pictures of great periods of human development and at the same time serve as signposts in the ideological battle fought for the restoration of the unbroken human personality” (5). Thus Lukács disagrees with the modern philosophical writers such as Spengler and Heidegger and other influential thinkers who saw only despair and darkness in the twentieth century and argues that the direction in which literature should move is that of Classical Realist literature as exemplified in the writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Tolstoy, Zola, and Gorki. He commends the picture of “unbroken human personality” in these writers. The analysis of character as sign and subject in Callaghan’s novels in the previous chapter has shown that neither man nor society can be
described as “whole.” The discussion of non-mimetic nature of fictional world in the present chapter further dismantles the realist beliefs of Lukács.

Although Lukács strongly objects to naturalism as concerned with the seamy side of life, realism is closely associated with it in the nineteenth century. Naturalism believes in rendering a more accurate depiction of life than realism. Being the product of post-Darwinian biology it holds the view:

A human being exists entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul nor any mode of participating in a religious or spiritual world beyond nature; and therefore, that such a being is merely a higher-order animal whose character and behaviour are entirely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity and environment.” (Abrams 175)

The major exponents in the naturalistic mode are Émile Zola, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser who aim at scientific objectivity and elaborate description (like those aims of the French Realists that Watt discusses). Callaghan’s early novels such as Strange Fugitive, It's Never Over, A Broken Journey, Such Is My Beloved, They Shall Inherit the Earth, and More Joy in Heaven have been interpreted as naturalistic or deterministic, but in close association with realism; thereby, enforcing the view that all the three approaches are interlinked and not separable.

Within realism, Marxist critics designate “Socialist Realism” as a term for novels whose characters and events, in accordance with the Marxist view, embody and reflect “the struggle between economic classes is the essential dynamics of society” (Abrams 176). Socialist Realism becomes a major influential doctrine in the literary writings by Russian writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Marxists indiscriminately apply
the term to novels that uphold the principles of Communist Party and expose the oppression by capitalists and the virtues of working class and of Socialism. This view is not as same as the one expressed by Lukács (discussed above) who sees greater concerns of humanity in both Marxism and the realist novel, than a mere confirmation of one particular ideology.

All the characteristic features of realism discussed above have been re-examined in the contemporary critical debate over the connection between language and reality. Whereas the critics in favour of realism claim that reality shapes literary works, modern critics argue that it is language that creates reality. A detailed discussion of New Criticism, formalism, structuralism, semiotics and poststructuralism in the first chapter has attempted at showing this changed perspective. Many moments within realist texts, as that of Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, and that of Callaghan’s novels (which will be analysed later in this chapter) are subversive moments within the conventions of realism. Critics often take support from Callaghan’s *That Summer in Paris*, which contains his statements of literary principles. Callaghan argues like a realist for writing that is uncomplicated and direct, as against “calculated charm in prose.” His realist conviction of words as direct means to represent objects and not for decorative purpose is stated more than once in *That Summer in Paris*:

> [W]riting had to do with the right relationship between the words and the thing or person being described: the words should be as transparent as glass, and every time a writer used a brilliant phrase to prove himself witty or clever he merely took the mind of the reader away from the object and directed it to himself; he became simply a performer. (21)
Yet in the same memoir, Callaghan expresses his wish that a writer should not give his readers an easy recognition of what the work contains. Obviously, he is against the “literariness” in using language, but he is conscious of writing’s need to be indeterminate in its meaning. Commenting on Sinclair Lewis’s writing, Callaghan says:

his grand success was based on one of his weaknesses as an artist: he gave the reader a chance at too quick a recognition. This kind of writing always puts the writer and the reader in a comfortable relationship, neither one being required to jar himself, or get out of this groove of recognition. A writer who has this gift is always meeting his reader and reviewers on their terms, and it should be always the other way around. (69)

Both the passages quoted above reveal the contradiction in Callaghan’s statements. He wants language to be as “transparent as glass,” yet does not want to allow readers easy recognition.

The realists believe in a direct perception of things, and in presenting such things directly in their novels, without authorial commentary and its subsequent reader manipulation. But the second passage quoted above from Callaghan is a clear indication of the self-consciousness due to authorial intervention. Elsewhere Callaghan emphasizes the everlasting mystery of good writing:

A writer is like a woman who has a lover. She may go around . . . complaining that her lover does not fully understand her. The one thing in the world she should dread is that she should be fully understood. When this happens she loses all her mystery; she has been fully possessed; she has given her heart to the hawks; she loses her lover too. That’s the way it
is with a writer. If he is any good, if he is to last at all, there should always be aspects of his work you simply don’t understand. (qtd. in Conron 6)

Clearly, Callaghan’s views subvert the assumptions of direct perception and direct presentation. The self-consciousness of the passage draws attention to the work’s existence as an artefact and to the role of the writer as a performer. By setting rhetorically cultural and marginal signs such as priest, church, prostitute and outlaws against authoritative signs such as law, police, bourgeois and the clergy Callaghan envelops his novels with ambiguity, indeterminacy of meaning and endless signification.

Like Callaghan, well-known nineteenth-century writers such as George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James, even though they claim impersonality and objectivity in their critical writings, they show awareness of their own artifice in their novels. In “The Art of Fiction,” Henry James strongly objects to authorial intrusion and criticizes Trollope for that:

He [Trollope] admits that the events he narrates have not really happened and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime. . . . It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth . . . than the historian. . . . (46-47)

In correlation with the principles of objectivity and impersonality, James is implying that the realist should be concerned with facts and present them as natural. This is again a confirmation of the realist belief that fiction should mirror the world. Elsewhere in this article, he writes that: “the subject matter of fiction is stored up . . . in documents and records and if it will not give itself away, as they say in California, it must speak with
assurance, with the tone of the historian" (35). Even in James's novels, however, there is an omniscient narrative voice, which directs the reader regarding characters and situations, and sometimes sees into characters' thoughts.

The realist emphasis on objectivity, impersonality, documentation, and fact highlights the author's role in creating fiction. Hence, the realist criticism is mainly directed towards the author, particularly in England, this focus on author is closely linked with moral element of realism. Realism believes in the possibility of a common perception of "reality" and expects the author to reflect this in his/her work; criticism in turn concentrates on the accuracy of the reflection. As language is considered to be natural, criticism does not pay much attention to the artistic process. The examination of accurate description of objective reality is of critical importance and therefore, the morality of the author. This is the reason why the realist criticism always pays greater attention to biographical details and to the examination of author's moral virtues. The emphasis on morality in art and criticism is evident in the critical works of Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold and F.R. Leavis. All these critics believe in the essential goodness or beauty in nature and a direct portrayal of these qualities in art and literature. They are less concerned with the processes and structures of art. In Literary Theory, Terry Eagleton rightly points out that this type of criticism elevates the status of art to religion:

Indeed by our own time literature has become effectively identical with the opposite of analytical thought and conceptual inquiry; whereas scientists, philosophers and political theorists are saddled with these drably discursive pursuits, students of literature occupy the more prized
territory of feeling and experience. Whose experience and what kinds of feeling, is a different question. Literature from Arnold onwards is the enemy of "ideological dogma", an attitude which might have come as a surprise to Dante, Milton, and Pope. (Eagleton 22)

In Arnold’s view great poetry is concerned with such things that have enduring validity. In “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” Arnold insists that the critic’s duty is to seek the best in all kinds of intellectual activity and wonders if there will be a language that is innocent and transparent that can transmit pure intentions. Arnold’s search for such a language, his stress on pure perceptions and moral instruction come closer to realist emphasis on similar objectives.

Similar concerns are found in F.R. Leavis when he commends the novelists in The Great Tradition for possessing an ability to capture the essence of experience, a kind of openness towards life, and moral intensity. Elsewhere he assigns the proper role for criticism as defending culture against mechanization. The most important point in Leavis’s critical theory is his belief in the transcendental value of literature as a moral teacher. As Eagleton points out, “[Leavisites] stressed the centrality of rigorous critical analysis, a disciplined attention to the ‘words on the page’. They urged this not simply for technical or aesthetic reasons, but because it had the closest relevance to the spiritual crisis of modern civilization” (27).

