

UNIVERSIDAD DE CÓRDOBA
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOLOGÍA INGLESA Y ALEMANA

**STAGING PIONEER CANADA: A STUDY OF DOCUMENTARY AND MYTH
IN JAMES REANEY'S *THE DONNELLYS* AND *BALDOON***

TESIS DOCTORAL

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*A mi madre, mi hermana y mi esposo,
por su amor y apoyo incondicionales.*

INDEX OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
ILLUSTRATIONS	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
FIRST PART On Documentary	40
I. AN OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENTARY.....	41
I.1. Documentary: A Review of Approaches in English-Canadian Literature and Theatre.....	41
I.2 The Role of Documentary in Reaney's Work	77
I.2.1 The Documentary Element in <i>The Donnellys</i> and <i>Baldoon</i>	81
II. DOCUMENTARY AS REVISION: <i>THE DONNELLY TRILOGY</i>	91
II.1 A Review of Documentary Sources on the Donnellys.....	93
II.2 A Study of 'Documentary' in <i>The Donnellys</i>	107
II.2.1 "A Canvas of the Pioneer life": Documentary and the Plot.....	109
II.2.2 Irish, Catholics and 'Blackfeet': Documentary and the Characters	127
II.2.3 Fragmenting Chronology: Documentary and Time.....	136
II.2.4 Naming and Mapping on Stage: Documentary and Place.....	140
III. DOCUMENTARY AS EXPLORATION: <i>BALDOON</i>	148
III.1 A Review of Documentary Sources on <i>Baldoon</i>	149
III.2 An Analysis of 'Documentary' in <i>Baldoon</i>	152
III.2.1 Exploring Pioneer <i>Baldoon</i> : Documentary and the Plot.....	152
III.2.2 Pennsylvania Dutch and Scottish: Documentary and the Characters	158
III.2.3 Dating a Popular Tale: Documentary and Time.....	163
III.2.4 Creating a Sense of Locale: Documentary and Place	165
SECOND PART On Myth	168
IV. AN OVERVIEW OF MYTH.....	169
IV.1 A Brief Review of Approaches to Myth.....	170
IV.2 Main Approaches to the Study of Myth in Literature.....	182
IV.2.1 Frye on Myth.....	190
IV.2.1.1. Frye and Reaney.....	206
IV.2.2 The "New World Myth"	212

V. <i>THE DONNELLYS: RE-MYTHOLOGIZING</i>	218
V.1. <i>The Donnellys: A Canadian Tragedy</i>	219
V.1.1 <i>The Donnellys: A Fertility Myth</i>	221
VI. <i>BALDOON: MYTH-MAKING</i>	246
VI.1 <i>Baldoon: A Canadian Folktale</i>	247
VI.1.1 <i>Baldoon: A Myth of Deliverance</i>	268
CONCLUSION	272
WORKS CITED	288
APPENDICES	298
APPENDIX ONE	299
APPENDIX TWO	305
APPENDIX THREE	320
APPENDIX FOUR	327
APPENDIX FIVE	351
APPENDIX SIX	364

FOREWORD

This dissertation is the result of several years of reading and studying James Reaney's great work. My interest in this Canadian writer started some years ago when I had to write an essay for the then lecturer of Critical Analysis of Literary Texts at the University of La Laguna, Tenerife. When I was asked which literary genre was my favourite one, I undoubtedly answered drama. Some months before, I had manifested to him my interest in learning something about Canadian Literature. It was so new and different! His answer was giving me the only theatre plays book he had in the still small library of the Centre for Canadian Studies and asking me to write an essay on it. This play happened to be *The Donnellys* by James Reaney.

After reading the trilogy, I definitely decided to work on James Reaney's theatre and although that meant entering a whole new world, that of the Canadian Literature, his topics and his style engaged me.

Several visits to Canada and especially to Toronto were necessary to get all his plays, novels, and poems and all the bibliography on him. I received the help of many people and especially that of the writer himself, who, after receiving the letter I had sent to the Playwrights Union Press, decided to send me most of his plays. In my second visit to the University of Toronto I could meet Prof. Richard Plant, from the Drama Centre. I knew he was an expert on Canadian Drama, so I decided to talk to him and tell him about my doctoral thesis project. He helped me give shape to my still vague project idea and recommended me to have a look at some of the theses that were written at the University of Toronto.

After some time reading and analyzing Reaney's work, I finally took the decision to study the use of two of the most characteristic elements in Reaney's work, those of documentary and myth. Since Reaney has written quite a number of plays, delimiting the plays to be studied became a necessity. Finally, two of them, *The Donnellys* and *Balloon*, which deal with pioneering Canada, were the selected ones because of the originality in which the issue of pioneers in Canada was dealt with, both in content and in performance.

Most of the dissertation was written during one of my stays in Canada, having Prof. Plant's help in giving shape to the structure of the thesis. Also I took many Canadian dissertations on different literary topics as reference for my own dissertation. These are definitely the reasons of having written a dissertation with such a specific topic and not a more generalist one that included his whole theatre work. Thus, the dissertation ended up being a study, in the light of post-modern and post-colonial theories, of the use of documentary and myth in these two plays that portrayed pioneer Canada.

The first part of "Staging Pioneer Canada: A Study of Documentary and Myth in James Reaney's *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*" is devoted to the study of documentary. The initial chapter offers an overview of the different approaches to documentary in the fields of literature and theatre. Works by writers and critics such as Dorothy Livesay, Frank Davey, Barbara Godard, Stephen Scobie, Linda Hutcheon and Manina Jones on the use of documents and documentation in the Canadian narrative long poems and novels are discussed. With regard to drama, I refer to works by Diane Bessai and Alan Filewod. Finally, in the light of these contributions, I present my own approach to the study of 'documentary' in Reaney's history plays *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* regarding the plays as dramatic texts and, therefore, as literary texts.

Chapters two and three offer a study of how the 'documentary' aspect reveals itself in *The Donnelly's* and *Baldoon*. An analysis of documentary involves Reaney's treatment of the plot, characters, time and place as constituents of the dramatic text. This analysis of documentary includes an approach to the documentation inserted in the text and to several stage documentary techniques (taking as reference the information given in the *didascalia*). The third chapter is devoted to *The Donnelly's*, one of the most important plays in English Canada. Documentary in *The Donnelly's* is dealt with as an example of revision since by using the documentary element, the author attempts to revise the history/story of the Donnelly's. *Baldoon* is the subject of the third chapter in which the documentary aspect is seen as an exploration of topics such as religion and witchcraft in nineteenth-century pioneering settlements.

The second part of this study, dedicated to 'myth', is also composed of three chapters. The first chapter is an overview of several theories of myth in general in order to contemplate the evolution of the term from classical Greece to the 20th century, and how it became related to literature. With respect to myth in relation to ritual and literature the studies of J.G. Frazer and the Cambridge School, Jessie Weston, Maud Bodkin and Richard Chase are briefly considered. A more detailed study is devoted to Frye's theories on myth. As Frye's influence on Reaney's concept of literature is of great importance, the

way Frye's theories remain somehow present in Reaney's works is also addressed. The concept of 'New World Myth' in relation to Reaney's own myth is also dealt with.

In chapters five and six, *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* are once more the object of detailed study. The fifth chapter analyzes *The Donnellys* as an example of 're-mythologization'. That is, I analyze how Reaney, while deconstructing the widely popular myth of the Black Donnellys, creates a new Donnelly myth. The way in which the author did so and a subsequent analysis of the new myth in the light of Frye's theories constitute the core of the chapter. *Baldoon*, the object of study of chapter six, is approached as an example of mythmaking based on a popular legend. Reaney and Gervais used such a legend, in which poltergeist and witchcraft issues in the settlement of Baldoon are predominant, as the basis for their play. How the process of mythmaking from this legend is carried out is studied in this chapter, and also how the myth is placed within the Fryian mythical frame. Although both documentary and myth are considered separately in this study in order to carry out a more thorough survey of the plays regarding these aspects, the tension between them is ever present in the two plays that are studied. The way this tension underlies them and the implications that result are analyzed in the conclusion. That is to say, the conclusion expresses how Reaney's use of documentary and myth is representative of postmodernist and post-colonial

trends that intend to destabilize traditional approaches to history, myth, religion, literature and theatre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is a number of people and institutions that I would like to thank for their help and support: my supervisor, Bernd Dietz for giving me the chance to meet the fascinating field of Canadian Literature; Professor Richard Plant, from the University of Toronto for helping me give shape to the dissertation and guide me in the selection of the topic; James Reaney, for sending me most of his works and always receiving me very kindly; the Drama Centre staff, especially Jean Glasgow for being so kind to me; the staff from Robarts Library at the University of Toronto for kindly allowing me to have access to the stacks, and the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria for granting me financial support for some of my visits to Canada.

I would also like to give special thanks to my family, especially to my mother and my sister for loving me and helping at all times; and Rafael, my husband, for helping and encouraging me during the whole process of preparing this dissertation.

To all of them I hereby present my sincere acknowledgements.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NFCL: *Northrop Frye Critical Lectures*

Anatomy: *Anatomy of Criticism*

S.S.: *Sticks and Stones*

H.: *Handcuffs*

S.N.H.: *The St. Nicholas Hotel. Wm. Donnelly Property.*

ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	<i>The Donnellys'</i> National Tour Announcement	343
2.	NDWT cast for <i>The Donnellys</i>	344
3.	NDWT company (Pictures taken from Reaney, James, <i>14 Barrels from Sea to Sea</i>).	345
4.	Workshops (Pictures taken from Reaney, James, <i>Wacousta</i>).	346
5.	<i>The Donnellys'</i> performances (Pictures taken from Reaney, James, <i>The Donnelly Trilogy</i>).	347-8
6.	<i>Baldoon</i> performances (Pictures taken from Reaney, James, <i>Baldoon</i>).	349-50
7.	Pictures from the Donnelly family	352-4
8.	Pictures from key characters in the massacre	355-7
9.	Pictures from the Donnellys' tombstones	358
10.	Map of Lucan village	359
11.	Letters	360
12.	Father Connolly's book	361
13.	Notices and Announcements	362
14.	Portraits of prisoners (Pictures taken from Fazakas, Ray, <i>The Donnelly Album</i>).	363
15.	Photograph of James Reaney, myself and my husband	371

INTRODUCTION

The present work intends to analyze how Canadian playwright James Reaney portrays and stages key events from the Canadian heritage by making use of both documentary and mythical aspects in a specific and personal manner. Both aspects are thus studied from a general perspective and then, in relation to two of James Reaney's many plays, grouped and included under the general label of "historical drama".

In order to carry out this study, it is necessary to first offer an overview of James Reaney's personal, social and academic background, highlighting those aspects relating to the author's trajectory as a poet but chiefly as a playwright within the Canadian theatrical panorama. It is my intention to place a special emphasis on those events that had a particular influence on his theatrical work.

James Reaney was born in 1926 on a farm in South Easthope Township, near Stratford, Ontario. This specific environment, i.e. the farm and its surroundings, pervaded his early poems, short stories and plays, thus becoming "the physical centre of his world" (Stingle 1990, 1). During his childhood and adolescence he attended Elmhurst School, South Easthope (1932-39) and Stratford Collegiate and Vocational Institute (1939-44). His early education on the academic side was completed on the religious side by his attendance of an Interdenominational Sunday school in the country and, later on, of a Presbyterian and a Congregational Sunday school in Stratford. The experience of what he calls the "Evangelical Tabernacle", where he studied the Bible, learned about and read books such as *Daniel and the Revelation: the Response of History to the Voice of Prophecy* and *Satan or Christ?*, greatly influenced the author's vision of the world. This aspect is pointed out by Woodman¹ who finds reminiscences of the apocalyptic vision of this

¹ Woodman, Ross (1971) *James Reaney*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

evangelical world in his early Gothic dramas such as *The Sun and The Moon*², *The Killdeer* and *The Easter Egg*³, which

owe an enormous debt to the melodramatic vision which he first encountered in the evangelical world. They are, in large measure, that world raised to the level of imaginative vision. His fondness for melodrama, his extremely simplified characters that at times merely personify a rather child-like vision of good and evil, his radical reversals in the last act that in their own way are informed with a certain evangelical 'giddiness' are distinctive features of Reaney's drama whose roots are in the religious world of his childhood (1971,9).

Reaney wrote his first play during his period at high school. With regard to this play he commented: "It was about Stratford, set in Perth County. It was sort of a disaster, but it was fun" (Cowan 1978, 19). Southwestern Ontario continued to be the setting in many of his subsequent plays.

After finishing high school, he moved to Toronto in order to study English language and literature (with Honours options in Greek, Latin, and History) at University College, University of Toronto. He received his B.A. in 1948 and his M.A. one year later. During his stay at the University, he continued to write mainly poetry, but some short stories and plays as well. In 1949, his first collection of poems was published under the title of *The Red Heart*⁴. In it, the writer portrays a romantic world filled with horror, fear and

² Reaney, James (1962) *The Killdeer and Other Plays: The Killdeer, The Sun and the Moon, One-man Masque, Night-Blooming Cereus*, Toronto: McMillan.

³ Reaney, James (1972) *Masks of Childhood: The Easter Egg, Three Desks, The Killdeer*, ed. by Brian Parker, Toronto: new press.

⁴ Reaney, James (1949) *The Red Heart*, Indian File no.3, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

solitude, much along the line of Blake's *Songs of Experience*. This book of poems won him the Governor General's Award⁵ and launched his prolific career as a poet and playwright.

Having finished his M.A., Reaney was appointed to a teaching position at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, where he taught *Creative Writing*, among other courses, and continued to write. Among the books he worked on was *A Suit of Nettles*, published in 1958, for which he won a second Governor General's Award. *A Suit of Nettles*⁶ is based on Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* and presents a series of eclogues whose protagonists are a bunch of geese on an Ontario farm. The dialogues maintained among the geese are both lyric and satiric, touching on themes such as love, music, death, and keeping "a sharp eye on the health of church and state" (Wilson 1958, 160). Although the book had a mixed reception on the part of the critics, his erudition and creativity were, in general, very much applauded. With regard to this work of poetry, Northrop Frye stated:

I will say only that I have never read a book of Canadian poetry with so little 'dissociation of sensibility' in it, where there was less separating of emotion and intellect, of the directly visualized and the erudite. He has succeeded, as I think no poet has so succeeded before, in bringing southern Ontario, surely one of the most inarticulate communities in human culture, into a brilliant imaginative focus (1971, 90-91).

