Chapter – III

Oppression in Academic Institutions in *Three Desks*

James Reaney's *Three Desks* was published in 1928. It was first performed on 3rd February 1967 by the London Little Theatre and the Grand Theatre, in London Ontario. Men are competing with each other for the acquisition of Wealth and power in the postmodern era. Power politics and personality conflict have become the fashionable themes for the postmodern writer James Reaney. The University professor is not an exception to be fascinated by these current subjects that attract the attention of the readers and audience. If a drama has these themes the theatre becomes a place of battlefield.

*Three Desks* presents the unpleasant and envious atmosphere prevailing in a college in the department of English because of the academic conflict and controversy between the two professors who fight against each other for their place in the department. The professors who are supposed to be the role models to the student’s community lose their self-respect among the students and they are reduced to the lower state which is worse than a layman.

*Three Desk* is fascinating in several ways. It is the only one of Reaney's play that was generated by the Manitoba experience. The plot stems from a famous Manitoba academic anecdote that was nearly when Reaney arrived there in 1949. The play's central acting area is office 101 of the long gone down town temporary buildings of the University of Manitoba where a fierce battle is waged between forces of education.
Reaney developed a contrapuntal action that moves the audience's attention from the office and its inhabitants to the school world composed of the young folk. The activities of the College Glee Club are presented with lively scenes on the stage. The activities of the Glee Club like rehearsing songs, writing exams, arguing and making love are fantastically presented on the stage with maximum excitement.

There is a great contrast between office 101 and the Glee Club. Office 101 represents the world of teachers and the Glee Club represents the world of students. Reaney presents the students world with friendship, love and compromise. This world of young folk is contrasted with the adult world of teachers, which is jealous, cruel, cunning, malicious, envious and revengeful. The University professors who are to be respected by the society become laughing stocks to the society because of their indecent behaviour and inhuman attitude.

Reaney had bitter experience when he taught in Manitoba after the II world war. He became annoyed with the unpleasant atmosphere regarding the academic jealousy and controversies among the University professors. This annoyance and displeasure made him give a dramatic presentation of *Three Desks*. Hence the play *Three Desks* reflects Reaney's own experience against the limitations of the teaching community. It codifies the moral codes, behaviours and responsibilities of the renowned professors of the Universities.

The first Act starts with the songs at the Glee Club. There are three major characters in the play Dr. Jacob Waterman, Professor Max Niles and Mr. Edward Durelle. The other two staff members are Miss Mia Dubrovnic and Mr. Sandy Mcwhin, The students who play the minor roles in the play are thirteen in number. The play is written in two Acts with nine scenes.
The action takes place in a small liberal Arts College (Rupert Stand College in a prairie Town) Dr. Jacob Watson is the senior most faculty member in the Department of English. Professor Maxilian Niles and Edward Durelle occupy the second and third place in the Department. From beginning to end, there has been power conflict and personality clash between Dr. Jacob Waterman and Maxilian Niles. The academic problem between the two professors becomes serious and obvious when Edward Durelle joins as a lecturer in the Department.

The problem is about the place of their desks in the department. As Jacob Watson is the senior most professors in the department, he puts his desk near a window. After Nile's entry to the department, he wants to place his desk in the place of Jacob Waterman. Hence, during the absence of Jacob, Niles moves his desk to the place of Jacob. On seeing the change Jacob moves his desk and replaces it in his place. It is quite silly and ironic that the reputed scholars of the renowned College are fighting against each other for their places in the department. This conflict between the two professors becomes a perennial problem.

Apart from his place problem, in other academic affairs, always there is fretting and fuming between them. Edward is a youngster and an ideal lecturer. Though he is young, energetic, and enthusiastic and a man of noble ideals he becomes displeased with the unpleasant academic atmosphere in the department. Though Dr. Jacob is the senior, Niles becomes the head of the department by 'hook or crook' methods. Edward, an ideal person, suffers in the cruel hands of a dictatorial and tyrannical head. When the principal is going to retire, Mr. Niles is selected for the post.
By making use of his power, Niles ill-treats his subordinates. Unable to tolerate the atrocities of Niles, Jacob strangulates him. In the modern materialistic society, man's mind is attracted and dominated by power supremacy and luxuries, Reaney, in the play *Three Desks* deals with the postmodern problem of power conflict between and among the academicians in various institutions.