With the rise of novel and its correlating belief in realism in the eighteenth-century England, and with the development of realism in the nineteenth century, the transcendental relationship between words and objects they represent is firmly established. Many of realist dictates, although untenable, are still prevalent in the
twentieth century. However, the twentieth-century structural-linguistic theorists, particularly Ferdinand de Saussure, have questioned the transcendental relationship between words and objects and have revealed that "realism" is a construct. The basic premise in Saussure’s theory that language is constituted of signs and that the relationship between the signifier (word’s graphic form) and the signified (the referential object) is arbitrary heralds a new revolution in the conception of language and reality. It exposes that there is no transcendental essence why certain words are used to denote certain objects. Any ‘naturalization’ of particular language simply denies the existence of similar concepts in other languages. Within one language, words are distinguished from other words by their differences. Since Saussure’s theory has been discussed in detail in the first chapter; suffice it to understand the emphasis on the “constructedness” of meaning in his theory. Meaning does not exist independently of language, because linguistic structures determine the perception of reality. The realist assumption that literature is a mirror reflecting reality proves inadequate because it assumes the existence of ideas before words. Against this, structuralists argue that knowledge of objective reality is structured by the systems of codes and conventions that direct the irregular flow of experience. They denounce that literature is a natural emanation from an inspired mind; instead, their motto is to demystify literature as a privileged discourse by showing that literature is constituted of structures, codes and conventions just like language. The analysis of character in Callaghan’s fiction in the second chapter not only demystifies the notion of character as a unified individual, emanating from the coherent self of the author, but also reveals character’s constructed nature as a sign constituted by codes and conventions of society. Examination of realism in the present chapter establishes that
Callaghan frequently explores the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality in his fiction. Thus Callaghan's prose, despite seeming simple and transparent, creates the impression of opacity in various aspects, which are dealt in this chapter and in the fourth chapter. Commenting on the new insights structuralists offer on realism in literature, Eagleton says:

> Structuralism is a modern inheritor of this belief that reality, and our experience of it, are discontinuous with each other. . . . It undermines the empiricism of the literary humanists – the belief that what is most ‘real’ is what is experienced, and that the home of this rich, subtle, complex experience is literature itself. Like Freud, it exposes the shocking truth that our most intimate experience is the effect of a structure. (Eagleton 94)

The changed notion that meaning is socially constructed and plural not only challenged the naturalization of meaning but also changed the position of author as the producer of meaning and morality. More specifically, meaning in structuralist and post-structuralist theories becomes a product of mutually creative act between the text and the reader.

It was New Critics who first attacked the realist dependence on biographical criticism. They made literary work, not its author, the centre of examination. As Abrams points out:

> It [New Criticism] opposed itself against the prevailing interest of scholars and critics of that era with the biographies of authors, the social context of literature, and literary history by insisting that the proper concern of literary criticism is not with the external circumstances or effects of a work, but with a detailed consideration of the work itself. (246)
Objectivity now confined to the reality of the work itself, New Criticism claimed the autonomy of the work and emphasized on work's unity, subtlety, and integrity. W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley coined a new term "Intentional Fallacy" in the essay with the same title (1946) to point out the error of interpreting a work by calling outside evidence to understand the intention of the author. They claimed that meaning was inherent within the finished work. They also explained the other side of the New Critical stance as "The Affective Fallacy"—the error of evaluating a poem by its emotional effects upon the reader. Both the intentional and affective fallacies result in the disappearance of the work itself as the object of critical judgement. The text was released from the realist dependence on author's biography in the hands of New Critics, but they resembled realists in their obsession with the text.

The self-sufficiency and objectivity claimed by the New Critics are put to question with the rise of reader-response criticism in the 1960s. Reception theorists and structuralists stress the interaction between text and reader. Meaning is not inherent in the text, but is produced in the shared process of reading. The reception theorists such as Jonathan Culler, Stanley Fish, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., David Bleich, Norman Holland, and Wolfgang Iser state that the process of reading not only enables the reader to derive meaning from a text, but also has the power to change the expectations and beliefs of readers. As Eagleton observes:

Reading is not a straightforward linear movement, a merely cumulative affair: our initial speculations generate a frame of reference within which to interpret what comes next, but what comes next may retrospectively
transform our original understanding, highlighting some features of it and backgrounding others. (67)

The important point in reader-response criticism is that it examines reader’s response and confers on the literary text ‘polysemantic’ and ‘pluralistic’ qualities. But, in a similar manner to New Criticism, it expects an ideal reader to arrive at a single meaning. Critics such as Holland and Iser believe in a transcendental relationship between the reader and the text: the reading experience takes the reader to deeper levels of self-consciousness and re-creates the reader’s own identity. As Eagleton remarks, “It is as though what we have been ‘reading’, in working our way through a book, is ourselves” (68). Hence the reader-response theory relies on a unified reading subject to confer upon the text a unified meaning.

The poststructuralist and postmodern criticism revolt against unified meaning or unified reading or writing subjects. As the influence of philosophical thought and psychoanalytical theory on these theories have been discussed in great detail in the first chapter, only the relevance of postmodern critique of reality in fiction is discussed here. Postmodern critics argue that meaning is ambiguous and plural. They are of the opinion that reality as something that could be directly mirrored by a novel is a myth, and if there is any reality, it exists only as a linguistic construct and all literary works mirror other literary structures, codes, signifying practices and discursive methods. As Eagleton points out:

All literary texts are woven out of other literary texts, not in the conventional sense that they bear the traces of ‘influence’ but in the more radical sense that every word, phrase or segment is a reworking of other
writings which precede or surround the individual work. There is no such thing as literary ‘originality’, no such thing as the ‘first’ literary work: all literature is intertextual. (130)

It is clear that the above stance is based on Saussure’s theory of difference. For Saussure, meaning is constituted by the interrelation among all the signs in a language. As discussed earlier, Saussure’s theory of linguistics becomes the guiding spirit for structuralists and post-structuralists. Roland Barthes’s essay, “The Death of the Author” echoes the structuralist shift from the author to the reader, because it is “language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, ‘performs,’ and not ‘me’” (143). Thus the authorial “I” is only a linguistic subject, not a person with passions, emotions and feelings, which exists prior to the text. For Emile Benveniste and Jacques Lacan the categories of language and subjectivity are closely linked. They view subject as a signifier or as a sign that represents a subject for another signifier. It was Peirce who laid the groundwork for linguistic predominance in constituting subject “by bringing to the fore the notion that the subject is determined by signifiers rather than being a transcendental producer of them” (Silverman 18). On this basis, in his essay “The Death of the Author,” Barthes argues that to impose an “Author” having authority over his text is to impose a single, fixed meaning. Modernist and postmodernist texts, however, imply multiplicity of meaning because language is inherently plural in its signification. Hence, Barthes proposes that language is not simply a system of difference, but a “systematic exemption of meaning” (147).
The relativism of language is the focus of attention in post-structuralism and deconstruction. Whereas structuralism is concerned with binary oppositions (male/female, good/bad, high/low, white/black) in a text, deconstruction points at the ideological problems created by such antitheses. Binaries presuppose an absolute that gives rise to authoritarianism, and hierarchy of preference, which deconstruction tries to subvert. Derrida’s deconstruction shows that what is excluded in a binary system does not remain the ‘other’ or ‘opposite’, but is present within the preferred term. For instance, Eagleton points out how woman is not the ‘other’ of man in the binary opposition between man/woman: “woman is not just an other in the sense of something beyond his ken, but an other intimately related to him as the image of what he is not, and therefore as an essential reminder of what he is” (115). Hence deconstruction of a text involves undermining the “philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed grounds of argument, the key concept or premise” (Culler 86).

Both the linguistic and critical theories in the post-structuralist era attack realism and the ideology of absolutism behind it: that each text possesses a single truth emanated from a unified, moral subject. Barthes criticizes realism as a literary ideology that projects the notion of a ‘natural’ or neutral social reality through the ‘naturalization’ of language. The ‘healthy’ sign or language constituted of healthy signs is the one that draws attention to its own arbitrariness. The natural sign, on the other hand, is not seen as “a changeable entity determined by the rules of a particular changeable sign system: it is seen rather as a translucent window on to the object, or on to the mind” (Eagleton 117-8).
Since Saussure, there is less confidence in the absolute relationship between the world and our experience. As Lee points out:

Postmodern texts are both the inheritors and the perpetrators of this radical undermining. Like linguistic theorists, they posit a straw man of Realism, while at the same time, they unravel the fabric of their own language through the discourses of history, performance, visual art, and film. (27-28)

In Callaghan’s novels, the Postmodern tendencies are subtle and have not been examined. Since realism is discussed strongly in the critical works on Callaghan the subversive elements in his fiction are overlooked. His novels, while using the conventions of realism, undermine the very conventions by dislocating the meaning of such binaries as margin/centre, sacred/profane, and good/bad; by hybridization of genres; by embedding other discourses as law and performance; and by undermining oppositions. The reason for negligence of these aspects of his fiction may be due to the dominance of mimetic and referential approaches in Canadian criticism until 1960. In his essay, “Surviving the Paraphrase,” Frank Davey calls for a criticism, which would turn the critic’s attention to “literature as language, and on writing as writing” (12). He denounces the mode of “referential” criticism that includes Northrop Frye, Margaret Atwood, Douglas Jones and John Moss for its tendency to paraphrase literature through “the mirror metaphor of poor sociology” (Godard 28). In this type of criticism author controls the meaning and truth in his work, thus reducing the significance of textual experience. Davey associates evaluative and normative criticism with thematic critics, and advocates “analytic criticism” that would put emphasis on text and language and hence lead to the
death of the author that Barthes proposed. In “Structuralism/Post-Structuralism: Language, Reality and Canadian Literature,” Barbara Godard undertakes a systematic study of theoretical developments in Canadian criticism—from New Criticism to phenomenology, structuralism, semiotics, deconstruction, feminist criticism and post-structuralism—that have given rise to the “rise of the reader” and “the plurality of meaning.” These developments have cast new insights on Canadian literature, both past and contemporary. Increased interest in theoretical usefulness to Canadian literature led George Bowering to comment as:

Yes, one thing I am looking forward to, and seeing some signs of too, is Canadian critics who are reappraising the texts that we’ve seen handled in fixed ways for the last thirty or forty years. I don’t know whether I can’t stand reading certain Canadian authors because of the way they have been introduced to me in critical texts and anthologies . . . But I’m looking forward to someone’s using all the tools, all the nomenclature we’re always making fun of, to go back and talk about early twentieth-century Canadian writers. (Schellenberg 15)

In response to Bowering’s desire to see the traditional Canadian authors in new theoretical perspective, Robert Krotesch expresses a similar concern: “changes in critical methods will open up a writer for the rereading, as you say” (Schellenberg 15). In light of these theoretical concerns that unravel hidden meanings of a text, Callaghan’s novels provide the best opportunity for such an enterprise. When Callaghan began his writing career in the late 1920s, Canadian literature and criticism was in one of the transitional periods.
Realism becomes a welcome sign in Canadian literature and criticism in the 1920s when the dominant form of fiction are romances and regional idylls that presented an escapist or exaggerated image of Canada. Continental literary realism that flourished in the nineteenth century in France, Russia and England makes its way to America in the last decades of nineteenth century with William Dean Howells as its champion. In his historical survey of realism in the Canadian Novel of the 1920s, E.L. Bobak traces its slow growth and Callaghan’s prominent position as a realist. Despite the dramatic political and social changes of the period between the close of World War I and the crash of the stock market in 1929, the dominant form of fiction in the early twenties is “escape literature” which includes the historical romances, regional idylls, novels of crime, detection, and mystery (Pacey 169-170). In Bobak’s view, realism is “an ideal medium for the objective reporting of social phenomena” (85). When realism is practiced in Canadian literature, Bobak observes, the excesses of Zola’s naturalism is avoided, some sense of the unknowable is retained, and concrete physical details are used to suggest mental states (Bobak 86). In this sense, Callaghan, along with MacLennan, plays an important role in developing Canadian realism independently.

Bobak praises Callaghan’s first novel *Strange Fugitive* (1928) for its startling “innovativeness”: the book is “consistent, clear, and direct in its use of what was for the Canadian novel a new literary technique” (99). In Callaghan’s case, notes Bobak, his urban realism blended with religious dimension, which, in turn, ruled out determinism. As a result, the exterior world depicted in Callaghan’s novels reflects the interior world of his characters. His portrayal of the city forces “a re-examination of the romantic nationalism which connected the “real” Canada with wilderness and the land” (Bobak
In matters of objective portrayal of the contemporary social world and in portraying the interior world of characters Bobak’s view of realism comes closer to the two major objectives of realism in nineteenth century—accurate description of the social world and revealing the psychology of characters in the manner of real people. There exists, however, a contradiction in Bobak’s statement when he says that concrete physical details suggest mental states, thus revealing the objective portrayal of either the external or the internal world impossible. A similar contradiction exists in Hugo McPherson’s comment that in Callaghan’s fiction: “surface events function simultaneously as realistic action and symbolic action, revealing both the empirical and the spiritual conflicts of his protagonists” (McPherson 62). These contradictions exist, because Callaghan’s novels do not purport completely to realism, the reasons for which are analysed in the later pages of this chapter.

When realism begins in France, its opponents criticize it for a portrayal of “low” life and characters, thereby attaching a certain anti-puritanical attitude to realism. Similarly, when realism first makes its appearance in Canada there is a great deal of debate over choice of subject matter. A.J.M. Smith relates opposition to realism in Canada to the puritan fear of discussion of sex. In “Wanted—Canadian Criticism” Smith observes:

Of realism we are afraid—apparently because there is an impression that it wishes to discredit the picture of our great dominion as a country where all the women are chaste and the men too pure to touch them if they weren’t. Irony is not understood. Cynicism is felt to be disrespectful, unmanly. The idea that any subject whatever is susceptible of artistic treatment and that
praise or blame is to be conferred after a consideration, not of its moral, but of its aesthetic harmony is a proposition that will take years to knock into the heads of our people. (169)

In such a puritanical situation, he praises Callaghan along with writers such as Raymond Knister and Mazo de la Roche not only for their frank treatment of sex and other forbidden themes, but also for writing novels other than patriotic "Canada-conscious" ones. Smith's observation finds confirmation when many of Callaghan's early novels are banned in Canada. Frederick Philip Grove, however, dismisses any definition of realism based on "choice of subject," and insists that realism is a matter of "literary procedure." He praises writers such as Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Flaubert as great realists in literature. In going back to the classical heritage, Grove comes closer to the definition of realism that Lukács formulates in his examination of classical great realists.

Despite Bobak's observation that Callaghan's novels rule out Zola's naturalism, his early novels have been identified as a combination of realism and naturalism. The criteria used in assessing realism in the early novels—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) are: an authentic portrayal of the social world of the depression period, the alienation of modern man in such a world, psychological conflicts within characters, the colloquial language of the characters, and the relationship between the society and the individual. The criterion used in assessing naturalism in these very novels is: characters are victims of their environment and heredity. His later novels, however, are assessed by critics as less realistic and have been called "ambiguous" and "complex." In their attempt to trace only realism in Callaghan's
novels, critics have overlooked the fact that Callaghan is moving in a different direction in his later novels: of developing a subversive technique within realist conventions.

Like the nineteenth-century realist novels, there are self-conscious moments in Callaghan's novels that interrogate the realist dictates of transparent, impersonal and objective reporting. The omniscient narrators in various novels seem to provide the central source of intelligence and form an unproblematic relationship between the narrative prose and the dialogues of the characters. Quite often, however, the narrative reveals that there are two perspectives offered at a time in what looks like an impersonal, objective and detached narrative. In most of the novels, we have a central character whose point of view, evaluations and judgements are interspersed with the omniscient narrator's. What is interesting in the presentation of two perspectives is Callaghan's ability to introduce irony and thus disrupt the impersonal narrative. For instance, in *The Loved and the Lost*, most of the time during narration, it is Jim McAlpine's (James McAlpine) views and reactions to the characters and situations that are interlinked with the omniscient narration. It is the use of irony in such moments that alerts the readers to the self-consciousness of the narrative. In his first meeting with Peggy Sanderson, Jim discovers a peculiar kind of innocence in her: "He had an urge to protect the charming innocence he had discovered, but of course he had to conceal his feeling from Foley" (19). The irony is in "but of course," compelling the readers to notice the narrator's intrusion and ask why does Jim have to conceal his feelings from Foley? The omniscient narrator's personal view intrudes the direct narration (dialogues) as well as indirect reporting (narrative description). It results in ambiguity regarding many factors in the novel; one such factor is, Peggy is seen either through Jim's eyes for most of the time or
through other characters’ opinions surrounding her. For readers, views from both the sides seem suspicious as they are coloured by characters’ own prejudices, ideals and notions. Hence, Peggy remains as an elusive character in the novel, which leads John Orange to comment: “It would be clearer if we had an omniscient narrator to set the record straight, but we have seen already that the narrator purposefully adopts an ambiguous and ironic position on all of the crucial issues” (79). By making Jim another major narrative source along with the omniscient narrator, Callaghan avoids such rewards that realism in a novel offers: a perfect understanding of characters, truth, and reality. The shift in the narrative points of view and the use of irony distance the readers from an easy recognition with characters and situations.

One of the means by which Callaghan disrupts reality as something already established and in control, is by developing the rhetoric of centre/margin dichotomy either to subvert the centre or to show that the boundaries established will be transgressed. The previous chapter revealed the presence of the excluded sign within the included sign through the analysis of characters. The present chapter analyses the manipulation of urban space in Callaghan’s novels with a view to showing the movement from centre to margin and vice versa that causes disruption or dislocation of power and accepted order in an established society. Most of Callaghan’s novels begin with clearly marked areas in a city that categorize the people living in them. Gradually, during the course of the action, one or more characters belonging to the upper strata of society are drawn towards that part of the city and that group of people, which is thought to be marginal or existing on the periphery to constitute the boundary. Although the description of the urban space won Callaghan the recognition that he was the first Canadian urban
realist, it is significant to note that he is also the first Canadian novelist to create the polemics of centre/margin dichotomy through space in his novels not only to expose the ideology that controls the dichotomy, but also to subvert such an ideology.