⁵ As is well known, the Governor General's Awards are Canadian literary prizes annually awarded in English and French. The awarded categories are Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Non-fiction, Children's Literature (Text and Illustrations) and Translation.

⁶ Reaney, James (1958) *A Suit of Nettles*, Toronto: McMillan; (reprinted by Porcépic in 1975).

Among the academic influences on Reaney at the time were Margaret Arnott Mcleod in History, John Warkentin and Fred Watts in Geography as well as his reading of Marshall McLuhan. Their works helped the young writer to grasp a new vision of the land. About Mcleod, Reaney wrote: "Blind, she could make you see the old landmarks on the river road north from town as they still existed when she could see and was young" (1970, 97).

Reaney's stay in Winnipeg, in spite of being a productive time, was hard at first, since it was difficult to make the city and the province "a locale, a home place for [him]" (Reaney 1970, 95). In a sense, he was too far away from his physical and psychical centre, that of Southwestern Ontario. Hence, in 1957 he took a leave of absence to complete his Ph.D. courses and finalize his thesis⁷ on Spenser and Yeats under the supervision of Northrop Frye. During this time back in Toronto he became more heavily involved with Frye's theories on myth, although these were not absolutely new to him, for he had previously read *Fearful Symmetry*⁸ (1947), a work that marked Reaney's own career as a poet. Reaney has himself stated that *Anatomy of Criticism*⁹, published the year he returned to Toronto, helped him find the form he was seeking for his literary work. He commented that "it saves time if nothing else to have a book

⁷ His thesis, entitled *The Influence of Spenser on Yeats*, is a key study in order to understand Reaney's own work since much of the world portrayed in his poetry follows Yeats' principles.

⁸ Frye, Northrop (1947) *Fearful Symmetry. A Study of William Blake*, Princeton University Press (1990, 10th printing).

⁹ _____ (1957) *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, Princeton University Press, (1990, 10th printing).

like the *Anatomy of Criticism* around and I consider it to be the poet's handbook that T.S. Eliot's criticism failed to produce" (1959, 188).

Reaney's fondness for Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* was such that he even considered it a model for his ideal type of theatre. This theatre is described as "a building whose proportions reflected the cosmos as traditional poetry sees it: hell beneath, heavens up there, a middle earth section where actors get torn in two by the conflicts in the already named areas" (1980, 20).

The presence of Frye's theories underlying most of his poetic works caused Reaney to be regarded by scholars and critics as a disciple of the mythopoeic school along with Jay McPherson, Eli Mandel and others. Being a mythopoeic writer also granted him the consideration, on the part of some critics, of devoting his literary work to merely telling stories that were far from reality, most particularly from Canadian reality. For instance, Frank Davey criticized him, together with MacPherson and Mandel, for having "retreated from the reality of themselves and their country into an emasculated international world of myth and archetype" (1972, 64). Along the lines of Davey, Linda Sandler commented upon the excessive literariness of Reaney's myths. She argues that "reading him is sometimes like entering a hall of mirrors; you feel he's writing parodies of poems you've forgotten - not imitating them, but gripped by the same iconic and rhythmic storm that

produced the originals. Blake, Sitwell, Lear, Coleridge, Swinburn - they're all there, in effigy" (1975, 85). Contrary to this critical school, Woodcock considered Reaney folkloric rather than mythopoeic since, in his opinion, "he has almost single-handedly turned the *fait divers* of rural Ontario's local history into a body of romantically conceived folklore such as exists nowhere else in Canada outside Québec, but essentially he is a fanciful Grimm rather than a Goethe, ..." (1993, 123).

The accusations of making use of excessive international archetypes and myths may be partly true, mainly with respect to his early works, including his plays. Pieces such as *The Killdeer*, *The Sun and the Moon* or *The Easter Egg* - that mainly deal with the characteristic romantic topic of the loss of innocence and its subsequent pain - are filled with archetypal characters representing the dichotomy of good versus evil. However, surprisingly, in an interview¹⁰ with the author, when asked about his use of this type of fictional archetypal characters, he, very tacitly, answered that there were people like that where he lived as a child. Besides, it is quite noticeable that although his characters seem to be excessively archetypal and his stories overwhelmingly mythical, Reaney seems to have had a specific geographical place in mind when writing his *mythoi*. Hence, references to specific places and customs in the region of Southwestern Ontario, the use of certain idioms and vocabulary typical of such

¹⁰ This interview was prepared by the author of the present study and took place in London Ontario, in June 1995.

a region, etc. are commonplace in these plays in an attempt to show a personal portrait of Canadian life, or more specifically of life in Southwestern Ontario.

However, in his early years as a playwright, Reaney still had not found the "magical formula" for conveying a sense of reality to his stories, that is, for mixing the correct amount of life and the proper dose of art in his works. It was a few years later when the writer found this "magical formula" to convey both myth and fact, that is, real stories filled with mythical and archetypal patterns: what he called the juxtaposition of documentary and myth. He made a leit-motif out of this and it even became the central idea of his magazine *Alphabet. A Semi-annual Devoted to the Iconography of the Imagination*, which the playwright started to edit and publish in 1960. In the editorial of the first issue, he made his predicament clear: "That's how poetry works: it weaves street scenes and twins around swans in legendary pools. Let us make a form out of this: documentary on one side and myth on the other: Life and Art. In this form we can put anything and the magnet we have set up will arrange it for us" (1960, 4).

The juxtaposition of documentary and myth, then, became the motto of *Alphabet*, each number of which was devoted to a myth and to a story or poem related to that particular myth. It also turned, since then, into an ever-present aspect in Reaney's work, which helped to articulate his commitment to create a

Blakean Jerusalem out of his region. As Ross Woodman says, he emerged "in his work as a member of a defined poetic Elect whose task (...) [was] imaginatively to redeem the times" (1971, 10).

Reaney's liking for re-telling myths and re-creating archetypes was present in his plays from the very beginning and, although the setting of many of his early plays was mostly Southwestern Ontario, the stories told did not happen in "real" life. His interest in using real life events in order to tell a story emerged from his particular zeal in enabling people to have access to their own cultural traditions, in his case, the Southwestern Ontario traditions. This special interest in bringing to the light such cultural background was very much related to the cultural, political and socio-economic changes that Canada was undergoing at the time, and that ultimately led to the revival of a nationalist sentiment which embraced all artistic expressions.

This nationalist sentiment revealed itself within the theatrical field as a quest for a national theatre with plays, topics, playwrights and actors of its own. Such a quest, nonetheless, had originally been initiated back in the early 1930s with playwrights such as Herman Voaden fighting for the creation of a personal theatrical form. Voaden, influenced by the German Expressionist drama, and especially committed to producing a creative Canadian drama, developed his own theory of drama, an amalgam of diverse art forms, which

he called Symphonic Expressionism. Some writers, though, such as Denis Salter (1991, 71) take this quest even farther back, thus dating what he calls "agitation for a distinctively Canadian kind of national theatre" in the nineteenth century.

In an article published as early as 1916, Beverly Baxter (in Rubin 1996, 43) pointed out that the Canadian National Theatre was "a serious undertaking and should be the concern of every one, artist and artisan, poet and preacher, capitalist and politician." He also insisted that seeking artistic expression was "the law of nations." Although the terms of *nation* and *national theatre* were recurrent, there was no attempt to define the sense of nation applied to Canada.

Six years later, in an article published in *Queen's Quarterly*, Vincent Massey ventured to acknowledge the non-existence of only one Canada as, using Salter's words, "a homogeneous, unique, and readily identifiable nation-state" (72), and thus, the impossibility to have such a kind of national theatre. He (1922, 205) explained:

We shall find, however - indeed we know it already - that Canada is a unit in a political sense - otherwise it is still a magnificent abstraction. In the elements out of which the drama is made - manners and social customs and atmosphere - there are several Canadas, for a country so scattered geographically, and composed of so many types, diversified in their origin, is bound always to reveal great provincial divisions. (...) Our schools of drama, and our repertory theatres, too, will inevitably develop on sectional

lines. The forces of geography are too strong for the growth of a national drama in the strict sense.

The idea of different theatres or, what he calls 'little theatres'¹¹ along Canada was subsequently referred to by Caplan in his article "The Ultimate National Theatre", in which he states how the foundations for a Canadian national theatre are in these little theatres growing all throughout the country (1929, 143). Taking both the Little Theatre Movement and the Irish Literary Movement as the main references for a national theatre, Canada embarked on her quest. Thus theatres such as Toronto's Hart House, which grew up under the auspices of the University of Toronto and festivals like the Dominion Drama Festival, which gave Canadian actors the opportunity to start thinking about being professionals, started to emerge. Also did companies like Dora Mavor Moore's New Play Society, which was born with the Irish Abbey Theatre model in mind, and Luscombe's Workshop Productions, Toronto's first 'alternative theatre' developed in Ontario. Likewise, theatrical works such as those developed by Voaden and by community centres such as Manitoba Theatre Centre and Ottawa Little Theatre, among others, became a reality.

However, financial support for creating a national theatre did not arrive until the 1950s. In this decade, the government became involved with the aim of financially supporting and establishing an official Canadian theatre.

¹¹ The term "little theatre", using the American generic term, refers to experimental amateur theatre.

Theatre voices like that of Voaden (1946, 391) were being heard in the 1940s asking for government subsidization and arguing that

if Canada is to become a world cultural power, as important in the arts as she is now in trade and industrial production, she must subsidize not only the radio and film, but the visual arts, music and the theatre as well. (...) Only then will the theatre reach its true stature as a humane, civilizing instrument, expressing and enriching the life of a young but potentially great nation.

The answer from the Government came in 1949 when Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent established a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Vincent Massey chaired the Commission and its main goal was to obtain reports about the state of the disciplines selected. Playwright Robertson Davies elaborated the report on theatre. This report took the form of a dramatic dialogue in which the characters of Lovewit and Trueman are revived and make a number of suggestions and recommendations regarding the state of theatre in Canada, touching mainly on topics such as professionalism, education and training. Some of these opinions about the issues of professionalism and subsidy for the theatre were as follows

Trueman: Acting, as a profession, is still in its infancy in Canada. We might hope for the establishment of a native tradition if there were not strong forces working against it. (1975, 22)

Trueman: [The Government of Canada] could do several things. It could give reputable travelling companies, composed of Canadians, a special favourable rate on the Canadian National Railways, by making some suitable arrangement with the railway authorities. The haulage of a

company and a quantity of scenery are a formidable consideration for any theatrical venture. (29)

Finally, Davies finishes his report with Trueman's final speech defending the idea of a national theatre for Canada, as some scholars such as Massey and Voaden, among others, had previously done:

Trueman: (...) Of course I believe that Canada needs a National Theatre! But I want Canada to have a strong National Theatre, directed by competent artists of the theatre, and so highly esteemed by our country and by the civilized world that it can, literally, run its own show and be under no obligation to cringe whenever a contumelious parliamentarian knits his brows! I want Canada to have a National Theatre which will be in competition with other Canadian Theatres of the first rank. . I want Canada to have a National Theatre which is one of the proudest possessions of the state, and not a drag upon the public purse! For the theatre is one of the arts which can maintain high standards and still pay its way; it is a truly popular art, and the people will support it when it is unmistakably of the first quality. I want a National Theatre in Canada as soon as we have developed a fine native theatre which has learned to support itself by its own efforts, asking from the Government a very little money and a few favours as assurances of goodwill. I want, in short, a National Theatre with its roots in the country, nourished by experience, craftsmanship, and a noble ideal of what a theatre should be! (36)

Among the results of such a commission was the creation of the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences. The Canada Council has generally been recognized to have played a major role in the change of the nature of theatre in Canada "providing a sudden massive influx of government funding for buildings, companies and individuals engaged in the arts" (Wasserman 1985, 13). And although it appeared to be the definitive launch of a distinctive Canadian theatre, that did

not occur until the 1960s and 1970s, a period during which the Canadian theatrical panorama experienced significant changes. This major new development resulted from, as Filewod¹² states, the confluence of several historical forces such as

the revival of nationalism that was so crucial in all sectors of Canadian life in the 1970s; the large-scale injection of government funding into the arts; the maturing of the post-war generation and its rejection of traditional artistic conventions; and a world-wide revival of experimental theatre that challenged traditional forms of theatrical production. (1987, vii)

All of these changes became reflected mainly in the proclivity for using indigenous themes instead of foreign topics and for experimenting with new theatrical forms rather than conventional ones. Definitively, they became reflected in an attempt to create a true distinctive Canadian theatre.

This important undertaking was carried out most notably by the so-called "alternative theatre". "Alternative theatre" has become an elusive term that needs to be addressed in more detail. Renate Usmiani, Alan Filewod and Denis Johnston, among others, have amply studied the "alternative theatre" movement in Canada. Each of them offers his/her definition and overview of its origin.

¹² Filewod, Alan (1987) *Collective Encounters. Documentary Theatre in English-Canada*, University of Toronto Press.

In her book *Second Stage. The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada*¹³(1983) Usmiani aligns the Canadian alternative theatre with the European "avant-garde" movement. In her view, both movements "arise in opposition to an established tradition as a result of the dialectic pattern of cultural history" (1). However, she clarifies that whereas "avant-garde" "usually refers to a strictly aesthetic concern, alternative movements set themselves up in opposition to institutions and social patterns, as well as artistic conventions." Usmiani provides a series of characteristics that identify the movement as a whole. These are basically its production by companies operating outside the theatrical establishment, a revolutionary and experimental aesthetics, a revolutionary social and political ideology, its production of "popular" theatre, its use of techniques of collective creation and improvisation, and its nationalism. She places the basis of Canadian alternative theatre in "a long tradition of avant-garde experimentation in Europe, and definite patterns of performance style in the United States" (21). With regard to its emergence in Canada, Usmiani points to three different dates that indicate the formal beginning of an alternative theatre movement in English Canada. These are "1959, the founding of Toronto Workshop Productions by George Luscombe; 1970, the year of the first Underground Theatre Festival and also the year when the term "alternate theatre" was first

¹³ Usmiani, Renate (1983) *Second Stage. The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada*, Vancouver: University of Toronto Press. This is quite a useful book and guide to the Canadian alternative theatre, though its approach is somewhat centred on Europe.

used; 1971, the year of the Gaspé and Niagara-on-the-Lake Playwrights Conference" (27).

