Chapter VI

Conclusion

Reaney probably knows more about the Donnellys than any one. He is fascinated by the complexities and relationships of the nineteenth century Canadian society. He carried out a deep research in Tipperary, into the background of the Donnelly family and the antagonisms that inherited. Reaney presents the historical details, however in the play as to forget that he uses history only as a starting point for a wider vision. In the hands of a great writer, history becomes only one of the many tools of his disposal in the new creation.

He uses the art of drama to present his global perspective for harmonious social vision and humanitarian outlook. He aspires for change and transformation in the Canadian society with the eradication of all kinds of discriminations. And finally he attempts to free the Canadian consciousness from all kinds of bondages. The Donnelly Trilogy is considering of as the major achievement of Reaney. He has converted the social victimization of the Donnellys into a spiritual ceremony. “They are offered as offerings to that fire god” (Noonan27).

The basic intention of Reaney to use the history for his play is to expose and satirise the social, political and religious follies. He has taken the Donnelly story both from the legend and the real history and has fashioned it into a remarkable and fascinating Trilogy. “The result is an illuminating experience in total theatre” (Stingle 2). From this critical reception of the play it is clear that Reaney has not only simply recounted the history of the Donnellys of Lucan Ontario but also has
transformed that history into a work of art and has created out of the soil of South Western Ontario. He knows so well a story that has universal appeal.

First of all, Reaney was fascinated by the history and so he immersed himself in researching the history of the Donnellys and their communities. Two trails were conducted for the murder of the Donnellys; six people were charged as criminals but none of them was convicted. No justice was brought to the brutal crime so far. The authorities of legal justice failed to award justice to the honest Donnelly family.

The influence and interconnection between the political authorities and legal authorities might have remained the obstacle for the award of justice to the Donnelly family. By exposing the follies committed by the social, political, religious and legal authorities, Reaney wants to prevent the mismanagement of power and justice.

Though the Donnelly family faces pressures and prejudices it boldly protests against the oppression of the Biddulph society. The Donnellys decide not to obey any kind of pressure or prejudice. Their rebellious force is more powerful than the oppressive force of their enemies.

Hence they settle in Biddulph as Donnellys, live as Donnellys and die as Donnellys. Tom Donnelly proves himself as a man of courage and willpower by striking Farl. But the enemies prove themselves as cowards by murdering the Donnellys during their deep sleep. Richard Stingle observes, “In his (Reaney’s) dramatization of their life and death, Reaney sees the Donnellys as a family who would not submit to the pressures and prejudices of their society” (3).

Reaney’s exciting recreation of how the Donnellys continue to be the Donnellys without being affected by the pressures and horrible actions of the
enemies attracts the attention of the audience. The hostile action of burning down
the barn of the Donnellys is an invitation extended by the enemies to drive the
Donnellys away from Biddulph. But the Donnellys remain unmoved by the
threatening force of the enemies. This strong willpower of the Donnellys makes
them withstand the enmity and face courageously the atrocities done by their
enemies.

Reaney’s visual imagination is directed purely by his egalitarian attitude.
Through the dark history of the Donnellys, Reaney wants to provide light to the
contemporary society. His artistic enlightenment also paves way for social up
gradation. His dramatic vision not only brings out the merits in the history of the
Donnellys but also projects his personal vision of life. He has given life to the bare
bone of history to make the life of the contemporary people a harmonious and
smooth one. He has a wider vision for social setup. He aspires for a society which
functions without prejudices, discriminations, hatred, malice and ill-will. He insists
on the practice of human values which would make a society function smoothly and
harmoniously.

Because of the violence of the neighbours, the Donnellys become violent
only to protect themselves from the oppressors. When there are two choices for the
Donnellys that either they have to join the enemies or they have to leave Biddulph,
with firm decision, the Donnellys neither join the enemies nor leave Biddulph. They
sacrifice their lives for the sake of their family name, individuality and self-respect.
James Donnelly's heroism and protest are shared by Mrs. Donnelly. Her will power
is exhibited when she tells her daughter that she will not leave Biddulph and she will
not allow Mr. Donnelly to do so. Reaney changes some historical facts in order to
fulfill his dramatic vision.
By re-writing the history of the Donnellys, Reaney has made the past stand for present and future. Regarding the creation of the Donnellys, his artistic potentiality and dramatic merit stand beyond time. Even if the future historian disagrees Reaney’s facts, his dramatic version regarding the history of the Donnellys remains valid. James Noonan appreciates the validity of Reaney’s dramatic vision and artistic excellence in the following words:

The historic figures he (Reaney) has made of the Donnellys gives us an insight into the potential that lies in the most unlikely places in our own past. Even if some later historian should come along and discount Reaney’s facts, the dramatic vision would remain valid and would still have to be judged on its artistic, not its historic merits.