Oppressive attitude becomes the root cause for power conflict. The oppressive attitude of Mr. Niles makes him overtakes the seniority of Dr. Jacob. Academic Justice and order is violated when Mr. Niles becomes the head of the department by suppressing and neglecting the seniority of Dr. Jacob Waterman. When academic justice and order is violated, it paves way for a tragedy. The tragedy happens because of Niles ambitious aspiration for academic power.

With the cruel weapon of his power, Niles suppresses both his senior and junior. As an unlawful and injusticious head, Niles suppresses the individual freedom and degrades the self-respect of Dr. Jacob Waterman and Edward Durelle. As a junior, Edward does tolerate Niles' actions of injustice. But as a senior Jacob protests against the oppressive force of Niles.

When the theme of power conflict is analysed, Niles becomes more dominating than the other two. He becomes the center of the plot. The plot revolves around the negative dynamism of Mr. Niles Niles’ practice of satanic power brings him the tragedy of his disastrous death. His actions become the deciding factors for the proceedings of the plot of the play.

When the plot of the play develops from scene to scene, the play becomes more and more complicated. The complicated development of the plot increases the seriousness of the play regarding the academic conflict between the two
academicians. Niles under-estimates Jacob Waterman and looks down upon him. He feels proud of his designation as the head of the department. He shows his pride and prejudices towards Jacob, though Jacob is senior to Niles, Niles thinks that Jacob is inferior to him and so he ill-treats and degrades Jacob. Edward and Jacob who are to be treated as fellow teachers with due respect are treated worse than a layman by Niles.

When Edward joins, there is a heated argument between Niles and Jacob. When Niles insists on the qualification of Ph.D. degree, Jacob argues against Niles opinion. He says, "We can't say that doctorate is a must to teach any subject" (TD 182). When the argument continues, he further says, "he can't say either that teachers without Ph.D.,'s are nothing or teachers with Ph.D.,s are the best" (TD 182). Niles’ oppressive attitude takes its root from his authoritative attitude and leadership ambition.

The prejudiced temperament of Niles never allows him to exercise the smallest amount of compassion and love towards his fellow teachers instead it makes him brutal and inhuman. Niles is portrayed, from beginning to end, as a man of cruelty, hatred, brutality and power supremacy. All these negative elements join together and make him a dictatorial leader.

This dictatorial approach of Niles causes many injuries to the polite minds of Jacob and Edward. Because of excessive pressure, Jacob's patience and tolerance burst out as a bomb blast and it causes the tragedy. Except moving his desk towards the window, Jacob does not do any unfair action against Niles. But Niles always sees Jacob with the maximum degree of annoyance and hatred which arise out of his academic imperialism.
Niles’ imperialistic outlook towards his subordinates projects him as a man at total power and authority. He remains a terror to the junior lecturer Edward. As the head, Niles always instructs Edward to prepare well for his class. He acts as a spy or detective for Edward classes. In order to know whether Edward teaches well or not he follows the habit of looking through the wholes when Edward takes classes. Instead of encouraging the new staff, Niles creates fear in the mind of Edward,

By being an authoritative and imperialistic head, Niles has robbed the individual freedom of Jacob and Edward. Whenever Edward faces Niles, he suffers from tension and fear. On seeing the disturbed condition of Edward, Miss Mia, another lecturer at the music department consoles him and relieves him of his tension. Miss Mia and Jacob provide enough moral support for his survival.

When a deep analysis is made between Niles and Dr. Jacob waterman, Niles is inhuman and brutal and Jacob is humane and compassionate. Since Edward finds it difficult to learn old English on his own, he seeks the help of Jacob. Jacob wholeheartedly takes up the responsibility of teaching old English to Edward. Jacob thinks that it is his duty to help the junior, fellow lecturer for his career upliftment.

Whenever Edward comes to him, he receives him with a pleasant smile, teaches him old English and encourages him to develop his scholarship for his successful future career. When Edward joins as a lecturer in the College, he does not have a lecture gown. Niles has his responsibility as the head to help Edward by providing him a lecturer gown. But he fails to extend his helpful arm to his fellow teacher. Jacob Waterman lends his lecturer gown to Edward and acknowledges his courtesy and compassion.
In this respect, the two professors symbolize the two aspects of vice and virtue or good and evil. Jacob symbolizes 'virtue' and Niles, 'vice'. When there is a conflict between virtue and vice, will be destroyed or defeated at the end of the conflict. The same thing happens in the case of Niles. Though Jacob is ill treated by Niles without the basic consideration of his seniority, Jacob neither revolts against him nor passes any direct criticism on him throughout the play. But Niles often passes insulting criticism on Jacob.