Whereas Usmiani's approach to the English-Canadian alternative theatre is eurocentric, Johnston's approach centres around Toronto. In his book *Up the Mainstream. The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres*¹⁴ (1991), he places the city as the centre and origin of the English-Canadian alternative theatre movement. He points out that the alternative this type of theatre offered was, first of all, "to existing forms of professional theatre in Canada, to the highly developed bureaucracy of the Stratford Festival¹⁵ and to the well-heeled respectability of the regional theatres" (5). In his identification of the emergence of the alternative theatre movement in Canada, Johnston goes back to the 1930s, mainly to the work of the Workers' Experimental Theatre in Toronto. As a later stage in the movement he also cites George Luscombe in the 1960s.

Although he does not concentrate his study on the alternative theatre movement, Filewod, in his *Collective Encounters*¹⁶(1987), approaches the term and describes several characteristics that identify his concept of "alternative theatre". Filewod sees the alternative theatre mainly as the manifestation of a

¹⁴ Johnston, Dennis W. (1991) *Up the Mainstream. The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres, 1968-1975*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. This book deepens our knowledge of the alternative theatre movement in one of the most theatrical (regarding the number of theatres) Canadian cities, that is, Toronto.

¹⁵ The Stratford Festival was inaugurated in 1953 in the city of Stratford, Ontario as a result of the impulse given to the arts after the Massey Report. It is a theatre festival entirely devoted to Shakespearean drama, being all the performances offered of Shakespeare's plays and only one of a Canadian playwright. The festival is still current and very much alive.

¹⁶ Filewod, Alan (1987) *Collective Encounters. Documentary Theatre in English-Canada*, University of Toronto Press. This major study on Canadian documentary theatre focuses on six plays that developed the different tendencies of this type of theatre at the time (1970s and early 1980s).

new era of Canadian nationalism absolutely related to a 'post-colonial' stance "because of its explicit rejection of foreign models and standards" (vii). In his opinion, the alternative theatre sought to discover authentic indigenous Canadian dramatic forms. One of the most characteristic dramatic forms used by the movement is the collective creation, a process in which the acting companies, along with the director and sometimes a playwright, or other artists (designers, musicians) develop a play. Filewod states that one of the most important manifestations of the desire to define an indigenous culture was "the recognition of regionalism as a determining factor in Canadian culture" (21). This is one of the crucial aspects in Filewod's approach to Canadian alternative theatre, that is, his consideration of the regionalist factor as a manifestation of post-colonial sentiment. This idea was already present in Bessai, who argues that "localism in its contemporary theatrical forms is a demonstrably important phase in the establishment of a mature, decentralized culture" (1980, 30). Localism and regionalism as well as indigenous dramatic forms (collective creation and presentational devices) become key characteristics of the Canadian alternative theatre, seen by Filewod as a model of post-colonial drama. Therefore, in his view, more than anything else, the Canadian alternative theatre meant a definitive step in the liberation and independence of a "colonized culture" or, in his own words, "an important stage in the evolution of Canadian culture from colonialism to cultural

autonomy"(vii). With regard to its origin within Canada, Filewod, like Johnston, goes back to the 1930s.

Out of the three approaches to Canadian alternative theatre, I consider Filewod's the most complete since he has included, as a major feature in his definition, the notion of a regionalist factor, which I also regard as a key characteristic within Canadian culture in general¹⁷. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, each time the term is used in this thesis I will be considering Filewod's concept of alternative theatre.

Among the playwrights who played a part in the development of the alternative theatre are James Reaney and his history plays, in which a good number of features characteristic of the "new Canadian theatre" such as regionalism and the use of the documentary technique are present.

The term history play has been so loosely used that it calls for a clear or, at least, elucidating definition. As Harben¹⁸ (1988, 1) comments, stating that plays "based on history or having a historical theme" are history plays, "raises more questions than it allays doubts as to what constitutes the genre." Therefore, for the purposes of the present dissertation, the term needs to be addressed.

¹⁷ In concordance with authors like George Woodcock (refer to "The Meeting of Time and Space: Regionalism in Canadian Literature" 1980), I consider regionalism to be a key or central characteristic of Canada as a country, since the European concept of nation does not apply to this country, which is mainly based on a confluence of the different regions. This regionalist character is embedded in all Canadian cultural and artistic expressions.

¹⁸ Harben, Niloufer (1988) *20th-Century English History Plays*, London: MacMillan Press.

Attempting to define what a history play is brings into light several aspects that ask for consideration, such as the relation of the playwright with history and thus with the historian. In his book on the English history plays in the age of Shakespeare, Ribner¹⁹ (1965, 12) states that in a history play the dramatic and the historical intentions are inseparable. Consequently, although the dramatist's main goal is to entertain the audience, "when he goes to history for his subject matter, (...) he assumes the functions of the historian as well." It is thus supposed that the playwright must show a strict regard for historicity in the presentation of the facts and their interpretation in his/her unique imaginative insight. The question of what extent the playwright has to present a "historical truth" also poses the question of whether there is a "historical truth".

As history requires the existence of the past in its traceable form (documents) and the reconstruction and interpretation of such documents by the historian, the issues of objectivity and veracity of the historical accounts are also questioned. This has been the task of the new historiography whose current models, as Knowles clarifies, "recognize that the past, insofar as it is external and objective, can only exist as fragments, 'facts', and documents that are in their own cultural terms, impenetrable. They recognize, that is, that

¹⁹ Ribner, Irving (1957, 1965 3rd ed.) *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare*, London: Methuen & Co Ltd.

'truth' inheres not in the facticity or actuality of events but in the ways in which 'we' understand them and construct their histories" (1999, 121).

As a result of the new perspectives regarding history, the existence of clear-cut limits between history and legend has also been addressed. We may observe how the positions regarding this issue have varied and how this has led to a change in the concept of history play. For instance, Ribner (1965) in his consideration of what type of plays could be considered history plays argues that "plays based upon (...) legends, (...) cannot be called history plays" (25). This is due to his belief that although the legend may be based upon actual fact, it will often disregard history and become folklore.

Conversely, Harben (1988) shows how even historians find it impossible to place a boundary between history and legend. He cites E.H. Erikson as an example of how the approach to these elements has changed. Erikson (1988, 8) considers that "the making of legend is as much part of the scholarly rewriting of history as it is part of the original facts used in the work of scholars." Harben states that historical plays of modern playwrights often refer more directly to legend than they do to fact. This adds even more complexity to the task of defining a history play. However, certain points of reference should be maintained that help distinguish history from the history play, and therefore, the task of the playwright from that of the historian. Harben argues that these

are that "history and the history play are two distinct, disparate forms of writing with markedly different aims and have to abide by their own rules and conventions" (14). In the light of this, certain boundaries can be placed between the task of the historian and that of the playwright regarding the interpretation of documents. In the author's view, in the case of the former, he/she is expected to subdue his/her imagination to the controls of scholarship and accept the primacy of his/her sources. The latter uses history as inspiration and, therefore, he/she can be free (to a certain extent) to explore the universal truths embodied in his/her subject. The limitation in the freedom of the playwright is imposed by his/her commitment to showing a "historical truth" understood as the historian's only proper ambition in offering knowledge of a reality however unattainable in an absolute form. In this sense, Harben defines the history play as "a play which evinces a serious concern for historical truth or historical issues though the expression of that concern and the treatment of those issues may take protean forms" (18).

This definition of the history play is flexible enough to allow for the inclusion of those plays where the boundary between history and legend is blurred. This is the case of Reaney's history plays and specifically of those that inform the core of my thesis, i.e. *The Donnellys*²⁰ and *Baldoon*²¹. Within the use

²⁰ Reaney, James (1975, 1976, 1977) *Sticks and Stones: The Donnellys Part I, The St Nicholas Hotel: The Donnellys Part II, Handcuffs: The Donnellys Part III*, Erin, Ont.: Porcépic.

²¹ Reaney, James & C.H. Gervais (1976) *Baldoon*, Erin, Ont.: Porcupine's Quill.

of the term, Reaney's history plays would include *The Donnelly Trilogy* (1975, 76, 77), *Balloon* (1976), *Wacousta*²² (1979), *The Canadian Brothers*²³ (1984), *The Dismissal: or Twisted Beards and Tangled Whiskers*²⁴ (1978), *I, the Parade* (1982), *Antler River* (1980) and *King Whistle!* (1980)²⁵.

Wacousta and *The Canadian Brothers* are based on John Richardson's novels of the same titles. Both depict highly fictionalized events concerning the history of Canada from 1763 and 1812. *Antler River* offers a series of episodes in the history of London, Ontario and *I, the Parade*, the story of an American professor who brings music to Waterloo, Ontario. These latter two have been considered the least powerful of his history plays, since both lack a strong design behind them. Conversely, *The Dismissal* along with *The Donnelly Trilogy*, *Balloon* and *King Whistle!* present quite a defined theatrical form conveyed with great skill and variety. *The Dismissal* tells about the student strike at the University of Toronto in 1893 in support of Dr. Dale, who had been fired for manifesting against the hiring of foreign professors when it came to occupy senior positions at the University. *King Whistle!* presents the story of the Stratford strike in 1933 "when chicken pluckers and furniture workers rioted, marched and finally won their fight for higher wages and

²² Reaney, James (1979) *Wacousta!*, Toronto: Porcépic.

²³ _____ (1984) *The Canadian Brothers, or the Prophecy Fulfilled*, in *Major Plays of the Canadian Theatre, 1934-1984*, ed. by Richard Perkyns, Toronto: Irwin.

²⁴ _____ (1978) *The Dismissal or Twisted Beards and Tangled Whiskers*, Erin, Ont.: Porcépic.

²⁵ _____ (1980) *King Whistle!* in *Brick 8*.

better working conditions, but not before the army was called in to quell the violence" (Wilson 1980, 74). This story is conveyed in the form of a musical. *The Donnelly Trilogy* and *Balloon*, besides a similar *mise en scène*, have in common the fact of being plays dealing with the pioneering experience in the nineteenth-century in the "physical and psychological centre" of James Reaney, that is, Southwestern Ontario, or as he calls it, "Souwesto."

The Donnelly Trilogy is composed of *Sticks and Stones*, *The St. Nicholas Hotel*, and *Handcuffs*. The trilogy is based on the story of the Donnellys, an actual family who came out from Ireland in 1844 to Biddulph Township, Ontario, and were nearly annihilated by a secret society formed among their neighbours 36 years later. The first part, *Sticks and Stones*, covers the beginnings of the Donnelly story, tracing the origins of their problems in Biddulph back in Ireland. The second part, *The St. Nicholas Hotel*, presents us with a race between the Donnelly boys and their enemies. This play develops the story of the vicissitudes between the Donnellys and their neighbours with the passing of time. Finally, *Handcuffs*, which is set in the present day, contains, by means of continuous flashbacks and the retelling of the events by different characters, the final massacre of five members of the family by a secret society on the night of February 4th, 1880.

In order to facilitate the understanding of the analysis of the plays to the reader, I find it useful to tell a little bit more in detail the story of the Donnelly family. The Donnellys were an Irish Catholic family that moved from their native Tipperary, Ireland to the Biddulph Township, Ontario, Canada with the aim of getting a better life, as most immigrants, and also due to, among others, religious problems. Back in Tipperary, the so-called Whitefeet, a group of Irish Catholics that formed a secret society against their English landlords, had menaced them. In leaving their country, the Donnelly family thought that their problems would remain there. Unfortunately, that was not the case. Soon after their arrival at Biddulph Township, their problems re-emerged.

The family arrived at Biddulph Township, 18 miles from London, Ontario in 1844. They settled on a piece of vacant land of about 100 acres on lot 18, concession 6, on the Roman line, where most Irish Catholics lived. After thirteen years living there, the difficulties started for the Donnellys when Mr. Donnelly, after helping in the Mulowney's logging bee, started a fight with Patrick Farrell and hurt him. Three days later, Mr. Farrell died. James Donnelly kept hidden for a year which meant suffering and despise from many neighbours to Mrs. Donnelly and her children. Their bad image in Biddulph started to grow.

In 1858 Mr. Donnelly gave himself up and was convicted of the murder of Patrick Farrell. He was planned to be executed on September 17th. On July 7th, Mrs. Donnelly presented a petition for clemency to Governor-General Edmund Head at Goderich, Ontario. Twenty-one days later, Mr. Donnelly's sentence was commuted to seven years' imprisonment. He was sent to Kingston Penitentiary, Ontario. While Mr. Donnelly was in jail, the problems for the family grew and grew. Some of his sons, particularly the youngest one started to be accused of some thefts. Meanwhile burnings of some farms continued to happen. Enemies of the Donnellys always pointed at them as the guilty of all crimes. A black legend about them, which remained for several decades, began to spread in the village. Finally on July 27th, 1865 Mr. Donnelly was released from prison.

As the family started to grow financially with Mr. Donnelly back home and his sons already grown up and entering the business of riding a stagecoach, attacks from their enemies started to amount. In 1867 their barn was burnt while they were at a wedding dance. Their water pump was also broken and a message reading "No water for the Blackfeet" was left.

In spite of all menaces, accusations and indictments, the Donnelly family decided never to leave Biddulph. They kept on working their land and two of their sons bought one of the stagecoaches. The hate their enemies felt

for them affected their personal relationships. That was the case of their youngest son, Will who fell in love with Maggie Donovan but without success, since she was prevented from marrying her because of her father's objection. This prohibition led Will to take part in a violent 'shivaree'²⁶, organized for Maggie's brother, William Donovan, with the motive of his wedding, in his search for her. He and four friends were tried for assault on William Donovan but they were found not guilty.