(Noonan 278)

Reaney’s dramatic creation of the Donnelly history serves as a new mythology for Canadians. He has equally highlighted the two distinct elements of oppression and protest by signifying the threats and pressures of the oppressors on the one hand and the heroic struggle of the Donnellys on the other.

The myth of the Donnellys provides courage to the Canadians to fight against oppression and injustice. Reaney has reproduced the ordinary myth into a heroic one for the social welfare of the Canadians. Even the mere reading of the play without dramatic performance will revolutionize the mind rather than entertaining.

The spark of fire produced by the Donnellys is still burning in Canada to burn oppression and injustice. The struggle of the Donnellys remains a protective force against all kinds of oppressions. When the Donnellys are deprived of their rights to live in the Biddulph society, they revolt against it and fight to assert and
establish their right with the choice of life or death. Hence the Donnellys history has become a myth for heroism, willpower and self-confidence for the Canadians.

On this perspective Reaney has created a new mythology for the Canadians. The heroic family is violent in a violent place. Several key speeches in the final act of *Sticks and Stones* typify their heroism when Mr. Donnelly tells Casseleigh, ‘Donnellys don’t kneel!’ and when Mrs. Donnelly tells her daughter that (Jennie), herself and Mr. Donnelly will never leave Biddulph. Reaney wishes that the individuals should protest against oppressors who violate their freedom and rights. Hence he makes some necessary changes to make the Donnellys more rebellious and courageous.

Although Reaney has immersed in the history of the Donnellys and their times, he has done much more in *Sticks and Stones* than simply write a documentary drama. He has created a vision in dramatic terms of a family who would not bow to the pressures and threats of the local community. Even if some of the historical details are altered, even if he does not give a complete picture of the real Donnellys, it is heartening to note that the play’s importance lies in dramatic not in its historical qualities (Noonan 6).

As a great humanitarian Reaney aspires for global peace and harmony and wants to establish an egalitarian society which would be operated by liberty, equality and fraternity and would love humanity and respect the individuals.

Reaney contrasts true maturity with false maturity in *The Killdeer* and speech, dumbness and memory and forgetfulness in *The Easter Egg*. Reaney’s handling of contrastive elements dominates the plays in the wilderness. At the end of the play, the positive elements are restored and the negative elements are erased.
Kenneth's memory, and speech are restored and dumbness and forgetfulness are erased. Regarding Eli true maturity is restored and false maturity is erased.

The young protagonists Kenneth and Eli struggle for normal survival. Polly fights with Bethal for control of Kenneth in The Easter Egg and Becky with Madam Fay for Eli in The Killdeer. Kenneth and Eli are left in a non-human world which constrains their growth. Their internal suffering is caused by the external world which contains crude realities in it. Reaney satirises the mothers and stepmothers like Madam Fay and Bethal who ill treat their sons and step-sons by suppressing their individuality and violating their freedom. Reaney successfully projects the function of psyche of Eli and Kenneth. The invisible psyche is made visible.

The two plays The Killdeer and The Easter Egg present Reaney’s imaginative world of eccentric victims. They deal with the concept of psychomachia. They are built around ‘self ’philistinism. The souls of the heroes make a journey towards recognition from darkness to light. They are imprisoned by the force of oppression. The story of Eli in The Killdeer and Kenneth in The Easter Egg deal with the oppression of their souls. The dichotomous impulses of the souls protest against the oppression caused by the family members.

Through the characters of Madam Fay and Bethal, Reaney preaches the social morality. The toy Easter egg and the bird killdeer symbolize the divine world. Nature represents god and god is present in nature. The Killdeer which belongs to the world of nature symbolizes the divine power and The Easter Egg symbolises Jesus Christ.

Kenneth restores his speech and memory when he finds the lost Easter egg. Eli’s struggle to free maturity from the bondage of childhood comes to an end when
The Killdeer cries. The cry of The Killdeer is largely symbolic of the divine blessing. At the end of the plays, *The Eastern Egg* and *The Killdeer* the mask of the ‘self and psyche’ is removed. The true ‘psyche’ and the true self are explored. Eli and Kenneth are affected by family level oppression. Family level oppression leads to a psychic war.

Home becomes a hell and world becomes a battlefield to Eli and Kenneth. The two shifts from divine world to the satanic world and from the satanic world to the divine world stabilize the theme of the play and assert the artistic excellence of the dramatist. Reaney’s protagonists are subjected to victimization, problematization and denaturalization. His theatre functions with a collaboration among the three worlds; the world of victimizers, the world of victims and the world of redeemers. The world of victimizers becomes powerful with the evil forces of Bethal and Madam Fay and it becomes powerless when the world of redeemers becomes powerful.