At one context, when he talks to Edward, he talks ill of Jacob's subject knowledge. According to Niles, Jacob is inferior to him regarding qualification and scholarship. Unable to tolerate the false and dishonest criticism of Niles against Jacob, Edward gains courage and retaliates against the statement of Niles. Edward says "I am studying old English within. He knows his subject and he is good" (184). As the head, Niles has failed to maintain peace and harmony in the department.

Always, Niles wants to exercise monopoly power over the subordinates as the head this negative tendency of Niles spoils the harmony and creates the unpleasant atmosphere in the department. Dr. Niles and Jacob Watson are acting as two poles of the earth in the department. Edward, the third member of the department is caught up between Niles and Jacob. He has to oblige the words of the head, though he is acting.

At the same time he has to consider the justice on the part of Jacob Waterman whose seniority has been depowered, degraded and violated by Niles whose chief ambition is to enjoy utter power and total domination. Niles' practice of unlimited power and inhuman domination make him meet his disastrous end. Niles is a man of intellectual merit and turns himself into a man of anti-intellectualism.
His cynical attitude becomes a base for his anti-intellectualism. Niles' intellectual power is invested in evil force and the investment creates the root for destruction. The silly problem of place quarrel arises out of his cynicism.

Because of his cynicism, Niles becomes half-conscious of his responsibility as the head. He fails to focus on his designation as the head and spends most of the time in finding fault with the fellow teachers and criticising them. He is very much aware of keeping his place near the window. He blindly and wrongly thinks that his power, honour and dignity as the head lie on keeping his desk near the window. Hence he concentrates more on keeping the place for him permanently. This unnecessary and immaterial thought of Niles brings him the horrible tragedy.

The punishable crime of murder happens because of lack of adjustment and understanding between the two highly educated academicians. The conflict between the victimizer and the victimized comes to an end with the murder of the victimizer by the victimized. As far as Jacob considers his state of victimization as a meaningless one, the place conflict goes on as a routine. When he finds meaning for his victimization, he becomes a murderer.

When the effect of victimization crosses the boundary of limitation, Jacob becomes a rebel against victimization and his rebellious action comes out as a murder. Niles' unlimited domination makes a courteous and sympathetic man into a murderer. A virtuous person (Jacob) becomes a villain in order to put an end to the villainy of the villain. When Brian Parker analyses the demonic oppressive attitude of the three protagonists (Madam Fay, Bethal and Niles) in *Masks of Childhood* he produces the following comment on Niles' characteristics, "In *Three Desks* it takes the form of Niles' cynicism and anti-intellectualism as a teacher and the childish, pointless desk pushed which he inflicts on Jacob Waterman" (283).
Edward sorts out people into three types; Ectomorphic people who are thin and nervous (Edward), Endo-morphic people who have powerful body (Jacob), and Mesomorphic people who have neither all mind (sound mind) nor all body (sound body) (Niles). Edward categorizes Niles under the group of people who have neither sound body nor sound mind. Though he lacks both physical and mental strength, the vices like jealousy, cunningness, hatred, cruelty and brutality join together and provide strength for his academic survival as the scheming head.

Edward remains neutral and sees the justice on the part of Jacob and the injustice on the part of Niles. According to him Niles is neither inferior nor superior to Jacob except his harshness and cruelty. But Niles always thinks high of him and looks down upon others. He becomes a superior academician with the strength of his superiority complex. His ideas about the educational institutions, students and learning are peculiar.

He insists more on students’ collaboration with the society and their reaction to the social events than their course of learning. He also refers to the exchange of ideas and understanding among the students. When he talks to Edward about the role of educational institutions and students, he says, "The important thing about a college is the course work of all, but the student's social contacts and in a larger part their talk among themselves" (TD184).