In the meantime, the secret society decided to form a vigilance committee due to the excess of problems in the township. The committee hired a Hamilton detective, Hugh McKinnon, with the supposedly sole purpose of building cases against the Donnellys.

Accusations of farm burnings, assaults and robberies by the Donnelly boys did not stop to come up one after the other. In spite of all these problems, the Donnelly family kept on growing financially. But things got even more complicated for the family when in 1879 Father Connolly, who had been working in a parish in Quebec, was appointed parish priest of St. Patrick's, Biddulph. He got parishioners to sign pledge to help him in the discovery and putting down of crime in the village.

²⁶ A shivaree is a noisy mock serenade to newlyweds, made with pans, kettles, etc.

On the other hand, one of their enemies, James Carroll, was appointed county constable. From that moment on, almost all of the crimes in the village were carried out by any of the Donnellys according to the committee and the constable.

In 1879 Mike Donnelly was stabbed to death and his killer seemed to be lightly punished. Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly, who were already old, were accused of burning Pat Ryder's barns and stables. Mr. Donnelly decided to write a letter to one of the newspapers declaring his innocence in the Ryder Fire. That same day, that is, February 3rd 1880, he went to the village and picked up 11 year old Johnny O'Connor to take care of the farm next day when Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly were in Granton, declaring before the Magistrate. About 10 p.m., the Donnellys received a visit from a supposedly friend of one of his sons, Jim Feeheley. As he forgot his coat in the house, the door was left unlocked for him to return for it, and also for the Vigilance Committee to enter the house.

Shortly after midnight a mob of about 40 members of the Vigilance Committee led by James Carroll entered the Donnelly homestead and killed James and Johannah as well as Tom and Bridget Donnelly, their niece that had arrived a short time before. Then, they burned them and their home. The only survivor and witness to the murders was Johnny O'Connor, who was hidden under a bed during the massacre. Johnny O'Connor run to one of the

neighbours' house asking for help when the mob left to Will Donnelly's home. When they arrived there, they shot and killed John Donnelly, who stayed that night at his brother's, thinking it was Will.

In March 1880 the hearings started. Some of the accused were clear enough. They were tried for committing murder. However, the trials were postponed. Finally, all accused were mysteriously found not guilty. No further trial of them or of anyone else was ever held for the murder of the five Donnellys killed on February 4th, 1880. This is basically the story that the three plays by James Reaney tell.

The setting of *Baldoon* is also Southwestern Ontario. In fact, Baldoon is the name of the village where the story takes place in the 19th century. For this play, the writers, James Reaney and C.H.Gervais, used accounts concerning poltergeist occurrences in John McDonald's homestead (which in the play is referred to as John McTavish) during the years 1828 to 1830. As the writers themselves state, (1976, 109) "this tale is the source of the play *Baldoon*. The story has been changed slightly and given a more complicated interpretation."

Baldoon also tells the story of a family from Scotland brought to Canada by the philanthropic Lord Selkirk. Each family was given a homestead of fifty acres in Baldoon, near Wallaceburg, Ontario. Most members of the settlement were strict Baptists. That was also the case of the family protagonist of the

play, the McDonalds (McTavish in the play). In this settlement also lived a family (named Pharlan in the play) who inhabited a long low log house and seemed to be a little bit unsociable. The relationship between the two families was especially bad because on his marriage with a rich widow there, McTavish gained a piece of land for his homestead which was coveted by the Pharlans. From 1828 to 1831 the McDonald family was witness and victim of mysterious events.

The first event was the collapse of John McDonald's barn for no apparent reason. After the barn's collapse suffered by McDonald's daughter and a group of girls, more strange events followed in the house when they were in. Suddenly a shower of leaden bullets went through the windows without hurting anybody. After going through the windows, the bullets would drop quietly on the floor.

Some later days, the shower of bullets continued. This time the bullets passed through the board without leaving a mark. When the family tried to get rid of the bullets by throwing them into the River Snye, they returned to the house.

Again, in the summer of 1829 new persecutions by noises and stones began. Noises of slow and steady steps were heard in their kitchen and continued to disturb the McDonalds for three years. Then stones began to

attack the family in the same mysterious manner as the bullets. By this time people from nearby places visited their house with the purpose of living one of those "supernatural occurrences". Events such as the violent rocking of the baby's cradle, the flying of kitchen utensils, the breaking out of fires in every room of the house, etc. would not stop to occur. The last thing to happen was the burning of the homestead until it was demolished. The family had to move in with John MacDonald's father but the curse followed them. Only during the winter of 1830, the persecutions ceased, coinciding with the time McDonald's daughter helped Mrs. Pharlan to weave a carpet. When the work was finished, the persecutions began again.

All kinds of attempts were made to discover the source of McDonald's trouble. Authorities from Toronto were sent, an Indian Medicine Man was consulted, a Catholic priest tried to calm the spirits through prayers, ceremonies and admonitions. But all of them were of no effect. Also a local gentleman called Robert Barker, who had read many books on witchcraft, tried to exorcise the evil spirit but again without success.

Finally one friend, Mr. McDormand was able to help Mr. McDonald. He took it to a Dutch doctor, Mr. Troyer, who had a daughter gifted with second sight and the power of stone reading. Both men travelled 80 miles to Long Point on Lake Erie to consult the Troyer family. After hearing the story

told by Mr. McDonald, Troyer's daughter looked into her moonstone and gave him some advice: he was supposed to shoot a goose with a black wing that was disturbing McDonald's flock. Back in Baldoon, McDonald did as he was told and quite strangely, the day after, he saw Mrs. Pharlan with a broken arm. From that day onwards, strange events ceased to happen.

This is basically the source of *Baldoon*, the play by Reaney and Gervais. As previously said, some changes were done by the authors with the purpose of achieving dramatic effect. One of these changes is the insertion of a Sabbath church meeting that is taking place when Mr. McDonald and Dr. Troyer go to Baldoon and intend to prove people the existence of different viewpoints and interpretations of the same events.

Both plays offer bits of the history and folklore of Reaney's region. In both, history and legend are intermingled in such a manner that it is impossible to tell their respective boundaries. This is, as we shall see, a technique used by the playwright in his attempt to convey his particular vision of history. This and other techniques employed by Reaney are analyzed within his more ample and characteristic strategy of juxtaposing documentary and myth, which is, as said in the foreword, considered an example of postmodern and post-colonial trends in literature. Postmodernism and post-colonialism are thus terms that need to be briefly addressed for the sake of clarification.

Much has been written about both postmodernism and post-colonialism and about the overlap between the two. It is my intention to offer just a brief review of some of the most important works on the issue with the aim of letting the reader know what I exactly refer to when I talk about postmodern and post-colonial trends in Reaney's two plays.

Postmodernism is a concept that has been characterized by elusiveness and ambiguity in its scope and goal. The term was succinctly defined by Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition* (1984)²⁷ as "incredulity toward metanarratives." That is, in his view, "no one set of rules, no one story, no one condition accurately explains knowledge and communication." Some years later, Linda Hutcheon, in her book *The Canadian Postmodern* (1988)²⁸ stated that postmodernism is a term whose definition "remains decidedly vague," though it would encompass, in her view, all "art forms that are fundamentally self-reflexive - in other words, art that is self-consciously art (or artifice), literature that is openly aware of the fact that it is written and read as part of a particular culture, having as much to do with the literary past with the social present" (1988, 1). However, what seems to be specifically relevant about postmodernism is its challenge of traditional beliefs about the function of art in society. It is characteristic of postmodernism an "urge to trouble, to question,

²⁷ Lyotard, Jean Franoise (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

²⁸ Hutcheon, Linda (1988) *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

to make both problematic and provisional any (...) desire for order or truth through the powers of the human imagination" (2). The postmodern writer, in Hutcheon's view, is located in an 'ex-centric' position with regard to the central or dominant culture, thus also challenging the pre-established boundaries. The way the writer does this is mainly by means of parody and irony, which are two of the most characteristic postmodern forms. The use of these literary forms in order to challenge and deconstruct pre-established universal truths is precisely one of the links of postmodernism and post-colonialism and even one of the reasons why post-colonialism was originally misunderstood and even considered part of postmodernism.

Post-colonialism is a term that, though referred to since the late 1970s in key works such as the second issue of *New Literature Review* (1977), devoted to 'post-colonial literatures', did not begin to be extensively used until the publication of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989)²⁹. In this book, Ashcroft *et al.* used the term 'post-colonial' to refer to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (1989, 2). Ever since, post-colonialism, like postmodernism, has been a much contested term. In Ashcroft's view, post-colonial studies developed "as a way of addressing the cultural production of those societies affected by the historical phenomenon of colonialism" (2001, 7).

²⁹ Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London and New York: Routledge.

Therefore, post-colonialism was conceived as a methodology "for analysing the many strategies by which colonised societies have engaged imperial discourses and [...] for studying the ways in which many of those strategies are shared by colonized societies, re-emerging in very different political and cultural circumstances" (7). Nevertheless, since its entry into the mainstream, the concept has grown and come to encompass a great variety of critical practices. Thus, post-colonialism has been used, as Slemon (1994, 16-7) points out,

as a way of ordering a critique of totalising forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of 'class', as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism (and conversely, as the condition from which those two structures of cultural logic and cultural critique themselves are seen to emerge); as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings; as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third-World intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of 'reading practice'; and - and this way my first encounter with the term - as the name for a category of 'literary' activity which sprang from a new and welcome political energy going on within what used to be called 'Commonwealth' literary studies.

Also Arif Dirlik (1994, 331-2) distinguishes a multiplicity of meanings that the term 'post-colonial' may carry, though he finally points out three of them as especially prominent:

(a) as a literal description of conditions in formerly colonial societies, in which case the term has concrete referents, as in postcolonial societies or postcolonial intellectuals; (b) as a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism, in which case the usage is somewhat more abstract and less concrete in reference, comparable in its vagueness to the earlier term Third World, for which it is intended as a substitute; and (c) as a description of a discourse on the above-named conditions that is informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions.

On the matters of the overlapping of both postmodernism and post-colonialism, the discussion has been strong between postmodern and post-colonial scholars. Part of the confusion and overlap between the two may have been due to the fact that "the major project of post-modernism - the deconstruction of the centralised, logocentric master narratives of European culture, is very similar to the post-colonial project of dismantling the Centre/Margin binarism of imperial discourse" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1995, 117). Some of the key studies on postmodernism and post-colonialism by authors such as Kwame Anthony Appiah, Simon During, Linda Hutcheon and Diana Brydon will be briefly reviewed with the aim of knowing their ideas on the issue.

In his book *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (1992)³⁰, Appiah points to a clear difference between both practices. For him, in both the post is the post of the "space-clearing gesture," a post "that challenges earlier legitimating narratives" (in Ashcroft *et al.* 1995, 123). But in

³⁰ Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1992) *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, London: Methuen, in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995).

contrast with postmodernism, he considers that post-colonialism challenges these narratives "in the name of the ethical universal; in the name of humanism, 'la gloire pour l'homme'"(123). And it is in that sense that he finds Western postmodernism an antagonist though they may share similarities.

For Simon During postmodernism and post-colonialism move in completely different directions, since, in his view, postmodern thought is characterized by a refusal to turn the Other into the Same, thus denying otherness. As post-colonialism constitutes according to him one of those Others ("nations or groups which have been victims of imperialism") which need "to achieve an identity uncontaminated by universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images," (1987, 33) there would be a clear difference between their goals.

Conversely, for Hutcheon (1989) there is a clear overlapping between both. She unhesitatingly states that "the links between the post-colonial and the postmodern are strong and clear ones" (150). Such links are a "predominant non-European interpretation of modernism as 'an international movement, elitist, imperialist, totalizing, willing to appropriate the local while being condescending toward its practice,' a "strong shared concern with the notion of marginalization" and "the use of the trope of irony as a doubled or split discourse which has the potential to subvert from within." Hutcheon

acknowledges, though, the politics of both differ in important ways, since "the post-colonial (...) is a dismantling but also constructive political enterprise insofar as it implies a theory of agency and social change that the postmodern deconstructive impulse lacks" (171).

Hutcheon's position on the issue is countered by Diana Brydon who believes that although both postmodernism and post-colonialism "seem to be concerned with the same phenomena, (...) they place them in different grids of interpretation" (1995, 137). Thus postmodernism emphasizes the aesthetics of the political and post-colonialism "foregrounds the political as inevitably contaminating the aesthetic but remaining distinguishable from it" (137). In Brydon's view, one of the key aspects to establish a clear difference between postmodernist and post-colonial practices is their different uses of history. She argues:

Without denying that things happened, postmodernism focuses on the problems raised by history's textualized accessibility: on the problems of representation, and on the impossibility of retrieving truth. Post-colonialism, in contrast, without denying history's textualized accessibility, focuses on the reality of a past that has influenced the present. As a result of these different emphases, postmodern fiction takes liberties with what we know of the facts of the past much more freely than does post-colonial fiction (142).

Along the lines of Brydon is Gilbert and Tompkin's (1996) pronouncement on the matters of the intersection of both practices. They state that although their time frames generally intersect, and postmodern literary

devices are often found in post-colonial texts, the two cannot be equated arguing that

Part of postmodernism's brief is the dismantling of the often unwritten but frequently invoked rules of genre, authority, and value. Post-colonialism's agenda, however, is more specifically political: to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power based on binary oppositions such as 'us and them', 'first world and third world', 'white and black', 'coloniser and colonised'. Postmodern texts are certainly political, but post-colonial texts embrace a more specifically political aim: that of the continued destabilisation of the cultural and political authority of imperialism (3).

Canadian literature has been largely analyzed under the umbrella of both postmodern and post-colonial approaches by authors like Davey, Bennett, Brydon, Hutcheon and Vautier to name a few. In their respective works, whether from a postmodern viewpoint (Davey³¹ and Hutcheon³²), a post-colonial one (Bennett³³ and Brydon³⁴) or both (Vautier³⁵), Canadian literature has been studied as representative of both practices. Also is the case with Canadian drama, though in key works such as those by Bessai³⁶, Filewod and Benson³⁷, modern Canadian drama is considered a model of post-colonial drama, which may, undoubtedly, make use of postmodern techniques in order

³¹ Davey, Frank (1971) *From There to Here*, Erin, Ont.: Press Porcepic.