The individual identity of Eli and Kenneth is covered by mask. Their selves are covered by the mask of oppression. For Eli and Kenneth, the mindscape becomes dark and blind and loses its vision through which the internal function of the mind collaborates with the external world. Eli is devoid of maturity and Kenneth is devoid of speech and memory.

Eli undergoes single transformation from immaturity to maturity and Kenneth undergoes double transformation from dumbness to speech and forgetfulness to memory. Eli and Kenneth restore their original condition when their selves are unmasked. The psyche is centralized and stabilized and its normal function starts with the individual identity and freedom. The souls of Eli and
Kenneth start a journey towards identity, freedom and recognition. Reaney has discovered the unbound and theatre with its unrestrained urge to showcase the problems of the young ones.

Reaney’s theatre remains rough since it reflects the hard realities of life. Though it is built up with hyperbolism to certain degree, it is sensational popular, effortlessly accessible, and remarkably revolutionary. The play *Three Desks* depicts the fact that in today's world, in the academic circle, honesty and academic justice are violated by the power mongers like Niles. Niles’ tragedy becomes a lesson for the academicians.

It echoes the warning to the modern trend that the academicians who are holding responsible posts should maintain harmony in the academic institution and they should observe, preserve and practice decorum, legal justice and moral justice. There is justice on the part of Jacob though he rebels against Niles. The University of Manitoba which is an embodiment and abode of education becomes a place of academic war.

The Biddulph society remains a terror to the Donnellys; Bethal remains a terror to Kenneth; Madam Fay becomes a terror to Eli and Niles remains a terror to Jacob. The Donnelly’s protest against the Biddulph society and Jacob’s protest against Niles are wild and direct. Mr. Donnelly protest force causes the murder of Farl and Jacob’s protest causes the murder of Niles. Since Eli and Kenneth are made to protest by Polly, Harry and Becky, their protest remains mild and it causes failure to the oppression of Madam Fay and Bethal.

Niles’ struggle for power creates Jacob’s struggle for identity. Niles wants to establish his identity of leadership and Jacob wants to establish his identity of seniority. Because of this type of conflict, Niles loses his life and Jacob becomes a
murderer. Reaney merges the individual impulses with society, politics, religion, academic administration and familial affairs to fulfill his dramatic purpose. He wants to create a better society which is free from all kinds of discriminations. The relationship between the educated imagination and the external social and economic order between a separate mapping of inner and outer experience is central to Reaney’s evangelical urge to create a better society” (Parker 103). Reaney makes his dramatic world a charged one. In his charged dramatic world, the polar forces of good and evil, darkness and light and sterility and imagination co-exist with each other.

The Biddulph society, the university of Manitoba, and the homes of Eli and Kenneth become various kinds of hells on the one hand and battlefield on the other hand to the Donnellys, Jacob waterman, Edward Durelle, Kenneth and Eli, These oppressed victims fight against their oppressions. Eli and Kenneth achieve freedom after a long struggle against Bethal and Madam Fay.

In the Two Trilogies (The Donnelly Trilogy and The Masks of Childhood, Reaney focuses on three kinds of conflicts; social conflict, academic conflict and psychological conflict. The Biddulph tragedy teaches a lesson not only to the Biddulph society but also to the global society. In the two trilogies, Reaney standardizes his opinion of abolition of oppression and slavery. He always aspires for individual freedom and self-respect. The members of the Donnelly family, the farmers, merchants, priests, bakers, religious authorities and politicians of Biddulph have been immortalized in three forms; history, myth and the art of drama.

The world set up by the Donnellys is not there on the map of Canada, but it is there in the Canadian history myth and literature. Among the Canadian dramatists, Reaney preserves a unique place with his evangelical world which is highly
metaphysical and far-fetched. Through his characters, he advises the humanity to have global perspective, social attitude and humane sense and to avoid hatred and malignity. In general Reaney’s vision is based on collective welfare against various kinds of discriminations based on society religion, politics and academic affairs.

Man may not hold virtues. But he should not practice vice. Man may not be kind to his fellow men. But he should not be harmful to his fellowmen. Man may not be courteous or compassionate towards his fellow men. But he should not endanger the individual freedom of his fellowmen. Man may not like friendship. But he cannot live in isolation. The standby on the select plays of Reaney connotes these messages. Since literature is a wonderful tool for social transformation. Reaney’s artistic vision is reformatory. His tone is satirical and his voice is rebellious. Hence Reaney’s dramatic world remains a changed one amidst the human follies in humanity.