Niles faults finding and criticizing nature is revealed at many contexts in the play. He does not recognize and acknowledges the merits of others. When Edward talks about Jacob's scholarship in old English, he retorts and produces the following depreciating comment, "Whatever man (Jacob) may know his subject, but he absolutely knows no savory about putting it across to these young people" (TD 184).
The above comment proves Niles' false opinion on Jacob that even if Jacob possesses scholarship, he lacks the talent of good presentation to the students. Regarding attitude and behaviour, Jacob is better than Niles. In many aspects, Jacob totally differs from Niles. He wants to spend most of his time in updating the knowledge of the students and developing the teaching capacity of the junior staffs like Edward. Jacob criticizes some uncultured behaviours of Niles which lower his dignity.

On seeing Niles’ habit of looking through the hole in order to know how Edward manages his classes, Jacob asks the question "Does it seem fair for a head of the department?" (TD 184). It is a sorrowful thing that Edward, an ideal person becomes a slave to his senior. Edward enters the department with many ideas and expectations but after his entry, his ideals and expectations vanish in the air and they are shattered by Niles, the diplomatic head. Edward, an enthusiastic lecturer becomes frustrated and loses his spirit because of Niles prejudiced and pressurized actions.

Whenever Edward is in his low spirits Miss. Mia with her pleasant speech encourages him and strengthens his spirit and aspiration for his academic career. Whenever Niles degrades Jacob and talks ill of him, Edward retorts to his comments and speaks in support of Jacob. Edward, as a mediator, supports justice and neglects injustice. This impartial attitude of Edward creates a clash with the authoritative attitude of Niles and the clash increases the anger and suppressive force of Niles,

Most of Niles' actions are that of a villain throughout the play. His villainous actions affect both Edward and Jacob. Like Niles, Jacob is also a man of will-power and self-confidence. Even after knowing the cunning nature and the diplomatic approach of Niles in his academic affairs, Jacob does not lose hope and spirit and
continues to fight against Niles for his place in the department. Reaney deliberately projects Niles as a trickster. During the absence of Jacob, Niles moves his desk near the window.

In order to avoid Jacob moving his desk during his absence he keeps heavy stones inside his desk. When Edward opens the drawer of Niles' desk, he takes out the stones which were kept in the bottom doors. On seeing this, Niles terribly cries out in high degree of anger and tension. He shouts at Edward and asks him to replace the stones in his desk. He demands apology from Edward and severely instructs him to beg forgiveness.

But Edward refuses to do so and talks against Niles’ action, "No place for stones in a desk," (TD 185) on hearing these words of disrespect, Niles' anger is increased. He cries out, "They (the students) can't have desk robber's teaching" (TD185) and orders Edward to go out Edward protests against Niles’ order and raises his voice, "This is not the Vatican I don't have to leave the town in twenty-four hours" (TD185). Edward prepares his mind to fight for the problem. But Niles very cunningly and cleverly manages the situation and pretends as if he is good by complaining that Edward has ruined many things in his desk when he took out the stones from his desk.

Since Jacob is supported by Edward, Niles' jealously and hatred towards Jacob increases day by day. He also develops the same degree of hatred and jealousy towards Edward. Because of the enmity and hatred between Niles and the other two teachers in the department, Niles’ headship is turned into dictatorship. Brian Parker compares Niles to Hitler for his dictatorial approach towards the fellow staffs. He
comments, "Niles in *Three Desks* is compared to Hitler dancing at the fall of France" (*TD* 283).

The above comment made by Parker proves the fact that Niles is as cruel, tyrannical and doctoral as Hitler in Germany. Like the people in Germany suffered in the cruel hands of Hitler, the two teachers, Edward and Jacob suffer in the hands of Niles. By using his cunningness and tricks, he becomes a highly influential person in the college. So he is given the chance of enjoying unlimited power and authority. This unlimited power and influence provide him the chance of becoming the principal of the college. When he is the head of the department, the two men (Edward and Jacob) suffer for their academic survival. If he becomes the principal of the college all men (teachers) will suffer out of his tyranny and dictatorship.

Nature which been watching the atrocities of Niles, provides enough courage to Jacob to put an end to his tyrannical and dictatorial administration. Though Jacob commits the crime of murder and violates law and justice, the Goddess of justice does not become annoyed with him.

Niles not only violates justice and honesty but also violates morality. A teacher who has to be the preacher and practiser of morality lacks in moral codes. His tyrannical nature and silly and behaviour are revealed when he explains a lesson to girl students. Flossy, a girl student, who could not understand Tennyson's *The Lady of Shallott* asks Niles to explain, Niles explains the lesson by running his hand on her body. Because of these kinds of immoral behaviours, the students lose opinion on Niles.