³² Hutcheon, Linda (1988) *The Canadian Postmodern. A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³³ Bennett, Donna (1994) "English Canada's Postcolonial Complexities", *Essays on Canadian Writing* 52: 164-210.

³⁴ Brydon, Diana (1991) "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy" in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (eds.) *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-colonialism and Post-modernism*, New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

³⁵ Vautier, Marie (1998) *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction*, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press.

³⁶ Bessai, Diane (1992) *Playwrights of Collective Creation*, Toronto: Simon & Pierre.

³⁷ Benson, Eugene (1992) "Canada" in Bruce King (ed.) *Post-Colonial English Drama. Commonwealth Drama since 1960*, New York: St Martin's Press.

to convey its message. Such is the case of Reaney's plays that, in making use of documentary and myth in a specific and personal manner, become a clear example of one of the many post-colonial voices in Canadian drama³⁸.

Both aspects, documentary and myth, have been widely studied in relation to literature as well as to other disciplines with the result that there are diverse visions and perspectives which scholars have to take into account in order to carry out a satisfactory analysis in any field. Some of these visions and perspectives are considered in the next chapters in order to select those that can be of greater use to the study and analysis of *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*.

³⁸ Like authors Donna Bennett (1994) and Diana Brydon (1991), among others, have stated, we cannot speak of just one post-colonial voice in such a diverse country as Canada. In her interesting article on "English Canada's Post-colonial complexities", Bennett makes a historical overview of the different sources of post-colonial voices in the country, being one of them that of the Irish and Scottish settlers, the voice that is present in Reaney's plays.

FIRST PART

On Documentary

CHAPTER ONE

I. AN OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENTARY

"...the past once existed. But we can know it today only through its documents, its traces in the present."
(Hutcheon 1988, 22)

I.1. Documentary: A Review of Approaches in English-Canadian Literature and Theatre

Any work described by the noun or adjective 'documentary' may embody either one of the two meanings that such a term has. Thus, when stating that a work is documentary, we may refer to the fact that an element - whether a picture, an actual person, a map, a newspaper account, etc. - is used so that the reader or audience can document, that is, authenticate what is being expressed. Or rather, we may mean that such a work is related to the type of film that gives factual information about a subject. When dealing with literary

works it is the first meaning that basically prevails and as two literary pieces provide the core of this dissertation, basically this meaning will be considered in this review.

In English-Canadian literature, the documentary character has been amply studied with regard to poetry (documentary long poems), fiction (historiographic metafiction), and theatre (documentary plays).

The first considerable work on documentary in English-Canadian literature is Dorothy Livesay's essay "The Documentary Poem: a Canadian Genre"³⁹ (1971). In it, she speaks of the Canadian long poem "linked with the use of documentary material as the basis for poetry, the employment of the actual data itself" (267), as a new genre, that is the documentary poem. In her view, this type of writing attempts "to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet", thus being neither a narrative nor a historical epic, but a poem "based on topical data (...) held together by descriptive, lyrical and didactic elements" (267-268).

Under this label, she includes and analyzes specific works by authors as different and varied as Isabella Valancy Crawford, a poet from "a time of entrances", in Woodcock's words (1993, 1); Confederation poet Archibald Lampman; "uncompromising traditionalist" E.J. Pratt, and "social

³⁹ This paper was presented to A.C.U.T.E. at the Learned Societies, York University, 12 June 1969 and, then published along with other essays collected and edited by Eli Mandel under the title *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* (1971).

revolutionary in practice" (Woodcock 1993, 35, 75) Earle Birney. From Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie*, she says it is "not mere narrative [but] documentary and a prophecy, interspersed with some of the loveliest lyrics in our English-Canadian poetry" (275). Although Livesay acknowledges this poem to be a "love story", she does not hesitate to classify it as a documentary poem, arguing the use of documentary facts with regard to pioneer life in Canada, experienced and expressed by the author.

Other works labelled as documentary poems by Livesay are Lampman's *At the Long Sault*, based on a historical event. Also E.J. Pratt's *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, where "documentation [is] combined with raw experience; direct, plain, accurate language; sudden leaps into metaphor" (279) and Birney's *Trial of a City*, of which Livesay emphasizes

it truly contains the elements of a documentary: topical data, historical and geographic, based on research; no single protagonist; man versus nature which must be dominated if man wants "progress"; and a view of nature itself as brooding, implacable, but not sinister. (280)

These appear to be the main characteristics of the documentary poem according to Livesay, a genre which "record[s] immediate or past history in terms of the human story, in a poetic language that is vigorous, direct, and rendered emotionally powerful by the intensity of its imagery" (281).

In this sense, the documentary poem Livesay talks about follows the trend inaugurated in film by Grierson⁴⁰ in the 1940s. However, Livesay argues that Canadian poets have been using this approach for a very considerable time without taking into account Grierson's ideas, which were meant to be applied solely and uniquely to the film industry from which the documentary film originated. As a matter of fact, the term as such was introduced in the English-speaking world by Grierson himself in order to refer to film, after the French term "documentaire", which originally meant travelogue.

Grierson's documentary films were characterized by a series of principles which were the basis of a good number of documentary films made in Great Britain and in different countries of the Commonwealth, among them, Canada. These principles opted for using the documentary to picture the living scene and the living story, thus giving a certain preference to the original (or native) actor, the original (or native) scene and to the materials and the stories taken from the raw.

The adoption of these principles led to the making of films which were mainly portraits of the working class, intended to deliver information about it in a creative manner. That is, that "were meant to spread information and a rather benign message of democratic idealism and a belief in the working

⁴⁰ John Grierson was the head of the English Empire Marketing Board Film Unit, which helped to promote the documentary movement in England. In 1938, his services were required in Canada, where he created the National Film Board.

man". The method, in Grierson's words, was the "creative treatment of actuality"; 'you photograph the natural life, but also, by your juxtaposition of detail, create an interpretation of it' (Levin 1971, 12). It is in this sense that Livesay's "documentary poems" mirror Grierson's trend in film.

Along the lines of Livesay, Frank Davey⁴¹ (1988) reconsiders the "documentary nature of the long poem" in the light of the relationship between poetry and truth, the latter being understood either as "a pre-existent truth on the basis of external authority (...), a poetic or metaphorical truth (...), multiple co-existent truths (...), or absolute truth" (123-24). Davey rereads Livesay's essay considering the "documentary poem" she refers to, "the history of all the above approaches to achieving 'truth' in poetry" (128). He sees a certain restriction on the analysis of documentary that Livesay proposes and argues that only one specific meaning of documentary has been considered by her, that which means 'evidential', 'providing certifiable proof', 'factual', and 'objective'. He also argues that she fails to acknowledge various kinds of documentary such as those that present

poems which seek to document something contemporary and not previously documented (...), poems which seek truth on the traditional authority of the poet to metaphorically recreate the past (...), poems which openly and sometimes playfully seek surreal or absurdist truth (...), poems which include topical reference as an adjunct to what is essentially lyrical expression (...), poems which contain other documents (...), poems which

⁴¹ Davey, Frank (1988) *Reading Canadian Reading*, Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 123-36. This book, in which the essay referred to, is included, contains a good number of works on Canadian literature all written by Davey which offer his peculiar as well as interesting viewpoint on a range of issues such as postmodernism and genre subversion.

invoke other documents, but without quotation (...) and poems which invent documents. (129)

With regard to the relationship of documentary to truth, Davey poses the question of the attainability of objectivity whether by the writer, the reader or the text. In the light of contemporary critical theory meaning may not be objective. Thus the writer has the possibility of free play with historical materials. It is in this sense that Davey considers many of the so-called long poems not only documentary, for "the impulse of these texts is not really to document, [but] to appropriate, co-opt, re-cast for one's own needs and times" (132). He finally sees them rather as "appropriation, recontextualization, literary intervention, historical revision, textual subversion, re-inscription, reconstruction" (133).

In an essay titled "Epi(pro)logue: In Pursuit of the Long Poem" (1985), Barbara Godard deals with the use of the documentary in the long poem under the light of post-structuralist theory. She sees the documentary as a subversive strategy, since in "incorporating documents, it is both collage and parataxical disruption of the syntagmatic chain, at the same time [that] it is multivoiced" (315). In her definition of documentary as "a non-authoritarian, non-hierarchical and non-bourgeois discourse" ideological factors are considered, thus presenting it in "direct contrast to the hegemonic lyric"⁴²

⁴² The lyric is described by Godard as hegemonic in Gramsci's terms, thus considering it "one of the bourgeois forms of discourse", showing an absolute rather than relative position for the subject.

(315). Godard also considers the documentary aspect an evidence of the novelization of poetry. This novelization involves the possibility of applying a specific corpus of terminology devised for analyzing the novel to the documentary poem. In incorporating "other texts, other perspectives, other voices", the documentary offers, in Bakhtin's words, a "dialogic discourse", characterized by "heteroglossia".

Godard's essay meant the inauguration of a post-structuralist approach to the documentary poem, which Stephen Scobie⁴³ assumed and developed in a chapter, devoted to "Signature as Documentary", in his Derridean work *Signature Event Context* (1989). Scobie starts by pointing out the use of the term 'documentary' in Canadian literature "to describe less a genre than an impulse: a certain attitude towards the incorporation of factual, historical material into imaginative works" (119). As Davey previously did, Scobie starts from Livesay's essay in order to reassess the question and, although he generally coincides with Livesay's ideas of the document being a source of historical fact, he adds a new feature, that of "an element of intertextuality". Usually other texts, that is, different types of documents whose main function is, in Scobie's view, to prove the historicity of the subject, are inserted.

⁴³ Scobie, Stephen (1989) *Signature Event Context: Essays*, Edmonton: NeWest Press, 113-33. This Derridean piece of work meant an important step in the study of Canadian literature under the light of post-structuralist theories, which converted it into quite an interesting book for those scholars interested in knowing about such theories applied to Canadian literature.

As Scobie comments, these documents are quite diverse and may range from "actual historical accounts, or transcriptions of interviews and oral history [to] (...) novels, letters, journals, autobiographies, or other poems" (122-23). Such documents are regarded as the link between the reader and the "real" material, thus allowing the former to have access to the information previously handled by the writer. The documentary poem is an open text that calls for the reader's participation. In Scobie's words, "[it] is never an enclosed, self-sufficient creation; the reader is actively invited to repeat the poet's research and engagement with the facts" (123).

Scobie also regards the documentary poem as a discourse in which the author is subtly present through an image of alterity in the documentary persona. He finally describes the documentary as a marginal⁴⁴ form whose main concerns are "a fascination with the interplay between fact and fiction, history and imagination; and the attempt to define the identity of the self by a dialectic process of contrast to the other" (121-22).

Linda Hutcheon⁴⁵ (1988) also studies the use of the documentary element in relation to the novel. Her study of this aspect is fundamentally focused on how modern Canadian fiction uses documentation in order to

⁴⁴ Scobie defines documentary as a marginal form in Derridean terms implying a text that deals with margins, limits, edges, overlaps, as opposed to a central, powerful, hegemonic text.

⁴⁵ Hutcheon, Linda (1988) *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. The publication of this book meant quite a major step in the study of Canadian fiction in the light of post-modern theories. Hutcheon's essays are clear, which aids to a better comprehension of post-modernism and its application to Canadian fiction.

deconstruct history. In this type of fiction - that Linda Hutcheon calls "historiographic metafiction" - history is seen as a construction made up of documents that the historian selects, orders, and narrates, in a similar process to the one followed by the writer of any type of fiction. The historiographic metafiction questions and challenges the limits between fact and fiction. Often this challenge "is made operative through the novel's use of intertextuality", on which the novelist relies "to signal both its oblique relation to historical fact (...) and its essentially literary nature"(68). Reading historiographic metafiction "becomes an act of philosophical puzzling as well as one of co-creation" (17) since "the readers are the actual and actualizing links between history and fiction, as well as between the past and the present" (65).

Not only is the view of history as "ordered and neatly closed-off narrative" (15) deconstructed, but also the realist presentation of historical events and characters in fiction. There is a special concern with the reader as much as with the writer as co-creators. And since one-sided views of an event are rejected, there is no use of one overt narrating voice. Conversely, several points of view are offered. Thus "readers are left to pull together the various and fragmentary points of view we have been offered and (...) we must make an evaluation and interpretation of all we have been told" (65). Historiographic metafiction thus deals with life and art and the boundaries between both. In Hutcheon's words it is "a fiction that is intensely, self-

reflexively art, but is also grounded in historical, social, and political realities" and in which "the aesthetic and the social, the present and the past, are not separable discourses" (14).

In the field of theatre, Diane Bessai⁴⁶, in her essay "Documentary Theatre in Canada: An Investigation into Questions and Backgrounds" (1980) argues that "... writers like Livesay who try to take the documentary mode back into the 19th century obscure a proper understanding of the whole documentary idea" (12). She believes that the documentary tradition cannot exist before the stage of modern cultural history because the documentary mode is a product of the twentieth century, utterly related to the moving picture.

The idea of a documentary theatre, then, seems to be irrevocably linked to the principle of the documentary film, that of conveying the "truth" as seen by the eye of the camera. Consequently, some of the most remarkable characteristics of the documentary film, i.e. its social purpose (Vertov), and the creative treatment of actuality (Grierson), were to be some of the main features of the documentary theatre which started to develop in the 1930s. Erwin Piscator was the director who realized the need for a change in the way theatre had to be done at the time, consequently encouraging such a shift. He developed the type of expressionist theatre known as "agitprop"⁴⁷ which

⁴⁶ This essay was a hallmark in the preliminary studies on Canadian documentary theatre and its origins. Still are fundamental Bessai's first contributions to a better knowledge of documentary theatre in Canada.