*The Loved and the Lost* (1951) begins with a clear demarcation of two sections of the geographical space of Montreal:

Joseph Carver, the publisher of the Montreal *Sun*, lived on the mountain. Nearly all the rich families in Montreal lived on the mountain. It was always there to make them feel secure. At night it rose against the sky like a dark protective barrier behind a shimmering curtain of lights surmounted by a gleaming cross. . . . it was looming up like a great jagged brown hedge.

But the mountain is on the island in the river; so the river is always there too, and boat whistles echo all night along against the mountain. From the slope where Mr. Carver lived you could look down over the church steeples and monastery towers of the old French city spreading eastward from the harbor to the gleaming river. Those who wanted things to remain as they were liked the mountain. Those who wanted a change preferred the broad flowing river. But no one could forget either. (1)

One of the devices Callaghan uses incessantly in his novels is to establish the structural differences of the society through geographical borders: as seen in the above paragraph, mountain with a gleaming cross stands for constancy, material prosperity and religious authority; the river with boats signifies change and a threat to constancy of the mountain. The word ‘But’ after ‘the great brown hedge’ signifies that change is always predicted
and the narrator’s comment in the last line gives expression to the tension of awareness between constancy and change. From this dominant space of centre and periphery (mountain and river) emanate more hierarchical structures of differences within the city that intensify the tension.

Callaghan establishes the social setting in accordance with the geographical setting. Various ethnic groups—the polish Jew, Wolgast, Negroes such as Elton Wagstaff and Ronnie Wilson; Irishmen Foley, Doyle and Malone; the English Carvers, Fielding and Jackson; the French Canadians Gagnon and Bouchard; the Jewish gynaecologist named Sol Bloom; the half Scotch and half-French, Mrs. Agnew—all have their share of power within the stratified city. The hierarchy in social identity corresponds to the hierarchy in material prosperity among these ethnic groups. The mountain is a place where rich people live in rigid harmony created by material prosperity that gives them power over the other ethnic communities who live in the city down the mountain. Against the rigidity, stability and constancy signified by the mountain are the movement, flexibility and changes signified by the different categorized areas in the city.

With the occupation of geographical space comes the power associated with it. Joseph Carver and his daughter Catherine Carver like living in the Chateau apartment “high above the roofs of the houses sloping down to the railroad tracks and the canal. In the grey winter days when the clouds were low on the mountain the Chateau with its turrets and towers and courtyards looked like a massive stone fortress” (1-2). After a few pages, the narrator tells how rich people considered the location they occupied as their own: “It was her [Catherine’s] town, at least the small part of it that was not French” (5). In a French dominated city, the space that English Carvers occupy on the mountain
becomes important for their identity. The Sun building where Mr. Carver publishes his newspaper in competition with French language journals is another geographic space, which adds to the status of the Carvers. Mr. Carver is the patron in this building, and thinks a lot before appointing Jim who can be a threat to his patronizing attitude. Behind the veil of liberal humanism of Mr. Carver, Jim during his first visit to the building gets “a glimpse of an unfamiliar world of humiliating bondages” (31).

Territorialization of the city is associated with power and identity in the case of all characters. Streets divide the city into particular areas of power points and relegate others into marginality. The names of specific streets and areas that correspond to the “real” city of Montreal are used more for the purpose of classifying different areas within the fictional space of the novel. Streets and corners that connect different territories are manipulated for the purposes of showing the movement of power from one group to the other, and rupturing the boundaries. In many of Callaghan’s novels, streets are the signs of freedom as against the constricted space of the interiors in the urban world. His characters are found walking frequently on the streets for various reasons.

The two clubs, Wolgast’s Earbenders Club in the Chalet Restaurant near Dorchester and Wagstaffe’s Café at St. Antoine accentuate further the demarcation. Wolgast and Doyle own The Earbenders; the club is Wolgast’s pride, his “white horse,” a sign for his childhood ambition and dream of material prosperity. He feels secured and established in the space he occupies through the club—“he could accept or reject anyone who came to his place for a drink” (51). A Jew from Poland, he feels at ease with other well-established outsiders, but his hostility towards Montrealers is shown in the mocking caricatures of distinguished Montreal citizens on the walls of his club. The ethnic
differences of the people who get drunk in Wolgast’s bar are never forgotten; in fact, they keep making sly comments on one another, but they are well established and feel connected to each other in the physical space of the club they occupy. Although they are not as rich as the people on mountain, they are better settled than the Negroes. Catherine, however, disapproves Wolgast’s bar, “that awful Chalet Restaurant,” “a low-brow drinking place for men which represented, no doubt, a taste he [Jim McAlpine] had picked up in the war. She longed to sweep it out of his life, but as yet she couldn’t” (185). As Jim gets attracted to Peggy and distances himself from Catherine, she realizes her weak position and connects it to Chalet Restaurant: “But how much more unbearable that he should persist in having a place in his life where she could not enter” (185). Jim’s association with the place makes Catherine feel powerless in asserting her control and love over him.

The geographical area that Negroes occupy in the city suggests their minority, their poverty and hence their marginalized position in the city:

There weren’t many Negroes in Montreal, and those who were there lived between St. Antoine and the railroad tracks, with Mountain Street the base of a triangle, and the apex cutting east across Peel. They were mainly porters and red-caps and bus boys and entertainers. In their own small neighbourhood they took in one another’s washing and had three night clubs and the French liked them; but they couldn’t live in the good hotels or go into the select bars and knew it. There was never any trouble. (41)

The Negro nightclub in Café St. Antoine is after the “dark railway underpass,” and slightly up on the hill, but the street on which it is situated is “cut off short, the way
blocked by the enormous mountain barrier studded with gleaming lights" (57-58). The
demarcations are clear; so are the implied social boundaries. Among all the ethnic
communities that figure in the novel, Negroes form the marginalized group, not only
because they are poor, but also because they are denied access to select places. Whereas
the white ethnic groups have the privilege to visit the Negro Clubs, the same is denied to
the Negroes. It becomes transgression if anybody tries to disturb this mutual
understanding of social codes and system.

When Peggy brings her Negro friend to Wolgast's Chalet Restaurant, Wolgast's
position in the society is threatened. In an angry outburst with Jim, who is deeply
involved with Peggy by this time in the novel, he hints at resorting to violent methods to
prevent any such transgression and defilement: "She makes up her mind to select a spot
away from St. Antoine where she can drink with a jig. Why did she pick on my place
first?" (172); "If little Peggy walks in on me again with a jig I won't say anything to the
jig, understand? I won't insult the jig, because the jig won't be belittling me. But I'll
break the bottle and cut her with the jagged edge, and not even a jig will ever for her
again" (173). Transgression of physical space is closely related to the transgression of
established social pattern. In the clearly marked city, no one wants a transgressor to
demark or forget the boundaries. The ethnic communities are themselves marginalized
people in a French dominated city, but they do not question their marginalized position
until it is threatened by the more marginalized people than they are. The contemptuous
reference to Negroes as "jigs" in Wolgast's speech is an indication of the power his white
skin gives over the Negroes. Those who are established have formed their own codes and
norms, and do not want them to be violated. As Orange points out, "ethnocentric pride
employed individually to supply security and self-confidence for the Carvers, Wolgasts and Wagstaffs of the world” (25).

Chapter Nineteen presents ironically the paradox in Wolgast’s reaction to Peggy bringing a Negro. Being a Jew, he is not a welcome man in the French dominated society, and he does not hesitate to make fun of his Jewish identity with big clients. So are some French Canadians like Gagnon who do not mind joking about his race and others. The rich Jews have encroached Montreal on St. Catherine East and are hated by French Canadians for their prosperity. Wolgast is aware of this, but takes it as a sign of pride that French Canadians are jealous of Jews growing rich. Although uprooted from his home country, he has found a place of respect and hope in Montreal. But, he rejects Negroes “who couldn’t go anywhere else” coming to his bar just because he is a Jew.

It is significant that The Loved and the Lost questions the naturalized boundaries by setting the boundaries and conventions first, and then by subverting them. Men like Wolgast who count on material prosperity accept boundaries and naturalize them. But for Peggy boundaries are authoritative, artificial, deceptive, constructed and therefore, to be transgressed. For Jim, boundaries present contradictions and confusion. The contrast in their attitudes is presented in the narrator’s comment:

For Wolgast it was the city where his life could be easy and enlarge a little more every day in an atmosphere of pleasant tolerance. But for McAlpine it was a place that had always beguiled him; a rock of riches with poverty sprawling around the rock, and now a place that had inexplicably brought turmoil to his heart. (166)
Jim comes to Montreal to ride the “white horse” of his childhood days. No one is aware of the boundaries as he; for he was shut out of the hedge separating him from the big Havelock house when he was a small boy. As he waits outside for his absence to be noticed by the Havelock kids, Mrs. Havelock’s earlier question, “Who’s that boy?” comes back to his mind and he whispers fiercely, “Just wait. Just wait” (10). Orange points out that “His ambition to belong to the upper class set is motivated by revenge, not by any ideological design or even greed” (76). The desire to belong to the other side of the hedge, however, has ideological implications, as it shapes Jim’s life as an adult. He is perfectly aware of the place he wants to occupy in Montreal: the community on the mountain and Mr. Carver’s daily, The Sun in which he is supposed to write a column.