Unable to tolerate the villainous actions and misbehaviours of Niles, the student’s revolt against Niles. Dehorah, a girl student, writes about Niles as an
intellectual fraud. Thus, Niles' identity as the head loses his dignity. Niles’ personality is split into two. He is a man of silly behaviour to the students on the one hand and a silly anti-intellectual to the fellow teachers on the other. He spoils the honour of the desk of a professor not only by pushing it towards the window, but also by keeping rough stones and stolen things inside it.

Niles is not only a villain and fraud, but also a sadist who enjoys the sufferings of others. He wants to cause disturbance to Jacob as much as possible. Niles’ enmity and hatred for Jacob does not stop with Jacob. It is also extended to the family. He wants to spoil the peace and happiness of Jacob's family. Hence he steals the examination paper of Jacob's youngest son and keeps it in his desk, when it is found out; he manages the situation as usual by his tricks and diplomatic knowledge.

During the absence of Niles, Jacob moves Niles’ desk about a foot with a lot of strain and force. Since the bottom drawer of the desk is filled with heavy stones, Jacob finds it very difficult to move. After moving the desk about a foot, he collapses and falls down with the semi-stroke. Edward comes to his rescue. He also brings Miss Mia to help him. Because of desk moving, the desks become the erotic objects of quarrel and violence and the department becomes an erotic place. The department of English, the place meant for education and scholarship is turned into an erotic place.

Sometimes, it becomes worse than a public market, when the teachers are quarreling among themselves and shouting at each other. According to Brian Parker, any department in any college should be a holy place and they should be pious atmosphere. The three men in the department (Jacob, Niles and Edward) should observe decorum and act as the trinities of Father, Son and Holy Christ. He
comments, "The three desks are very erotic; they could be the trinity too, Father, son and Holy Christ" (288).

From the beginning of the play itself Niles is viewed not as a professor, but as a villain. From the second Act of the play he is seen as a monstrous villain with all kinds of villainous activities. The problem of desk moving becomes a big issue in the college and it becomes the subject matter for the talk of the professors and lecturers in the college. The fussle of desk moving reaches the ears of the principal. He calls both Jacob and Niles and warns them not to continue the problem in the department. Even after the warning, they not stop their 'pushing activity'.

The principal's words, "No more desk moving" (TD 183) do not produce any effect on them. Jacob as a senior does not want to give up his claim. Niles as the head wants to exercise his superiority over Jacob. Edward is helpless and he could not do anything against Niles, though he supports Jacob and sees justice on the part of him with his impartial eyes.

Whenever Niles talks to Edward, he speaks with the tone of pure academic instruction. But when Jacob speaks to Edward, he speaks to him with the affectionate, non-academic tone. One day, Niles complains to Edward about Jacob. He tells Edward, "He keeps moving my desk away from the window and he keeps pushing his desk towards the window" (TD 183).

Edward feels embarrassed and does not react to the complaint of Niles. Because, he could not explain to Niles that it is unfair on his part to ill-treat the senior. As a mediator, he comments, "That was unfair, a bit of unfairness is a bit at fun (for Niles)" (TD 183). For Niles', pushing the desk and disturbing Jacob has become a leisure time fun.
The narrow-mindedness and selfish motive of Niles prevents him from seeing other's difficulties. All he sees knows and practices in academic level are power and domination. If he had kept his power and domination of his headship within the limited circle of administration, he would not have faced the tragedy. Through the character of Niles, Reaney wants to caution the academicians who aspire for power and domination beyond boundaries will face the disastrous consequences.

Jacob waterman wins the favour of the audience by his positive characteristics. He may be criticized for his claim at keeping his desk near the window. But he remains much useful to Edward, a new staff who needs a moral support and encouragement. Along with his teaching of Old English to Edward, he teaches him the preparation of tea. When he teaches about the preparation of tea to Edward, he says, “tea is made as love is made” (TD183).

He sees the similarity between making love and preparing tea. He gives importance to love and affection, courtesy, sympathy, compassion and humane sense. Both love making and tea preparing need patience and art. He points out the indecent manner of Niles and says that grown up men should devote to the austere beauty of lecturer and not to push around each other's desk.