⁴⁷ The term "agitprop", created by Piscator, is a compound of "agitation" and "propaganda", which clearly mirrors the type of theatre it was devoted to.

resulted in the well known "epic theatre" in which, as we know, the public discussion of political and social issues could be shown.

In Piscator's earlier plays, there is a clear intention of endowing existing forms of drama with a social and moral purpose. Thus, the stage, as Styan (1991, 130) points out, "was to be a political agency in the widest sense. It would be a scientific laboratory dealing in facts, which it would treat objectively."

Piscator's concept of epic theatre was based on the Aristotelian concept of a tale told without regarding the unities of time and place. All realistic conventions stopped being used and the epic play turned to be "a rational report on some social or political theme, [which] free from realism, (...) would open out its content for inspection." (Styan 1991, 131)

The "epic theatre" subsequently gave place to the "documentary theatre", in whose productions Piscator used elements such as photographs, film clips, slides, song and dance material. They were complementary to the text in such a way that they formed an indispensable part of the show as Styan clearly states:

...newsreels and still photographs became a visual commentary upon, and an extension of, the drama, and assisted the actor in creating the desired objectivity. Lantern slides, placards and signboards, like the film, could contribute as atmosphere and background, and even provide a form of chorus by contrasting what was spoken with what was unspoken. A

monologue could be illustrated, and character's motives could be demonstrated (1991, 131).

Piscator also experimented with mixing media on the stage by attempting to use as many mechanical devices as possible, but without leaving aside the sociological aspect that informed his theatre, since his idea of the stage was a "play-machine", and an "arena for battling ideas".

After Piscator, the playwright that followed most of his ideas regarding theatre was Bertolt Brecht. As his predecessor and partner did, Brecht used many of the mechanical devices already mentioned so as to expose an analysis and a political examination of the society and its working elements. Nevertheless, Brecht's theatre was meant to be didactic as well as entertaining as the documentary films by Grierson were, but also a critique of life.

In his beginnings, Brecht's work somehow embodied Piscator's way of epic theatre. He used a narrative form and told a story using illustrative scenes, choruses, commentators, songs and dances, projected titles and summaries and also Piscator's mechanical apparatus.

Major in his theatrical conception was his concept of the actor. S-he was supposed to do his/her work objectively and in order to do so s-he would keep a certain distance while speaking, repeat an action slowly, or would

explain the audience what s-he was doing, thus creating the well known 'alienation effect' of epic theatre.

The so-called 'alienation effect' affected not only the actor that, in Styan's view was supposed to 'show' rather than imitate, thus speaking in the third person, or in the past tense, addressing the audience directly with the aim of creating the distance necessary to strip off the stage of its theatrical magic. Accordingly, the stage would be only an open space, deprived of any props, on which to tell a story. On this stage, all set changes would be made in full view of the audience and no 'fourth wall' would be suggested so that stage and audience would not be separated. James Reaney, as will be seen, put some of these ideas into practice.

Brecht's influence was felt in Britain mostly on directors and designers. Director Peter Brook, who was early attracted to Brecht's methods, George Devine, John Dexter and William Gaskill are some examples. Also Joan Littlewood and her company Theatre Workshop felt Brecht's influence. Littlewood intended, like Brecht, to create a popular theatre with a working-class audience in mind, but she failed. Nonetheless, she has been acknowledged with having made the stage "uniquely alive and lusty, in an endless state of experiment" (Styan 1991, 185). But it is John Arden, who, in Styan's words, "has consistently demonstrated real understanding of Brecht's

intentions and has persisted in testing epic techniques on the English stage" (186).

By the time Piscator started to develop and apply his ideas on documentary theatre, in the United States and Russia, between 1934 and 1938, the Living Newspaper emerged, giving a new direction to the documentary movement.

The Living Newspaper happened to be the favorite technique of the American Federal Theatre Project under Hallie Flanagan Davies. This type of theatre, in Arent's words (1971, 57), was meant to be a dramatization of a problem. This dramatization was "composed in greater or lesser extent of many news events, all bearing on the one subject and interlarded with typical but non-factual representations of the effect of the news events on the people to whom the problem is of great importance." Many of its characteristics were similar to both those of Piscator's theatre, such as the use of projection as background, and Grierson's concept of the creative treatment of actuality. The latter was represented by the creative scene, defined by Arent as "based on slum conditions (...), where instead of one-dimensional characters, (...) we have a man expressing himself in the warm speech and theatric idiom of a humanity undeterred by the hopelessness of being immortalized in the Congressional Record" (57).

According to Bessai, the American Living Newspaper can be seen to present quite a coherent example of the stage documentary as an innovative theatrical extension of the documentary film idea. It used film documentation in diverse ways such as "illustrations of particular points, as a means of comparing the present to the past, or occasionally plastically as an extension of the physical scene. But always the technique exploited rather than emulated the camera" (14). The Living Newspaper made use of elements of the circus, the music hall and the ballet as well, thus being "an amalgam of motion-picture, epic theatre, commedia dell'arte and American minstrel show techniques" (Gassner in Styan 1991, 179).

In the 1950s, people like Joan Littlewood and Peter Cheeseman in Great Britain picked up techniques of the Living Newspaper. In Germany the Marxist director, Peter Weiss, a disciple of Brecht, gave a step forward in German documentary theatre. And in Canada, George Luscombe was a pioneer in creating a Canadian "documentary theatre".

The revival that took place in these countries followed quite different directions. On the one hand, a documentary theatre that made a pervasive use of media emerged and, on the other hand, a theatre following the tradition of the *théâtre engagé*⁴⁸, and ultimately the trend created by Piscator.

⁴⁸ This type of theatre was fundamentally interested in socio-political matters and was intended to engage the underdeveloped audience, mainly the working class.

The representative of the first direction was Peter Weiss, who stated his ideas on the documentary theatre in an article entitled "The Material and the Models: Notes Towards a Definition of Documentary Theatre"⁴⁹ (1971). Some of the points dealt with in the essay develop the concept of the documentary theatre as an art form with total commitment to social reality, which leaves aside the political influences that may handle this reality in their own way. The idea of the theatre documenting a real event is also developed. In order to do this, Weiss opts for using many actual elements on stage such as "records, documents, letters, statistics, market-reports, statements by banks and companies, government statements, speeches, interviews, statements by well-known personalities, newspaper and broadcast reports, photos, documentary films and other contemporary documents (...)" (41).

Nonetheless, the difference between the real event and the performance of such an event is made clear, since "the stage of the Documentary Theatre no longer represents immediate actuality, but [is] a reflection of a segment of that actuality, torn out of its living context" (42). To clarify this aspect, Weiss points out very sharply the difference between the actuality of the event and the actuality of the performance. This difference justifies his particular use of the documentary form and defines his personal stance towards documentary theatre. His stance is clearly conveyed in this comment: "Documentary takes

⁴⁹ This text was originally delivered as a paper to the 'Brecht-Dialogue' held at the Berliner Ensemble in East Berlin, 12-16 February 1970. It comprises fourteen points attempting to define the most important aspects of documentary theatre in the author's view.

sides, the playwright chooses his subject for this kind of treatment because he wants to invite a partisan judgement. It is a matter of keeping an artistic balance between fact and fiction, truth and imagination" (42).

The second direction the documentary theatre took is, in Bessai's words "in one respect more firmly rooted in the century's traditions of théâtre engagé and therefore (...) ultimately more creatively influential in transmitting the theatre of Piscator and the Living Newspaper to the present day" (15). It is the theatre that developed mainly in England and whose main representatives are the above-mentioned, Joan Littlewood and Peter Cheeseman. Their plays were particularly oriented to the community, to a popular audience. From their work, many regional theatres have been influenced, since these playwrights have tried to get involved with their communities. The best example is Peter Cheeseman, who "has remained the theatrical voice of his particular community for nearly twenty years, both through his documentary collectives and his program of new play development" (Bessai 1980,16).

In Canada, as Johnston (1991) mentions, George Luscombe emerged as the pioneering representative of the "documentary theatre." In his early years as a commercial artist, Luscombe had his first contact with theatre through a youth club associated with a left-wing party. His first experience in acting was with a group called 'People's Repertory Theatre' with whom he toured Ontario in 1948. Two years later, he left for England in search of theatrical experience.

Once there, his main source of knowledge and apprenticeship was Joan Littlewood and her company that were moving to their new home, Theatre Royal, at Stratford East, London. Working several years under Littlewood's direction gained him a major acting experience and in 1956, Luscombe decided to go back to Canada, having made up his mind to be a professional actor. His dedication to theatre comes from his attending a meeting in Toronto where, according to critic Antony Ferry (in Johnston 1991, 19) "everyone lamented the lack of good theatre in Toronto. Good ideas were aired, money was never mentioned, and there was a painful pause. Luscombe suddenly stood up and said, "If it's worth while, I'm ready to give ten years."

As Johnston (1991) tells, from that moment on, he became completely involved and absolutely devoted to creating a theatre of his own. He joined Antony Ferry's play-reading circle called the 'Theatre Centre' and became its artistic director in 1959. At that time, the group's name changed to Workshop Productions. Subsequently, the group joined the Arts Theatre Club of Basya Hunter, thus giving rise to one of the most outstanding leaders of Toronto's alternative theatres, Toronto Workshop Productions. This theatre is described by Robert B. Scott (1997, 91) as "the longest-lived, the most productive, the most inventive, and the most ideologically consistent of all the alternative companies operating in the city through the 1960s."

With Workshop Productions firstly and, then, with Toronto Workshop Productions, Luscombe had the opportunity of putting into practice all the knowledge and experience acquired back in England, i.e. mostly Littlewood's ideas. Among these were the concept of collective creation and the acting styles that reflected a clear rejection of conventional stage mannerisms. Thus, free rein was given to the use of mime, music hall, stylized movement and improvisation in order to portray realistic action. Hence performers had to be actors, mimes, acrobats, singers and dancers.

Another important aspect in Luscombe's theatre was the staging, which, in Scott's words, (92) was "innovative, became a trademark and some truly inventive props and sets brought unpretentious authenticity to the action. In dramatic terms, the results were visually and viscerally engaging, (...)."

One of his most successful productions was *Hey Rube!*, a play about a group of down-at-the-heels circus performers, developed out of a script created by Ferry from the group's improvisations. This play, in Johnston's words "catapulted his company into the front rank of Toronto theatres" (1991, 19) and granted him the recognition of "the most dedicated and original creative talent working in our theatre" (Whittaker in Johnston, 19). His particular production style had some influences on Reaney whose ideas on drama, as Johnston points out, "had been deeply affected by seeing two

important experiments in arena staging, the first plays at the Stratford Festival and George Luscombe's *Hey Rube!* in the park at Stratford" (238).

Around the same time Luscombe initiated his Toronto Workshop Productions, Reaney founded his Listeners' Workshop in London, Ontario (See appendix 4). As the author himself (1977, 12) recalls "the basic theoretical start of these weekly dramatic experiments was quite simple: watching how children play and remembering how they used to play."

The world of children has been ever present in Reaney's work from the very beginning. Most of the protagonists of his first poems are children usually living alone in a farm and/or orphans such as in the poem titled 'Whither do You Wander?' from *Poems*⁵⁰.

So that wherever I go,
Wherever I wander
I never find
What I should like to find.
For example, a mother and father
Who love me dearly
And loved each other so,
And brothers and sisters with whom,

⁵⁰ Reaney, James (1972) *Poems*, ed. by Germaine Warkentin, Toronto: new.

In the summer, I'd play hide-and-go-seek
And in the winter, in the snow,
Fox-and-geese week after week (...).

By the same token, typical children's games and nursery rhymes pervade his extremely imaginative early work. A good illustration is 'Tillie the Toiler', a typical children's song:

Music of transcribed financial guano
Miss Toiler plays upon her strange piano
Margot travaille bien
Like a galloping pale kaiserina
And a leafy filing tsarina
Margot travaille bien
The rain upon the window strums
On churches and gymnasiums
Margot travaille bien
The salesman's aching thighs await
Masonic Hall for dancing date
Margot travaille bien
Afterwards in the car he took it out
The rain upon the roof
Was her ten fingers typing stout
Margot travaille bien

When decided to dedicate his creative talent to the dramatic genre, Reaney aimed at translating this world of childhood and imagination to his idea of theatre. He thus added a new and fresh touch to his world already filled with the archetypes and the metaphors inherited from his lyric poetry, which in turn was strongly influenced by his readings of Frye and Blake. As he (1977, 4) states, his work made at the time a necessary shift "from the still world of lyric poetry [which he considers more personal and private] to the kinetic world of metaphors in a theatre."

Many were the influences that helped materialize such a change, but, undoubtedly the turning points were his work with directors John Hirsch and Pamela Terry, his watching the Peking Opera and his attendance of Luscombe's production of *Hey Rube!*, as already mentioned.

From Hirsch and Terry he learned of the importance of additional mime and movement. Thus, he realized that that was the type of play he intended to create, characterized by "the delight of listening to words, the delight in making up patterns (scribbling with your body/bodies) of movement for fun and in play" (Reaney 1969, 78).

Watching the Peking Opera one evening at the Royal Alex Theatre in Toronto also helped him decide he would try writing a different kind of play. He acknowledges that his early plays (*The Sun and the Moon*, *The Killdeer* and

The Easter Egg) lack what he calls the scrunch feeling, "here we come to the rapids." The author describes this group of plays as being constructed "like rivers in voyageur journals. You go smoothly along in an apparent realistic way, and then there is a big leap...", and what he wanted was a play where "it's all rapids." (Dragland 1978, 119).

His first attempts at a new type of play were *One-Man Masque*, *Names and Nicknames*⁵¹ and *Geography Match*⁵². These were plays in which he proceeded with mostly lists of names which are chanted, or with words that were shouted eventually against somebody. This is clearly observed in *Names and Nicknames* from the very beginning. In this play the chorus and the chief actors start by announcing the setting and immediately afterwards start reciting a list of words and miming what the words represent:

CHORUS AND CHIEF ACTORS

The farm in the morning. The Farm.

Farmer Dell's Farm.