Jim’s movement down the mountain to where Peggy lives is like stepping down from the highest point in the city (mountain) to the lowest point (basement). Peggy lives in the basement house of a three-storied building on Crescent Street, the place suggesting a space lower than the ground level. The physical space Peggy occupies has a deeper suggestion to offer in the novel: it is even more a marginalized space than the Negroes. Her liking for Negroes is related to her childhood experience with the Negro family of six kids, the Johnsons. As the only motherless daughter of a Methodist minister in a town in Ontario on Georgian Bay, Peggy is attracted by the happiness that is always present in the Negro household and on one instance experiences a strange kind of happiness seeing one of the Negro kids naked at the bay. At an early age, she is aware of the malevolent nature of racial prejudice when her father refuses her to invite the Negro children to her birthday party. From the day of refusal to have Johnsons, Peggy begins to detest the set codes, norms, authority and boundaries. In Montreal she confines her social group to the
Negroes and the geographical space to St. Antoine, a few physically crippled or weak white men, and exceptionally, a man like Jim who is broad minded about Negroes. She is an “outcast” in her own community because of her association with the Negroes and her constant presence in the Negro clubs. It is her non-conformity in all matters that outrages both the white and the Negro communities. There are white girls in the city who go to Negro clubs and have affairs with the Negroes for some wild sensational satisfaction, and people are not against them, because they are just “tramps.” But Peggy is not a tramp; she presents an ideological problem both on social as well as gender-biased sexual matters. The opinion that emerges from those belonging to the Earbenders is that she is a low class woman going for the “niggers” or “dinges;” clearly, their contempt for Peggy is born out of sexual jealousy and frustration.

Jim’s obsession with Peggy leads him to follow her to the Negro club at Café St. Antoine. He fails in his first attempt to enter the Café, because the presence of mountain barrier at the foot of the street is overwhelming. It reminds him that “Everything he really wanted was up there on the mountain among those who had prestige, power, and influence” (58), and he refuses to go inside the Café. In his second successful attempt to enter the club, Jim is aware of the boundary he is crossing, but he wants to believe in his faith in Peggy: “the enchanting, peaceful, pure whiteness of the snowbound city strengthened his faith in Peggy. And he didn’t even look up at that black barrier of the mountain. In the snowstorm he could hardly see it. He didn’t want to see it” (67). By entering Peggy’s house first, and then her constant hang out, the Negro Café, Jim thinks he can get into Peggy’s life and understand what it stands for. He falls in love with her, and also manages to do his writing at Peggy’s place when she is away on work. But he
does not forget the boundaries; in fact, he tries to bring Peggy back within the boundary that she rejected long ago: “He had wormed his way into the room, he would worm his way into her life and into her heart and take her life into his” (156). Jim’s growing intimacy and power in his relationship with Peggy is related to spending more time in the cellar as is Catherine’s frustration in imagining his distance from the mountain and his closeness to Chalet Restaurant.

That stratification of the city, associated with the stratification of power and authority, is reinforced in Chapter Twenty when Jim and Catherine are at the Forum to watch a hockey game. The structure of the stadium is a miniature version of Montreal: the arena where the game is played is a white space with ice; and the rows surrounding it black filled with rich people from Westmount, French Outremont and the Jews from St. Catherine, and a few Negroes from St. Anotine in cheap seats. But the stadium does not have very poor people, because they cannot afford to go to hockey games. Jim, in his imagination, draws parallels between the structure of the stadium and the structure of the city that points at Peggy’s (also his because of his love for her) outlaw position. He imagines both of them being washed over by “the sea of faces” around him (178). Just when the game is making a beautiful pattern on the arena, a player breaks the rule and assumes an innocent air that drives the whole audience go crazy with anger. Their fury shocks Jim, because he draws its implication for Peggy’s situation: “A beautiful pattern. Anything that breaks the pattern is bad. And Peggy breaks up the pattern” (179). The implication of this scene and Jim’s awareness of the impending danger in Peggy’s life are significant, because at the end Peggy is made to pay a higher price than the player who broke the pattern: she is raped and killed in her room.
Throughout the novel Callaghan uses antithetical sets of images to enforce binary oppositions in the world circumscribed by the novel: mountain/river, dark/light, up/down, black/white, inside/outside, male/female, hedge/beach, sun/moon. His aim is not to resolve the opposition but to expose ironically the tension and ambiguity inherent in such divisions. The final café brawl at St.Antoine (Chapter 23) lets a passage for the eruption of this tension when all the members of Earbenders Club visit the Negro Café St.Antoine to listen to a female black singer. Having once been rejected by Peggy, Walter Malone makes odd movements towards Peggy, and hits the black waiter who stops him. Ronnie Wilson, the trumpet player joins them and knocks off Malone. The crucial moment in the brawl is when Malone is on the ground circled by a small group of people, Jim outside the circle, waiting to drag Peggy out:

There was a moment of silence. Nobody moved. Everybody waited. This was the dreadful moment McAlpine had been anticipating ever since the first night he had come there; he felt a strange exultation and he stiffened, ready to leap to her side, but he had the sense to wait and not break that silence with a violent gesture. He wanted to get Peggy quietly out of the café. Even one body lurching against another might break that strained silence. (208)

The moment described in short, clipped sentences in the passage heightens the tension and is analogous to the situation in the city. The moment is broken when a young Negro tries to help Peggy come out of that place and Malone strikes him. The first waiter, the young Negro, and his three colleagues jump at Malone and hit him. None of the white men sympathizes with Malone and is embarrassed to save him until the waiter puts his
boots to Malone’s head on the floor. Callaghan describes ironically the reaction of a white man who joins the fight and makes it a fight between the whites and the blacks:

A powerfully built white man, a truck driver who had been watching doubtfully, aware that his white pride and superiority were involved, shouted, “They got him down and kicked him!” His own moral problem had been settled. “Are we going to take that?” (209)

The irony is in the sentence “His own moral problem had been settled”: the morality of saving a white man is restricted, because it was Malone who started it; but a black man kicking a white man does not present any moral problem. The brawl that follows is narrated comically, but the seriousness of the situation is not lost when Malone openly accuses Peggy for being the cause behind everything. Others who have hidden their vehemence against Peggy join Malone in putting the blame on her.

Behind Malone’s accusation is his insulted male ego, because Peggy refuses his sexual advances; behind Mrs. Wilson’s scream, “No good trash, no good trash” (211) is her sexual jealousy, because Wilson is friendly with Peggy; behind Wolgast’s judgement, “She’s a troublemaker,” “a fist-class troublemaker” (211) is the threat he feels from Peggy to his Restaurant; behind Wagstaffe’s final banishment “Get out of here!” (211) is his concern to save his night club. People belonging to all the strata of the society resent Peggy, because she poses a threat to their order.

Peggy is raped and killed in her house in the basement the night the café brawl takes place. Callaghan deliberately leaves the question, “who is the murderer?” open. But the final action heightens the irony that is present throughout the novel: Peggy may be destroyed to preserve the boundaries, but the contradictions she exposes will remain
within the system even when they are unacknowledged. The Negro waiter feels that he has a right to prevent Malone from insulting Peggy, because it is his café, his sanctioned area in the city. Wagstaff openly banishes a white woman like Peggy for the same reason. What people such as Wolgast consider marginal is not marginal at all. A white man in the marginalized area of blacks is as much under their control as is a black man in the white city. It is the occupation of space that gives them authority and power.

The space between the centre and margin is the deconstructive space that provides for new possibilities of subversion. In making everybody displaced from their assumed authority and power, if only provisionally, Callaghan does not resolve the contradictions, but presents them even more acutely. Jim moves down the mountain to be with Peggy, but he loses her because of his own lack of confidence in her; Peggy undergoes double displacement—first, by rejecting the social status of her father’s world, and second, by being expelled from the Negro café; Carvers are forced to come to the police station, driven by their conscientiousness to give evidence against Jim. But there are no permanent resolutions; Callaghan frustrates “Our ‘natural’ (that is, humanist) tendency to want to resolve difference into unity or to absorb the margin into the centre” (Hutcheon 11). This is directly against the realist tradition where the contradictions are resolved, tension diffused and everything put back into the place. The novel ends, with Jim still searching for the little old church he visited with Peggy in the “strong morning sunlight” thus indicating that the quest is never over. The little old church becomes an elusive symbol for the place without contradictions, tensions and boundaries.