Jacob can neither tolerate the atrocities of Niles nor can give up his place to him and adjust with him. Hence, he decides to retire earlier at the end of the term than retiring in the spring. To free himself from the suppression and ill-treatment of Niles, Jacob prefers early retirement. Because of their academic quarrel, Niles and Jacob are not respected properly by the students. One student Doborah calls Niles as an intellectual fraud. Another student Tuckersmith has a quarrel with Jacob. Because
of their academic conflict, the college teachers Niles and Jacob fail to develop the knowledge of the students and promote good understanding among them.

The problem of desk moving does not allow them to do their academic duty peacefully and perfectly. The silly action of desk moving creates irritation on the one hand and fun on the other hand. Whenever the department is presented on the stage there is the noise of desk moving, Niles neither thinks of his self-respect nor thinks of his senior's self-respect. Niles does not use his academic power for constructive purpose. So it is destructed by honesty and justice.

Not only the desks and the professors in the department become erotic but also the student community which has to learn decency, discipline civilization and the other human values from the teachers become erotic. They pass criticism on the teachers and degrade the teaching community because of Niles superiority and malicious nature. Because of Niles misbehaviours the other teachers, Edward and Jacob who deserve to be respected, obeyed and obliged are not respected by the students.

The teachers share half of the responsibility of the parents in upbringing the students and shaping and moulding their characters. Niles, as the head has to play a responsible role in these activities. But he never turns his mind towards the welfare of the students and the welfare of the society. The successful function of an educational institution definitely paves way for the progress of the society. The educational institutions are the part and parcel of the society. Niles has failed to realize these things and so he is disregarded in the college and also in the society.

As a dutiful citizen of the country, he has failed to do his service to the society which needs service from people like Niles. As an academician, he has failed to render his service to the field of education in the right sense. A man, who has to
be a role model for student’s teachers and the society, remains a model for talented villain. He is more a villain than the head of the department. He is more a fraud than a teacher.

Edward, the innocent and white-hearted man who is free from ill-will, hatred and malice is suspended from his service because of Niles’ villainy. Niles practices his villainy and malice towards his fellow teachers Edward and Jacob without human sense. Unsympathetically he robs the livelihood of Edward by being responsible for his suspension. He could not tolerate the support extended by Edward for Jacob. Niles wants Edward to justify his injustice actions.

But Edward wants to be a mediator and remains neutral. The neutral position and impartial attitude of Edward do not earn him any profit or admiration or happiness. Instead, he becomes a pathetic victim to Niles’ terrible villainy, hatred and malice. Jacob Waterman who is fighting for his individual freedom and place in the department could not help Edward against the powerful villainy of Niles to avoid his suspension.

Mr. Sandy Machine of the department of chemistry has the same mentality of Niles. Because of the same mentality, both of them maintain strong friendship between themselves till the end of the play. Like Niles, Mr. Sandy also has the characteristics of criticizing and fault-finding. He interferes in the individual freedom of others by making comments on their manners and costumes. Both of them have the opposite qualities which destroy the individual freedom and happiness. Mr. Sandy does not even tolerate people wearing costumes as they like. He says," if you are a Ukrainian or English wear your folk costume" (TD 184).

Regarding the academic affairs, Miss. Mia helps Edward and Niles is helped by Mr. Sandy. Edward is given the additional responsibility as the Dean of Men's
Residence after his joining. The climax starts when Niles becomes the Principal of the college. He demands Sandy's help to move his desk near the window. He says 'though he becomes the principal of the college, his desks should be kept near the window to keep up his public dignity.

Niles talks about his self-respect and public dignity, forgetting the fact that he has already lost his public dignity. Mr. Sandy agrees to help Niles on condition of a contract with Niles. The contract is that Sandy will help Niles to move his desk to the window and Niles should make him the Dean of Men's Residence. From this desire of Sandy, one can understand the fact that Sandy, like Niles, wants to exercise and enjoy power and domination over others.

Now Niles is on the new chair, the principal's chair. But he wants to have his place in the department and his desk near the window. This kind of cruel attitude goes beyond its limitation and faces the harvest. If Sandy becomes the Dean of Men's Residence, the Principalship of Niles and Deanship of Sandy will join together and will make the college into a hellish place. Like the fallen angels assisted Satan and worshipped his evil force, Mr. Sandy remains an ardent admirer and faithful follower of Niles. Throughout the play, there is no hint that he is supported by the other teachers and respected and obliged by the student. His practice of satanic power brings him the downfall. His injustious actions bring him the justifiable punishment.