(...)

vale hill dell dale

bush rock bank field

pool wood pond creek

⁵¹Reaney, James (1978) *Names and Nicknames*, Vancouver: Talonbooks.

⁵²_____ (1978) *Geography Match*, Vancouver: Talonbooks.

ridge hedge copse yard

swale lane fence wall

path road ditch post

barn shed tree house

Definitely, this type of plays clearly confirm Reaney's conviction that there is an "early born natural delight in riddles, rhythm, symbolism, word-lists and games" (1977, 12).

However, the play that meant a major change in Reaney's theatre was *Listen to the Wind*⁵³. Although his characteristic themes of the painful passing from childhood to maturity and the confrontation of good and evil were present, its stage design was completely different from that of his previous plays.

Listen to the Wind presented, in Reaney's words (1969, 77), a script "so odd that nobody seemed willing to chance it, and I had to direct myself." The story told is that of a boy named Owen that decides to spend the summer putting on plays with the help of his cousins, other elder relatives and the neighbourhood children. One of these plays is their adaptation of the Victorian novel *The Saga of Caresfoot Court*. While watching their adaptation, the audience is also able to watch Owen's story: his fight against his illness and his attempt to get his parents back together. Both stories "intertwine and

⁵³Reaney, James (1972) *Listen to the Wind*, Vancouver: Talonbooks.

illuminate each other." *Listen to the Wind* is also about imagination and creativity. Both features are mostly shown by the high inventive work of the chorus, which turns into the key factor in the play, as Reaney (1969, 77) points out:

The big thing was a chorus of youngsters who were on stage sitting or kneeling most of the time, and a prop table presided over by a girl who became almost the pivot of the whole production, also a book holder in a rocking chair, also a piano, a drummer and a guitarist. Whenever a sound was needed the chorus provided it; whenever someone needed a prop they walked over and got it. The miming of the coach scenes is an example of the whole method: whenever the actors had to go from one manor house to another, a boy appeared with a wheel which he coasted along, they following him behind running in time with him. Before they get into the coach they walk or limp or whatever; once in the coach they glide along with it. Coconut shells for hoofbeats and gravel sounds are provided by the chorus. Someone in mathematics remarked to a friend that the longest distances took the shortest coach rides, whereas the shorter distance the longer the ride. I have been thinking about that remark ever since. Out of this play which broke with reality completely, used shorthand for everything, forced the audience to provide lighting and production and sets and even ending (...) - out of this play sprang all the rest of recent activities - (...).

It was precisely the work with the chorus which was the basis of his Listeners' Workshops. Those interested in the type of theatre that was done by Reaney continued to train and practice under his guidance. His was a work with the community; that is, his workshops involved as many people in the community as possible. However, the key element in these workshops were the kids since, in the author's view, they are the indispensable element in helping actors free from conventional performing and develop imagination at its most. Hence Reaney would require from the actors working on his plays,

and mainly in *The Donnellys*, their collaboration and implication in workshops where they had to work hand in hand with kids on performances of the Book of Genesis, or the Greek Alphabet. That was a necessary, preliminary step, in Reaney's view, for the actors to become "infected" by children's attitudes towards the existence of one's body and voice and by their inventive capacity. After this training, the result would be, in Reaney's view (1976, 29-30), "actors willing to make fools of themselves, willing to invent on their own, to improvise, to keep moving, to never get tired, and to say yes rather than no when the insane author or director thought up some new problem in symbolism to be solved."

From these workshops, Reaney recalls, "a lot of things came out. (...) *Colours in the Dark*⁵⁴ and *The Donnellys*, as a matter of fact" (Ross 1983, 16). And with them many of Reaney's ideas on how to put his plays on stage starting from a simple logo-design

that sums up the floor movement of the actors for the whole evening. This dance design (all I'm talking about here is much more obvious in ballet) usually emerges in the very first workshops involved in the writing of a new play. These designs (...) are beyond a national tradition; they are really part of the way everyone dreams and thinks, the way we tell stories. (1980, 19)

Reaney's experience with workshops was absolutely gratifying as well as a major step in his evolution as a man of the theatre. This work paved the

⁵⁴Reaney, James (1969) *Colours in the Dark*, Vancouver: Talonbooks / Macmillan.

way for the type of theatre that he always had in mind, his ideal theatre, which he (1978, 156) describes as

an Eskimo solstice celebration I once read about in which in one big underground igloo the whole community gathered and put on their annual us-against-winter play; masks, chanting, women all sitting on a bench, but swaying and miming; men being crows, animal marionettes entering by invisible means, and total audience enjoyment.

Reaney's ideal theatre thus involves the community in a wide sense. The community, i.e. the place they live in, their customs, their culture, their history, ... becomes a fundamental element in Reaney's theatre, and specifically in his history plays. In this sense, it can be said that the playwright advocates a theatre about the community, for the community, and with the community. Accordingly, he (1980, 50) wrote: "...if you're going to write a play about a community, [...] then you have to persuade students and teachers to do likewise, to explore the roots of the community in every way possible."

The involvement with the community in Reaney's theatre means their collaboration in all types of tasks; that is, doing research, collaborating in the making of the script, acting, etc. That is, theatrical activity is, in his view, "rooted, as much as possible, in the peculiarities and pressures of the community, with the fullest possible participation by the community" (Parker 1991, 35).

Reaney's "Listeners' Workshops" somehow materialized, as we have seen, his eagerness for carrying out a theatre for the community and by the community, thus being one of the pioneering Canadian playwrights in putting into practice the so-called 'community theatre', which is so much in vogue nowadays.

Community theatre is developed, as Wilson (1997) indicates, in, for, and by a community. Although there is an involvement of as many non-professional people wishing to participate, there is usually a core of professionals - playwright, design staff and director - that is in charge of guiding the community in achieving its goal of producing a play. Usually everybody is actively involved in the creation of the work since community plays "operate under the premise that creativity is democratically distributed amongst the population, a quality possessed by all and not just a gifted few" (Wilson 1997, 3). As Van Fossen (1997) explains, creativity emerges through discussion; thus being one goal of community plays that of fostering free and open discussion of all aspects related to the plays. Regarding the thematic aspect, community plays usually deal with a historical event that resonates in the identity of the community. Thus, real people from the past are often included with the aim of creating a "sense of pride in and recognition of their heritage" (Van Fossen 1997, 14).

In Oram's view, this type of plays fosters the closeness between audience and actors by being written about a community event, with some community non-professional actors, and with the audience of the community in mind. Such closeness is emphasized by having members of the cast when not on stage or active, as "members of the audience, or viewing the play, giving strength to their fellow performers through their focus on the action" (Oram 1997, 7).

Some of these main features that characterize community theatre are present in Reaney's theatre. Despite the strong presence of Reaney's and Turnbull's ideas in both plays, the involvement of the community became present through various elements. The above mentioned workshops, in which children and adults participated, the research by the actors and some community members on the stories dealt with in the plays, and dealing with historical issues that contribute to the Southwestern Ontario community, are some "community theatre" elements present in these plays by Reaney.

A theatre fundamentally oriented towards the community - like the one Reaney advocates - and engaged in politics, represents, as Filewod (1987) mentions, the best vehicle of dramatic expression in a time of change and revolution. That is the case of the English-Canadian drama that in the 1960s and the 1970s saw a widespread revival of political and experimental theatre, which fulfilled the function of carrying the voice of the revival of nationalism

mainly in the 1970s. The theatre that emerged was, as previously seen, the "alternative theatre movement".

The Canadian "alternative theatre" emerged with the aim of creating a theatre of its own by searching for an authentic, indigenous Canadian dramatic form. This form proved to be the collectively created documentary play. Previously to the documentary plays of the late 1960s and 1970s, there are some examples of documentary theatre in Canada. These were mostly leftist and agitprop plays produced by 'local workers' theatre clubs such as the Workers' Experimental Theatre (WET) and, subsequently, Theatre of Action in Toronto (Filewod, 1987).

The Workers' Theatre was described by one of its leaders, E. Cecil-Smith, as "the new Canadian dramatic movement in very truth" (in Rubin 1996, 101). The type of drama this company dealt with presented the lives and struggles of the toilers of Canada's shops, mines, farms, and slave-camps. They were, as Smith (101) points out, "plays written in the heat of life by the same workers" and presented themes, plots, authors and players "truly Canadian."

Some of their staging techniques were under the influence of 'agitprop theatre' and German documentary theatre. They made use of mass recitation,

the agitational propaganda sketch as well as the methods developed by the "realist" school.

The work of both Workers' Theatre and Theatre of Action was, in general, political and intended to challenge the mainstream work of the 'Little Theatres' that usually staged non-Canadian plays. It was meant to be " a social theatre that would reflect the times, that would contribute, in a theatrical way, to the protest movements then developing for civil rights, for jobs, for unemployment insurance, for union organization" (Gordon Ryan 1981, 3).

Theatre of Action's greatest success was *Eight Men Speak*, an agitprop play, that portrayed the attempt to murder Tim Buck, national leader of the Communist Party, while he was in his jail cell in Kingston. The play depicted the violent period at the time whose climax was, in Oscar Ryan's view (in Rubin 1996, 110), the arrest of the Communist leader. In fact, *Eight Men Speak* originated from the arrest of eight leaders of the Canadian Communist Party in 1931. In Ryan's words, this "was the culmination of a period when people were being picked upon the street, in their homes, at meeting halls, simply because they had no visible means of subsistence; in other words, they had no jobs. Many had no homes, so it was common practice for policemen simply to pick them up and take them to police stations, and sometimes rough them up."

For the performance of such a play, the company employed blackouts, mass recitation, and some light humorous elements as well as new staging effects which were not commonly used in Canada (Ryan in Rubin 1996, 111).

Besides Workers' Theatre and Theatre of Action in the 1930s, Filewod (1987) also points out John Coulter as the first playwright to use documentary techniques in *Mr. Churchill of England* and in his trilogy about Riel; *Riel* (1950), *The Crime of Louis Riel* (1966) and *The Trial of Louis Riel* (1967)⁵⁵. Nevertheless, in Filewod's view, these plays are not committed to "historical truth", since the author changed some elements and invented some others for the sake of dramatic effect. Therefore, a "true" documentary theatre did not start as such until the late 1960s and 1970s with the alternative theatres.

The English-Canadian documentary theatre followed different directions as illustrated in the six plays selected by Filewod for his study. *The Farm Show*, *Ten Lost Years*, *N°1. Hard*, *Paper Wheat*, *Buchans: A Mining Town* and *It's About Time* provide, as the author explains, "a cross-section of the range of Canadian documentary." Thus, *The Farm Show* is the prototype of the most common form of Canadian documentary, that of collective creation. *Ten Lost Years* is an example of the relation between documentary structure and original source material. *No.1 Hard* and *Paper Wheat* are an expression of the regional impulse behind much of Canadian documentary. On the other hand,

⁵⁵ Coulter's trilogy about Riel documents the events of the 1869-70 and 1885 Metis rebellions, culminating in the trial and execution of Louis Riel.

Buchans: A Mining Town is a good example of political documentary and, finally, *It's About Time* questions the limits of the documentary idea (Filewod 1987, ix).

Although all of the plays show varied tendencies, they have in common the fact that they are a collective creation as well as "the transformation of historical or community experience into art" (182). Both characteristics largely define the Canadian documentary theatre. However, that does not mean they are unique to the documentary. Neither does that mean that works written by a playwright alone do not make use of the documentary mode. Examples of this are some of the works by "playwrights of collective creation" (Bessai, 1992) such as Rick Salutin, John Gray, and Linda Griffiths. Salutin's involvement with the documentary form and, specifically with the collective creation, came mainly after participating as a writer in the play *1837*. From this experience, Bessai (1992, 44) points out, "he was able to draw on elements that combine in his scripted plays."

John Gray's work was highly influenced by his association with Paul Thompson, a pioneer in the use of collective creation in the Canadian scene, at the Theatre Passe Muraille, which subsequently had a result in the documentary play *Billy Bishop Goes to War*. Also Linda Griffith's plays certainly show her experience in collective creation as an actor.

Other playwrights such as Carol Bolt in *Red Emma* or Sharon Pollock in *Walsh* and *The Komagatu Maru Incident* adapted, in Bessai's words, "the documentary mode in some measure for the examination of specific historical or contemporary subjects" (Bessai 1980, 19). Bessai also includes John Murrell's *Waiting for the Parade*, about which she argues, "unfortunately [substitutes] documentary's usual critical perspective on recent history with bland and sentimental period evocation", and Rod Langley's *Bethune*, in which he has exploited the documentary style, "although resulting in an all too facile rendition of the life and times of his central figure" (19).

All of these different ways of using the documentary impulse have given place to the distinction among "documentary theatre", "docudrama" and "historical drama". The first usually makes no use of pre-existing scripts and may be a collective creation. "Documentary theatre" may be defined as "a genre of performance rather than a form of literary drama" (Filewod 1987, ix). The "docudrama" seems to be characterized by some of the general features of the documentary theatre but does not leave aside the well-made forms of the conventional drama. Finally, the "historical drama" may make use of the presentational theatricality, characteristic of most Canadian documentaries. Thus, the documentary technique is used in a different way in each genre, as Filewod points out:

in the documentary the actors present the performance as a collective report of their experiences; in literary drama presentational techniques commonly appear as metaphorical devices which challenge the illusionistic conventions that audiences normally expect in the theatre (186).

The presence of documentary aspects in a good number of Canadian literary works has recently been questioned once more by Manina Jones in her book *That Art of Difference. 'Documentary-Collage' and English-Canadian Writing*⁵⁶ (1993). In her rereading of the documentary impulse in Canadian literature, Jones attempts to define 'documentary' "as itself situated at the intersection of the various voices/texts that have been drawn into a discussion on the very issue of reference and the usefulness of literary categories" (5). In this sense, Jones comes up with a new term, 'documentary-collage'. She justifies the use of this term by arguing that a common formal strategy of a body of contemporary Canadian works is a 'collage' technique. Jones points out that this technique "self-consciously transcribes documents into the literary text, registering them as 'outside' writings that readers recognize both as taken from a spatial or temporal 'elsewhere' and as participating in a historical-referential discourse of 'non-fiction'" (13-14).