The ambiguity inherent in Canadian culture is present in Peggy: she is both inside a dominant culture (daughter of a Methodist minister) and outside it (a rebel and a Negro
friend), what Linda Hutcheon calls “marginal ex-centric” (Hutcheon 4). Hutcheon uses this term to describe postmodern paradoxes shaped by Canadian history: the margin is “the place where the centre is paradoxically both acknowledged and challenged” (4). She finds this paradox in Canada’s major historical figures like Louis Riel who can be “an archetypal marginal ex-centric, both inside a dominant culture (French-speaking and church-educated) and outside it (Metis and a renegade rebel)” (4). Canadian history, in the words of Hutcheon, “is one of defining itself against centres” (4). Peggy presents the ambiguity of another duality that is so characteristic of all cultures: male/female. Except McAlpine, all the other characters in the novel hate Peggy’s sexual non-submissiveness, which, coupled with her “marginal ex-centric” impulses confuse them. Callaghan’s allusion to other historical, fictional and mythical characters—St. Joan in Bernard Shaw’s play, Eurydice of Greek mythology—further heighten the irony of the situation. The inability of characters, both male as well as female, to decide whether she is a saint or a lost woman is largely due to their inability to understand Peggy’s “marginal ex-centric position.” The cultural codes of the society have not yet been able to articulate this position and therefore feel a threatening force in Peggy. The whites from the Earbenders, with their frustrated attempts to conquer Peggy sexually conclude that she goes for “dark meat” (146). The Negroes cannot understand Peggy’s attention and affection towards them, because she does not enter into relationship with any of them. We, as readers, know that Peggy is gradually attracted towards Jim, but Jim himself doubts her final approval of him at a crucial point. The irony is at its highest degree when Callaghan keeps the identity of Peggy’s murderer unknown at the end of the novel. By keeping all
the characters (even readers) in dark Callaghan also subverts the conventions of detective novel that he follows subtly in this novel.

To move from Callaghan’s *The Loved and the Lost* to *A Fine and Private Place* (1975) is to discover even more a radical subversion of realist conventions. The dominant realist precept that art is a transparent window onto reality as well as to some transcendental truth are problematized in this self-reflexive novel in the relationship between Eugene Shore, a writer in Toronto, Al Delaney, a graduate student, and his girlfriend Lisa Tolen, a researcher at television stations. Callaghan’s disguise as Eugene Shore in the novel is deliberately established through many factors related to his life and works. Shore lives with his wife in utter privacy in an affluent neighbourhood in the city, and nobody knows what he does for his living. Throughout the novel many characters (including Al Delaney) ponder over the source of income for Shore’s luxurious life, but it remains a mystery until the end of the novel. The only work that he does in the novel is “to write,” which has a direct implication to Callaghan’s stubborn adherence to writing career even at a time when he did not have money. Shore’s early critics—Wyndham Lewis, William Saroyan, Sinclair Lewis, Alfred Kazin—are Callaghan’s critics too. Shore’s style, “unadorned and colloquial” (65) is also analogous to the description of Callaghan’s style in his early novels. The character of Eugene Shore, however, is entirely a fictional construct. The novel acts out the distance between fiction and reality in Delaney’s attempt to analyse Shore’s fiction through his close observation of Shore’s life. Just as Delaney’s attempt fails in the novel, so are reader’s attempts to see Shore as Callaghan.
The novel is also concerned with the aspects of performance such as role-playing, spectacle, masks, as well as scenes of inquest which are acted out within the textualized narrative. Delaney imagines the characters from Shore's novels as clowns performing in a circus that emphasizes the close relationship between act of representation and performance of representation. His constant wandering on the streets where he sees characters from Shore's fiction establishes the realist concern with referentiality and its subversive need for performance. Another important concern of the novel is with the self-consciousness of the characters in relation to their individuality. The novel destroys the illusion of wholeness, since characters refuse to be understood completely and want to remain as mysterious. Delaney's disappointment when he discovers that there is nothing more to discover in Lisa and Lisa's refusal to be analyzed in pieces are indications of a new understanding of human being as a signifier who signifies various meanings until, and even after his/her death. The roles such as reader and writer, and the creation of an artistic work are examined with a view to undermining the realist belief in a direct link between fiction and life. At the end of the novel, Shore expresses his wish to transform the real life (for readers it is fictional) incident—the inquest on Jason Dunsford shooting Juan Gonzalez—to get the public sympathy by manipulating the point of view in his story. What seems true for Shore does not seem true for the police officer, Jason Dunsford. The novel is self-conscious of the manipulative powers of writing, and the manipulation is conceived of as a kind of play. It foreshadows the indeterminacy of meaning in a text, as the text offers multiple interpretations.

For a number of critics, *A Fine and Private Place* is Callaghan's answer to the criticism of his works. Brandon Conron assesses the novel as: "an ingenious roman a
clef, an unashamed defence of his [Callaghan’s] narrative technique, a scathing and often hilarious rebuke to academically hidebound critics who respond analytically rather than emotionally to his imaginative creations” (6). Conron’s criticism is marked by referentiality; he seeks a direct connection between fictional assertions and Callaghan himself, thereby missing the irony that runs through the novel. By writing a self-reflexive novel, Callaghan is not trying to assert his own novels or rebuking the treatment he met at some critics’ hands but is probing into the nature of relationship between art and life. Art is not a reflection of life, but creates its own world for various purposes. Although many actual life incidents, conventions, codes get into the literary work, they ultimately serve to build a different world which is open to readers; readers are invited to make or find their own “truths,” if that is what they are searching for in a work. Ultimately, a literary work allows both the writer and the reader to construct out of the work their own realities and truths intervened by the codes, conventions, and culture that have shaped their thinking.

Delaney meets and becomes obsessed with Shore, the Toronto novelist who is appreciated abroad but not in Canada. He switches from his graduate dissertation on Norman Mailer to a dissertation on Shore’s works, because he is intrigued by some kind of mystery in them. In particular, Delaney wants to understand and analyse a strange effect that is achieved by Shore’s novels. He devises two methods to understand Shore’s works: by understanding the author; and by imagining the scenes and characters in his wanderings around the locales described in his novels. These two methods correspond to the two prominent methods of realist criticism: biographical association and referential authenticity. The significance of the novel lies in the fact that both the methods are
proved unsuccessful to understand the literary works of Shore. A careful examination of the novel reveals its self-reflexive concerns rather than as what some critics (such as Conron, Barbara Amiel, etc) describe as Callaghan’s attempt to draw attention to the significance of his work. Such critics obviously take the bait that Callaghan throws in the novel by deliberately making Shore his fictional counterpart—the themes of Shore’s novels discussed in the novel, the critics mentioned, and the strange anonymity of Shore in the city where he lives, all correspond to Callaghan’s writerly oeuvre. The novel, however, as Orange describes it, is:

His [Callaghan’s] version of the post-modern trend to write about writing itself. Callaghan concocted an elaborate self-reflexive novel about a novelist very much like himself under scrutiny by a graduate student who is studying his work. It can even be read as a send-up of postmodernist literary assertions. (33)

Although Orange labels the novel as self-reflexive, because it is about writing, the self-reflexivity emerges more from undermining the realist conventions by situating itself within those conventions.

Callaghan creates levels of fiction and reality in this novel: Delaney’s study of Shore’s fictional works is related to his relationship with Lisa and Shore in real life; for readers all the characters and incidents in *A Fine and Private Place* are fictional constructs and the characters within Shore’s fiction present one more level of fiction within fiction. Delaney’s obsession in finding a direct link between Shore’s life and his fictional works prevents readers from undertaking a similar search since Shore and his works are deliberately made fictional counterparts to Callaghan and his novels. Delaney’s
defect in confusing reality (which for the reader is fiction) with fiction is highlighted early in the novel. His fascination with Lisa and his curiosity to understand her completely is analogous to the methods he uses to analyse Shore's novels. Delaney is attracted to Lisa by a strange kind of effect she has on him; he thinks it is because of a sense of assurance in her—"a girl who could give him this sudden sense of harmony—surely she had some view of her own life" (28). He thinks he can measure the effect she has on him with all his academic training:

He knew he had always been good at measuring the achieved effects of painters and writers. Information. Get all the information. He has the tool he trusted: analysis. He had never had any patience with mysteries. Everything could be explained. That’s why he kept his journal, his notes about himself. All his training made him reject mysteries. (28)

Delaney's conviction that everything could be explained through proper methods relies on the existence of an absolute truth in human beings as well as in artistic works. Lisa, however, refuses to be analysed like a book that is dissected into parts and each part explained in detail. She wants to be accepted for what she is—with all the mysteriousness of a human being whose meaning cannot be fixed forever. The passionate and intimate relationship between Delaney and Lisa is tinkered by such slippery moments of grasping the meaning, yet hinting at more meanings to come. The conflict is heightened and problematized when Shore enters their lives.