Jacob Waterman, very patiently, has been fighting for his place for fifteen years. The enmity between Niles and Jacob Watermen becomes more and more prominent when years pass by. The fifteen years of academic service remains a bitter one for Jacob because of Niles’ suppression and malice towards him. For fifteen years, he does not remain a silent sufferer. He has been making attempts to
get back his place. But his attempts do not seem to be fruitful. It is confirmed that Jacob cannot do anything against the power of Niles, after Niles becomes the principal. After Niles becomes the principal, all the academic affairs take a very bad turn in his hands.

As the head of the department, Niles was enjoying monopoly power in the department level. Now he has been given the chance of enjoying monopoly power in the college level. But time and fate become unfavourable for the practice of Niles’ monopoly power and hence he meets his disastrous end. The long term academic conflict comes to an end after fifteen years. Unable to bear and accept his defect Jacob becomes revengeful, he wants to put an end to the tyranny and cruelty of Nile riot only for his personal reason but also for a public cause.

He thinks that the teaching community in the college will be suppressed and enslaved by Niles’ monopoly Principalship. He wants to avoid this academic mishappening. As far as Niles’ headship is concerned, he has a threatening voice over the fellow staffs. When he becomes the principal, it is sure that his superior voice will entrap and enslave the voices of the other staffs and they will become voiceless.

A man (Niles) who gives much importance to a trivial matter like keeping his desk near the window cannot be a successful leader to a college. Any leader of any institution should have sacrificing tendency and should possess the aspects of patience and tolerance. It is very clear from his behaviours and attitude that Niles does not possess these qualities. As the head, he has spoiled the dignity of headship. If he survives as the principal, he will spoil the dignity of Principalship.

Though Niles has received higher education, his mind remains rough and tough. Instead of being a refined and cultured person, he behaves in an uncultured
way with roughness and harshness. The failure of a small adjustment between himself and Jacob puts an end to his life. Of course, Jacob becomes brutal by strangulating Niles. He becomes brutal in order to put an end to the long term brutality.

There is ego clash between Jacob and Niles. The ego clash paves way for the academic conflict. The egoistical tendency of the two teachers spoils the academic harmony. Academic disorder and displeasure will affect the society. The hostile and problematic academic atmosphere in an educational institution affects the student’s world which has to be developed and enriched with the supply of knowledge and culture by the teachers. But the teachers are ruled and controlled by their personal motives and ambitions. Both Jacob and Niles look at the desks in the English department as their own properties.

Their insistence of importance on the desks remains extraordinary which does not suit the practical, real world. Jacob as a senior thinks that it is quite degrading to his self-respect if he adjusts with Niles and obliges his orders. But Niles thinks that the other teachers in the department should recognize and acknowledge his headship, oblique his words and obey his orders. The worst behaviours and malignant attitudes of Niles totally collapse his academic administration.

Because of Niles’ misuse of power as the head and the principal, the academic designation loses its honour and dignity. The desks which are the objects of designation are used as war weapons. The two teachers fight against each other like two soldiers of two different nations. The English department becomes a place of battle field. The academic war between the two teachers is extended to the long term period of fifteen years.
Throughout the play, Jacob Watermen has been a victim to Niles' cruelty and hostility. He has been fighting for fifteen years to relieve himself from the victimization of Niles. He projects himself as a challenged person, born for power and authority. But at the climax, the play moves with a very bad turn of extreme violence which creates tragedy and causes death to Niles. The checking and surprising climax scene presents reverse situation. Niles the victimizer becomes the victimized and Jacob, the victimized becomes the victimizer. Niles, at last, pathetically becomes a victim to Jacob's revenge.

Reaney, throughout the play, establishes a leg-pulling quality and delight by presenting shocking and surprising actions. In many contexts, Niles' actions are shocking and surprising. The last surprising action is violence and shocking murder. At the end of the play, a gin bottle is turned into a war weapons with which Jacob strangulates Niles and seeks vengeance.

Niles' villainy and vengeance are extended up to the level of killing Jacob's pet bird. The office which they occupy is an old and a desolate one. One day a dead bird, Jacob was keeping in his office was found on the floor. Niles had poisoned it to death. Killing a bird to take vengeance on a man is a total brute attitude. A soft creature becomes a prey to a man's villainy.

Niles villainy is not heroic but cunning, tricky and poisonous. A bird is pathetically victimized for a man's animal attitude and sadistic pleasure. Niles derives a large amount of sadistic pleasure on seeing Jacob's agony for the dead bird. The scene in which the dead bird is shown is one of the most striking, shocking and leg pulling event in the play. Niles' villainy, brutality and poisonous attitude turn against himself and invite death to him. Niles' brutal action is widened up to the brutality of the wild animals like lion and tiger. Just like the lion and tiger kill the
soft animals for their prey, Niles kills a soft bird for his vengeance on Jacob. The most in human and brutal action of Niles in the play is killing the pet bird of Jacob.

According to Reaney, Niles is an individual who represents a group of academicians, who serve with the unjustifiable academic administration. He analyses and focuses on the role of educational institutions and teachers in developing the standard of education, shaping a country's future citizens (students) and moulding their characters. Niles' character remains a model to the academicians who practice corruption and deceit in their academic career. His life becomes a lesson to the academicians who misuse their power and indulge in evil activities.

A man like Niles can enrich the knowledge of students and uplift the standard of education in the college which will pave way for the development of the society. But Niles has been paving way for the deterioration of standard civilization and culture in the college. He has been the cause of academic displeasure in the department. He has ill-treated his subordinates. He has caused much damage to the individual freedom of Edward and Jacob.

His villainy becomes totally responsible for Jacob's early retirement and for suspension of Edward's service. He has robbed the happiness of the individuals, Jacob and Edward and has threatened their academic survival. He has been a bad teacher to the students, villain to the fellow teachers and useless to the society. Even after becoming the principal of the college, he has failed to keep up the dignity of the chair.

As a mediator Edward points out Nile’s mistakes. But Nails fails to realize these mistakes. Instead of realizing his mistake he develops a strong grudge and enmity towards Edward. His oppressive attitude becomes the basic cause for all his atrocities in the academic administration. Wherever there is oppression, there would
be displeasure and disharmony. There would be malignity and hatred. There would be power conflict between the two groups of powerful people and the powerless people. The same thing happens in the department of English, Rubert Stand College.

When there is conflict, there will be an end. There will be success and defeat for the two groups or two individuals. In *Three desks*, in the conflict between Jacob and Niles, Jacob gets victory for his long term suppression and enslavement and Niles faces defeat which puts an end to his life.

If Niles had behaved gently towards Jacob, the tragedy would not have happened. If he had shown a bit of sympathy towards Edward with humane sense Edward would have continued in his service. If he had shown his interest and used his knowledge in developing the standard of education in Ruper Stand College, he would have survived as an appreciable and a successful principal of the college.

Niles’ oppressive attitude has made him lose his personal moral stability and general human values. It is a great irony that a teacher who should be the preacher of morality and human values does not possesses not even a single human value when the oppressive force is in high degree; both the oppressor and the oppressed become dehumanized. When the oppressor practices the oppressive force in high degree, he loses all the human values and becomes highly inhuman in his behaviour and attitude.

In this respect, the oppressor dehumanizes his own humane aspect and human values. When the oppressive force of the oppressor and his ill-treatment go beyond limitation it dehumanizes the self-respect and the individual freedom of the oppressed person. The moral and spiritual emptiness makes Niles a dehumanized person of animal attitude with which he causes trouble and disturbance to the individuals for his selfish enjoyment of power.
People like Niles should render their maximum service to improve the academic standard of the educational institution and the social standard of the society. When a teacher fails to do both the activities he becomes unfit for the profession and becomes an enemy to the society which expects more service and support for its development. In any country, the position of the society and its development are decided by two important factors; the standard of education and the percentage of educated people. Hence teachers have to play a responsible role for their professional enrichment and the social harmony.

Niles like teachers should be eliminated from the teaching community. Their evil activities should be rooted out in the beginning itself. Niles like academicians should not misuse their power and be a bar to both social and academic development. The society needs young teachers like Edward for a happy successful academic and social deliberation. It needs the courageous and service-minded people like Jacob to put an end to injustice and punish the culprits who destroy justice and stain the society.

The senior academicians should encourage Edward like juniors for academic harmony and achievement. Reaney satirizes the academic follies committed by the modern materialistic academicians whose ambitions are to achieveer power and fame and derive material pleasure. He warns the academicians that if they exercise power beyond limitations against justice and become corruptive, they will meet the disastrous, sudden and unexpected end, which would be the punishment brought by justice.