Starkey Kunitz, the internationally acclaimed critic writes an elaborate essay on Shore's works in *New York Review of Books* and belittles Shore's hometown for being ignorant of a unique writer like Eugene Shore. Delaney, who had always thought of
himself to be a Champion in academic matters, is shocked that a critic such as Kunitz makes a big issue of Shore whom Delaney had thought to be an insignificant writer. His shock turns out to be a deep discontent when Lisa mocks at him and his friends' confidence that they knew everything that went on in academics. From this point onwards in the novel, Delaney feels less sure of himself and begins to suspect that he has not understood Lisa at all. They try to escape the monotony of their lives and the little discord raised by Shore's entry in a short trip to Europe.

The trip to Europe brings out the contrast in Delaney's and Lisa's ways of perceiving things. Delaney is stimulated by the ancient city that could be placed properly in his mind; his imagination and his remarkable textbook knowledge make the ancient city of Rome come alive during his visit. He acts like a ringmaster (as Lisa thinks later in the novel) who could place the figures in his head with the remnants in Rome. But Lisa likes "the new Rome, the living people, the Via Condotti and the Corso" (56). He acts like a realist who matches the information from books with the objects in reality. His confidence in direct relationship between texts and the external world, however, breaks when he tries to come to grip with Shore's novels in a similar fashion. Lisa feels neglected when Delaney gets lost in the ancient city; it is the second moment of resentment between them as Liisa is for life with its infinite signification and Delaney is for bygone history and the ordered world. One night, in their hotel room, looking at Lisa, Delaney feels the ordinariness of their lives together:

The roguish gesture with her leg and her smile: it was familiar, expected.
They were now just another man and woman in a hotel room, who after a day of bickering, made love and felt a little better. All open to each other,
Lisa now all open to him. Her shadows were all gone and with her shadows, the secret places. (60)

Delaney is frightened by his thoughts and tries to hold onto something challenging in her personality that had drawn him towards her. Delaney reveals a paradox that is present in the realist approach: he wants to analyse and understand Lisa, yet at the same time, expects a kind of mystery to exist in her personality. Delaney's involvement with Lisa is strongly related to her being a challenging personality to his intellectual power of analysis. He feels empty in his heart when he gets a glimpse of ordinariness in Lisa's nature.

Both Delaney and Lisa meet Marcus Stevens in Rome, a well-known American poet and scholar who brings difference of opinion between Lisa and Delaney to open. Marcus refers to Shore and expresses a great reverence for a remarkable quality in his works. Delaney resents Shore's re-entry into his life, which is a reminder of Lisa's earlier suggestion that he could work on Shore rather than on Norman Mailer. He hates Shore, because he is not only an insignificant writer in the academics but is also unknown to him.

During their return trip, Delaney reads a book of Shore on the plane and discovers that despite a simple style (which he criticizes at first) the story achieves a strange and gripping effect. On returning home, Delaney goes to a publisher and gets a contract for a short book on Shore. His overconfidence makes him think that he can finish the book on Shore fast and then can take up Mailer, whereby he will have two works to his credit. His first attempt to understand Shore's works is based on academic training: "He [Delaney] had the tools. He sought out the themes, archetypal figures, traces of old myths, and
interesting ambiguities” (75). One night, he discovers that nothing he wrote for weeks explains anything about the effect Shore’s work had on him. He sees that he is trapped by scholarly training and “no matter where heroamed now, he would have his albatross—Dr. Morton Hyland—perched on his neck the rest of his life. The tool case. Goddamned tools that didn’t work” (76). He is aware, for the first time, that there are things beautiful that cannot be explained and is struck by their mysterious power. He looks into the page of his journal that has the heading “Lisa” and is relieved that nothing has been written on that page. By leaving the page blank, Delaney thinks, “he had let something be. Let Lisa be” (77). Now, Delaney becomes a prey to the other extreme of analytical method; he becomes obsessed with mysteriousness that need not be explained.

Delaney wanders in the neighbourhood that is described in Shore’s novels and tries to see his fictional characters in the people he encounters in the streets. The correlation between real life and fiction gives him new insights that Shore creates a subversive world in his novels. Shore’s marginal characters—hookers, robbers and thieves—are all lawbreakers, but with a new grandeur that makes them larger than life figures. He considers these impressions new vistas opening up, even though he is not sure of his responses. To Lisa’s alarm, Delaney, now, is not interested in finishing his book on Shore, but is proceeding from one impression to another. A position at the university can be Delaney’s, if he submits his dissertation sooner, but Delaney becomes engrossed in Shore’s novels to the extent that he forgets the concerns of his life. He thinks that he can bring the book to an end only after he knows some details from Shore’s life. From this point onwards begins what will become the central concern of the novel: the need for biographical information of a writer to understand his works. In making Delaney eager
for biographical information about Shore, and exposing its obsessive nature, Callaghan subverts readers’ expectations of similar concerns in his novel.

In the triangular relationship that involves the lives of Delany, Shore, and Lisa, Callaghan dramatizes both the biographical criticism and the problematic nature of representing reality in fiction. Shore has kept his personal life private and does not even encourage interviews when Kunitz writes a controversial article on his works. Upon Lisa’s request he agrees to see Delaney and becomes interested in what Delaney has to say about his works. Throughout their relationship, however, Shore never gives his opinion about his works, and insists on leaving it open to the readers. Like a realist critic, Al searches during their conversation for biographical details that could enlighten him about Shore’s characters. The questions he asks within himself reflect his strong adherence to see the writer’s work as reflecting his life:

Why do these strange criminal minds fascinate you? What happened in some dark corner of your life? Was it something you regret bitterly not having done? Something that happened when you were young? A crime—a criminal very close to you? A violent, heart-breaking death? Was it around here? I’ve got it right, haven’t I? (93)

The narrator’s comment soon after the above interior monologue, “But he dreaded being answered; he had to believe with all his heart in his insight” subtly reveals Delaney’s fear of being dominated by Shore’s views if he answers. His enquiries about criminality, law and freedom lead Shore to comment that Delaney likes criminals—hinting that whatever Delaney makes out of his works will be his perspective. Delaney’s insistence on extracting biographical details from Shore and Shore’s refusal to give his opinion on his
works becomes a kind of play where readers are like spectators watching the indeterminacy of meaning in life as well as in art. The following conversation enacts such indeterminacy and exposes the folly of the critic (in Delaney) who thinks that the author is the supreme source of knowledge for his work:

“There’s this one big difference,” Al said, “You make me look at my own life. The more I read you, the more life becomes a mystification.”

“And the more I look at life,” Mr. Shore said, shrugging, “the more of a mystification it becomes to me.”

“No,” Al said bluntly. “It’s held together for you.”

“It is?” (93)

Whereas Delaney believes in writer’s supreme knowledge, Shore implies the indeterminacy of meaning in life, and therefore, the same indeterminacy in art. It is significant that Delaney does not feel confident enough to finish his work until Shore’s death. His strong belief in a transcendental relationship between the author’s life and his works prevents him from doing so. As long as Shore is alive, Delaney struggles to come to grip with Shore’s view of life that could have been reflected in his novels.

Delaney’s obsession with Shore’s life leads him to question the existence of Lisa:

“Why should a work ever be finished? While a thing is unfinished, it is alive. That is exciting. Einstein said his theories were unfinished. Maybe I know this intuitively. Yet in all this, where is Lisa? . . .” (155). Interestingly, Callaghan brings out the contrast in the approaches that both Lisa and Al take regarding Shore and his works. Lisa considers Shore a human being like herself and is not baffled (like Delaney) by his role as an “author.” Upset as she is by Delaney’s inability to bring the work to an end, she
undertakes to chart out an outline herself: “She sat back for a moment, elated by a sudden sense of distance from the material; this was always how she was at her best at work, when, with that curious sense of removal you found that you were more in touch with the shape, the outline, the way a thing should be organized” (156). Both Delaney and Lisa represent two extreme approaches to a body of literary work: Delaney has moved from his New Critical approach to a realist approach; Lisa even though acts like an editor in arranging Als’ critical views, takes a detached view that is missing in Al’s approach. She even imagines a scene where Shore is completely extinguished from his superior position as an author. The novel once again stresses on performance as an important feature in deciding the role of writer, critic and reader. In her imagination Lisa plays with Shore: he is rebuked by the mayor for his subversive work and is seen as going “miles away, miles and miles away, smiling his little bemused smile, the figure getting smaller, fading, then vanishing. Gone, gone” (155). The rejection of authority of a writer on his work helps Lisa bring the work under a framework. The significance of the novel lies not only in exposing the constraints of a subjective approach but also in enacting the dilemma a critic experiences in deciding between the acts of creation and criticism.

With Shore’s death, Delaney finds a pattern for his work; he is not worried now about the right approach that matches with the author’s. Whereas he thinks he understands Shore’s perspective, we as readers know that the perspective is his own, because Shore hardly reveals his views on his works. To Delaney, Shore becomes a signifier that signifies infinitely when he is alive, and therefore, puts him in uncertainty. Physical death, at least, frees Delaney from the fear of wrong interpretation of Shore’s works. He understands the unpredictability, endless signification and mysteriousness of
life and art at its best. Now he changes from the role of a reader or a critic to that of a creator:

It's true that you can make anything you want to make out of a foot or a face or anything that gets into your imagination. If a thing is big enough and always changing, you look at it once, you make one thing out of it, another thing at another time, eh? It's life, isn't it? Life is big enough and mysterious enough and bewildering enough and there are no final answers about it. None at all. Only questions. So you can make absolutely anything you want to make out of life. (236).

Delaney's perception of life comes closer to the post-structuralist belief in the ever-changing nature of signifiers in life. Delaney is stimulated by his discovery and thinks that he will be, at last, the creator of his work, and need not be dependent on Shore. Lisa's angry response to the above statement by Delaney further warns him of assuming "authority" and re-emphasizes the unpredictability of a human being in place of a definable human essence. She redefines Delaney's perception by saying that what he makes out of anybody need not be true of that person:

I'm not a body of work you can put away for a while, then come back to and look at. That's alright for Shore, and maybe it's the way you should have felt about his work all along, but I'm alive. You said to me, 'What are you, anyway?' As if I could ever tell you! As if anyone could ever tell you! And if they could, I'd be dead. And you don't seem to understand that what you make of me may have nothing to do with what I am. I don't know whether you'd have the courage to take me just as I am—. (236)
Lisa's views reflect the self-consciousness of the characters, which is the crux of the novel: a man or a woman is like a sign who signifies infinitely, and the day the complete meaning of a human being is known, the sign will be dead; the identity of a human being is never definable completely, and thus the notion of *authorship* in the real sense of the term is a myth. Lisa's objection to be treated like a body of work (which is also capable of signifying indefinitely) is related to the fear of fixing a definite meaning to a work. On the surface level of reading, the novel gives the impression that it is about the profound influence Shore's works have on Delaney, because they are about reality and truth. The above revelations and self-conscious moments in the novel, however, subvert the twin notions of realism: that reality is tangible and that truth is absolute and knowable.

The scene of inquest, at the end of the novel, stresses the aspects of theatrical representation as essential to fiction. Like a postmodern novel, *A Fine and Private Place* textualizes its own indeterminacy of representation as well as meaning. This scene is concerned with aspects of performance such as role-playing, spectacle, staging and a different vocabulary from the rest of the narrative. It also, in a metafictional fashion, expresses its belief in the reactivating and resurrecting capacity of the process of reading. Jason Dunsford kills Juan Gonzalez, a Panama boy for the mistaken identity of a robber. Although Dunsford's act is questionable, the police inspector, Mallory and the deputy chief, Gotlieb take surface level evidence about the circumstance so that they can save Dunsford by merely holding an inquest instead of an inquiry. Both Delaney and Shore attend the inquest, because they have already encountered Jason on a snowy night and have disliked him for his authoritative dominance. Delaney is particularly interested in observing Shore's reaction to the whole scene, as Shore continuously exposes the
contradictions inherent in Institutional systems like law, police, and religion in his novels. Callaghan builds up the atmosphere and the scene with theatrical dexterity; the narrative description is enriched with irony. The coroner with his jurymen are described as fruits from the same vine, “all scrupulously clean, all gravely earnest about their job, all determined to have a clean conscience to the best of their abilities; and they all looked like property-owners” (191). The irony in the description heightens at the end of the inquest when the jury is at the mercy of the coroner’s role to uphold law and authority and hide their “clean conscience.” The focus of the scene is on the proceedings of the inquest that is performed rather than being narrated. The ironical description of the formalities that are observed in the courtroom brings out the detachment and aloofness in the authoritative figures regarding what is the actual cause behind shooting. The inquest is more to uphold law and order than imparting justice. Dunsford is rather compelled than threatened to kill the boy, but the coroner and his jury declare the act as an “inadvertent” death.

The crux of the scene is the exchange between Delaney and Shore after the verdict is passed. Delaney’s question, “Mr. Shore, I don’t see how you can write this story” and his doubt that “nobody will want to print that” prompt Shore to talk about the process of writing:

I’ am sure they’ll print it and just as I write it . . . As long as it isn’t libelous, and I’m very good at avoiding libel. . . . I have a picture in my head right now. Shadows. The inquest, a place in the shadows. Masked men waiting in the shadows. The cop and his pals, just eyes above the masks. The coroner in a mask and the jurymen and that bland lawyer, too.
The only face that isn’t masked is the mother’s—all ancient human suffering mirrored in her face as the mask men peer at her. (207)

The discursive context of the text is made explicit in this scene. By making a writer witness a “real” incident and by recording his reaction to it, Callaghan is exposing the self-consciousness of writing as a process than as a product. It is relevant to note Hutcheon’s views on the complex ‘discursive’ situation of literature in the postmodern context: “By this [discursive situation] I mean that the ‘discourse’ of literature consists of a situation wherein the writer, the reader, and the text meet within an entire historical, social, and political, as well as literary, context” (16). Readers are made to see that although real life incidents become the source of inspiration for fiction, they will be transformed in the process of writing. Shore’s belief in the capacity of language for such a transformation confirms the post-structuralist view that language creates its own reality.

The reference to mask highlights role-playing, performance and subversive intention as prominent features of fiction. In Shore’s fiction, he self-consciously projects authoritative figures as masked men, because they merely play their roles. The mother’s face is unmasked; for she is aware of and accepts the contradictions inherent in the system; she knows that law and justice are two different things. Shore is quickened and moved when Mrs. Gonzalez, Juan’s mother says, “I know about the law. Tony does not understand that justice is somewhere else” (209). Shore, who is a mere observer until then, is drawn towards the contradiction that such an insignificant woman as Mr. Gonzalez exposes. This is why, she is unmasked amidst the role-playing servants of the Law, which tries to hide contradictions to suit its own ideology.
Mrs. Gonzalez is not only poor but also a marginalized figure because of her ethnic minority. Inspector Mallory is relieved to know that Juan Gonzalez was a Panamanian: “Not enough of them around to make trouble. Thank God” (143). Mallory’s relief is a clear indication of the powerlessness of ethnic minorities in the society Callaghan depicts. There are not enough Panamanians even to raise a fund for the civil proceedings of the case that could bring the charge of manslaughter on Dunsford. In such a situation, Shore comes forward to do a story on the whole incident, because he has found a way to express the situation: reveal the contradictions in fixed meanings of the signs that the authority sets in a society. Whereas the implicit meaning of law is justice, in a society full of hierarchies, the sign is split, and exposed of its contradictions. Shore’s conviction that writing is the best medium to expose such contradictions is a clear indication of the power of language to create its own reality. He tells Robertson Dunston, the lawyer who argues for the Gonzalez family that when his story is printed, “what happened here won’t be so easily ignored in this town. And I think you’ll find that more people than can fill a lunch counter will want to help out” (210). Shore’s statement reveals the contradiction between reality and fiction: whereas reality of the courtroom scene is against Mrs. Gonzalez, Shore’s story born out of that incident will be in favour of Mrs. Gonzalez. Paradoxically, Shore, as a writer is aware of the distance between reality and fiction, yet the necessity of acting within the real situation. Like postmodern novels *A Fine and Private Place* acts out the resistant activity within a system while being in it. The introduction of trial scenes or scenes of interrogation in many of the novels serves significant purposes: it reinforces the idea of art as performance; exposes ironically the contradiction of one of culture’s dominant discourses—law and order; and
distances readers from closely identifying with the scenes and people of the novel by
drawing attention to the mixture of two genres—law and novel.

With the analysis of self-conscious and self-reflexive moments, interspersion of
genres, theatrical elements, the oppositions—reality and illusion, and the employment of
space as structural component of the narrative, the chapter has analysed how Callaghan's
fiction subvert the realist conventions by installing the same conventions. The
examination of codes, conventions, and ideologies in the construction of diametrically
opposed signs in the previous chapter, and the exploration of centre/margin dichotomy in
the present chapter disrupt the notions of character as individual and fiction as the
transcription of reality. The implication of these significant observations in Callaghan's
fiction prompts us to examine another important aspect in the next chapter—identity, the
conception of which undergoes radical changes in Callaghan's fiction.