These 'outside' documents constitute an element of intertextuality. Hence the documentary text is, as Scobie (1989) suggested, an open text which calls for the reader's implication in the process of interpreting the documents,

⁵⁶ Jones, Manina (1993) *That Art of Difference. 'Documentary-Collage' and English-Canadian Writing*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. This book offers quite an interesting and helpful approach to the use of documentary in some Canadian key literary works.

made up of the intersection of different texts ('inserted genres') and voices ('heteroglossia'). This type of documentary text also makes use of the citation as a form of assessing and challenging "the authority and autonomy of the documents it cites and consequently the belief systems and institutions they represent"(14).

Jones' term, 'documentary-collage', may be applied to different literary genres, as her study shows. In her analysis of documentary, besides the widely studied long poems, she includes the novel and drama. Regarding the latter, she intends to establish a difference between the classical historical drama and the documentary drama. For her, the former makes use of historical sources, and the latter makes use of intertextuality, heteroglossia and citation. Jones foregrounds that by making use of such elements, the intention of the documentary playwright is not only that of recreating a historical fact or event, but of revising and challenging the authority of the historical records and documents s-he has departed from. Jones also considers in her study some elements characteristic of the "documentary theatre" such as visual geographical references or the image of the trial. As she states, these are quite pervasive in a good number of documentary writings as a means of giving a local identity to the story being told. They are also a means of "questioning the nature of the evidence that contributes to both legal and historical verdicts, as well as the institutional processes by which the 'true story' is determined" (11).

I.2 The Role of Documentary in Reaney's Work

From the very beginning, Reaney's work has recreated a specific milieu, that of Canada in general, and specifically, that of Southwestern Ontario. Lots of references to specific Canadian places, accents and customs, and the use of Canadian terms have pervaded many of his poems, short stories and plays. Then, if the term 'documentary' is understood in Reaney's manner; that is, as an element that embodies references to local aspects, we could say that there has always been a certain amount of documentary in Reaney's literary work.

Although strongly influenced by Blake in the choice of themes and form, his early poems are located in a specific environment: a farm near Stratford, Ontario. In *The Great Lakes Suite*, the author dedicates a poem to each of the lakes, i.e. Superior, Michigan, Huron, St. Claire, Erie, and Ontario, as well as to two emblematic sites in Ontario: Grand Bend and Niagara Falls. Other not so emblematic places are present in his poems. Such is the case of the poem dedicated to the typical Ontario spot, near Tobermory:

Near Tobermory, Ontario

I look upon a blue cove

In August

With egg pebble beach,

Blue sky & cedar birch sides.

And I look upon the sisters four
Blue sky & blue water
Rock, pebble & earth
And the light I see it with. (...)

In his subsequent book of poems, *A Suit of Nettles*, though the main theme is that of sterility *versus* fertility at all levels and it is written in the manner and style of Spenser's *Shepherds Calendar*, there are many references to Canadian society, culture, history and geography. Thus, we find a description full of images of the details of the farmhouse as well as an allegory of the events of Ontario history. In fact, an attempt to tell Canadian history and geography by means of the image of a horrific scenic railway ride is developed in the passage entitled "Dante's Inferno and Funhouse" for whose understanding it would be necessary to have a knowledge of Canadian history and geography, as it can be appreciated from this extract:

DANTE'S INFERNO & FUNHOUSE

- Riviere du Loup* 1. A huge gasping gaping jaw narrowing to rapids.
Castor grassus 2. A small room padded with beaver fur.
Montreal 3. A room painted with demon faces, arms holding out
Niagara Falls white dogs, drums beating, rushing
roaring sound.
Louis XV 4. A shower of milk and a swarm of honeybees.

5. Freezing cold passage way, lamprey eels pursued by
Moraviantown Latvians; an old Indian's skin is turned into horse-whips
 and shoelaces, deafening explosion.
6. A bloody divan wearing a lace fichu awaits you in this
Mackenzie room. (...)

As Alvin A. Lee (1968, 84) points out, "this is entirely deliberate, one manifestation of many in Reaney's writings of his impatience with Canadians who are so intent on learning about Europe or the United States that they remain permanently ignorant about their own environment."

A Message to Winnipeg, The Dance of Death at London, Ontario and Twelve Letters to a Small Town, once more take his typical universal images and themes to specific Canadian locales such as those of Winnipeg, London and Stratford, turning local places and people into mythical ones.

Reaney's early plays *The Killdeer, The Sun and the Moon, The Easter Egg, Night-blooming Cereus* and *The Shivaree* are also along the line of his early poetry. *The Killdeer* and *The Easter Egg* are set in rural Ontario and present a common topic in Reaney, that of the fight between good and evil. Similarly, *The Sun and the Moon* is set at Millbank, Ontario in the year 1935. In it, as Lee (1968, 136) states, "again, the manners and morals of a rural Ontario community provide a point of departure for the satire and farce necessary to shake up the conventional processes of those both off- and on-stage."

The operas *Night-blooming Cereus* and *The Shivaree* also base their design on an abstract mythical pattern and although set in rural Ontario, the mythical aspect outweighs the documentary one.

The so-called school plays include *Geography Match*, *Ignoramus*, *Names and Nicknames* and *Applebutter*. They are plays in which the characteristic preoccupations and structures of Reaney's drama are present, but "on a reduced scale." And also, as in his previous plays, the social and personal history joins imaginative and mythical elements. The children's plays meant an important shift in Reaney's concept of theatre. His beloved world of children comes absolutely alive in these plays filled with games, songs and improvisational catalogues.

The introduction of innovative theatre techniques that develop in his subsequent plays *Listen to the Wind* and *Colours in the Dark* paved the way for the type of theatre presented in the so-called history plays. In them the use of the documentary element involves more than references to Canadian culture, history and geography. Some of the characteristic documentary theatre techniques such as the use of slides and maps on stage are already present.

King Whistle!, *The Dismissal*, *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* are plays, as previously said, based on real events occurred in Southwestern Ontario. This cycle of history plays also includes *The Canadian Brothers* and *Wacousta*, both being, as previously mentioned a theatrical adaptation of John Richardson's homonym novels.

As they are based on real events, the documentary element becomes manifested in many different ways such as the use of documentation in order to offer a much closer to reality portrait of the event, thus making use of real documents, maps, pictures, the recreation of accents, ... etc. However, the use of the documentary element in these plays is also present in their staging by presenting techniques typical of the documentary theatre as will be seen.

I.2.1 The Documentary Element in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*

The analysis of the documentary element in a play usually involves a study of both the dramatic and performance texts. However, only the dramatic texts available of *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* will be the object of study of this dissertation. For the sake of clarity, let us see how the dramatic text is defined.

The dramatic text, according to Roman Ingarden (1973, 50) is composed of a) a main text made up of the dialogue and the characters, and b) a secondary text - the *didascalía* and the stage directions. Anne Ubersfeld (1999,

8) shares this view of the dramatic text although she speaks of the theatrical text instead as being "made up of two distinct yet indissociable parts, dialogue and *didascalía* (stage or production directions), [whose] relation varies according to the period in the history of theatre."

Whether dramatic or theatrical text, both authors coincide in viewing this type of text on two levels, as pointed out by de Toro (1995, 13):

- a) the textual level, which includes successive units of cues and *didascalía*, and
- b) the stage level, which includes the non-successive units such as the characters, the set, etc.

Both levels are absolutely present in any dramatic text, in which according to de Toro "there exist matrices of representativity or theatricality which make the staging possible - that is, the idea that there exists no dichotomy between text, dramatic text and its stage production, and that the text, in one way or another, is present in the performance, ..." and *viceversa* (46).

As the dramatic text is also a literary text, this is defined, as the latter, in its semantic and pragmatic aspects "as a signifying system, as a 'pregnant' semiotic object which has to be processed by its recipients and [whose] meaning is pluralized" (Dolezel 1985, 189). This definition of literary text

coincides with Barthes' concept of 'text', seen by him as a non-defined object existing only as discourse, radically symbolic, decentred, without closure, plural and completely woven with quotations, references, and echoes. Barthes thus considers every text "the intertext of another text" that "asks the reader for an active collaboration" (Barthes, 1979).

The literary text, and as such the dramatic text, is, then, an example of intertextuality in Kristeva's terms. That is, a text that "functions not as a univocal utterance complete unto itself and attributable to a single authorial/authoritative voice, but as the intersection of numerous utterances, from other texts" (Kristeva 1980, 36) and which, therefore, calls for multiple voices or in Bakhtin's terms for "poliphony".

A reading of the documentary aspect in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* then encompasses a treatment of those mainly historical and religious intertexts. The historical intertexts are those texts that are present in the literary text in the form of references to historical facts and dates, i.e. they are not directly inserted but are used as a source of reference from which the historical information cited in the dramatic text has been taken. In my approach to those historical texts considerations of the historical narratives as "verbal fictions characterized by the mode of figurative discourse in which they are cast" (White 1978, 56) are borne in mind. We also take into account the consideration of the historical facts as "the systematized, constructed version

of brute 'event', [i.e.] the past given meaning by its writers and readers" (Hutcheon 1988, 16). These intertexts are then a vital part of the dramatic text since their "absent" presence contributes to help the reader have access to "a fragmented past that once existed but that can be known today only through its documents, its traces in the present" (Hutcheon 1988, 22).

In the dramatic text, the reader/audience has access only to those traces that have been selected and interpreted by the author out of the already reconstructed texts. The reader/audience then has access to a partial fragmentary past. This partiality is even more reinforced by the insertion of those selected "visible" texts in the dramatic text such as letters, reward notices, scripts of the trials, etc. Such an insertion of other 'texts', other 'discourses', which had a real 'referent' once upon a time, reminds us of Foucault's claim that "the frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (1976, 23 as quoted in Hutcheon (1988). This multiple referentiality of the literary text is what makes of the discourse of literature, in Hutcheon's words, "a situation wherein the writer, the reader and the text meet within an entire historical, social and political, as well as literary, context" (1988, 16).

The religious intertexts are approached as documents that attempt to give major information of the religious beliefs and creeds of the pioneering settlers in Southwestern Ontario. In the case of *The Donnellys*, the religious intertexts are taken from the Roman Catholic liturgy. In *Baldoon* they are taken from the Bible and attempt to explore the varied interpretations that different religions such as Presbyterianism and Protestantism, more generally, make of them. In this play, such religious intertexts are the object of revision in order to show how, like history, these are constructions that have to be deconstructed and freely re-invented by the reader/audience.

The documentary element in Reaney's history plays is also present in the authenticating style of presentational stage documentary, in which as Bessai reports,

the individual performers establish their roles as actors who are playing a number of parts in on-stage transformations. (...) There is direct address to the audience -either as character, actor or narrator. The speaker may present him or herself as on-the-spot witness, identify sources of information, or tell about himself as if responding to an interview. There may be reinforcing back projections or maps (...). Physical realities or abstract concepts are conveyed through the body language of mime (...). The play is shaped in an episodic way. The performers use song as a bridge between scenes or as a narrative frame for an individual scene (1992, 40).

And in the use of the trial image as a form of questioning of the reliability of the processes that lead to legal and historical verdicts. The trial situation, though used since Aeschylus, turned into quite a suitable vehicle for

the documentary theatre from the point of view of its interest in showing and documenting bits of real life since "the clash of historical forces can be reproduced without recourse to fictional invention" (Mason 1977, 269). It also conveyed in a powerful way the so-called alienation effect through the treatment of the characters as cases rather than as individuals. However, no matter how true to the original documentary sources (courtroom transcripts) the trial is presented, the playwright's viewpoint is somehow included in his/her selection and arrangement of material. As Filewod points out, "the procedure of the courtroom makes it possible for the author's editorial cuts and emphases to pass without notice, and the implicit bias of the play is supported by the apparent authenticity of the court protocol" (10).

How all of the previously mentioned documentary features take form in each of the four basic constituents of the plays, that is, the plot, characters, time and place, will be analyzed in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*. But before moving on to specific analyses, it is necessary to clarify which concepts of plot, character, time and place (following this order) I have found convenient to use.

The term 'plot' has undergone so many considerations that it becomes indispensable to cover some of the major approaches to the term in order to determine the concept to be used in this study. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle considered the plot to be one of the qualitative elements of the play, being defined as "the events of the plays; the story as opposed to the theme; what

happens rather than what it means" (Mobley 1992, 114). This definition of the term would apparently correspond to the Russian Formalists' *siuzhet* (*sujet*) referring to the "presentation of story-stuff as manipulated and rearranged by the author" (Pinto 1989, 7) thus being the story-stuff the so-called *fabula*, i.e. "the chronological or chronological-causal sequence into which the reader rearranges the events encountered in the *sujet*."

Boris Tomashevskii in his *Teoriia Literaturnykh Zhanzrov* precisely clarified the difference between the two terms. He defined them as follows: "the *fabula* consists of a series of narrative motifs in their chronological sequence, moving from individual cause to effect; whereas the *sujet* represents the same motifs, but in the specific order of occurrence to which they are assigned in the text" (Kolesnikoff 1993, 632). This pair of terms was translated into English as equivalent to story and plot, thus corresponding the story to *fabula* and plot to *sujet*. This correspondence leads us to think that the Russian Formalists' concepts convey the same meaning as Forster's story/plot.

In *Aspects of the Novel*⁵⁷, E.M.Forster defines story as "a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence" and plot as "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality" (60). In his view, both elements that seem to establish a dichotomy may well coexist as distinct aspects of the same work. Bearing these definitions in mind, the pairs story - *fabula* and plot - *sujet*

⁵⁷ Forster, E.M. (1954) *Aspects of the Novel*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

neither can be equated nor translated since the concepts, as Sternberg points out "are not interchangeable but complementary" (1978, 12). As a result, Sternberg creates his own combinations of the concepts, coming up with up to four different labels depending on the type of narrative exposed. The first one is the 'story-type sujet' for narratives that are arranged in an essentially temporal-additive sequence. The second is the 'story-type fabula' for narratives whose sequence as an ordered pattern does not exist but is reconstituted by the reader in the reading process. The third would be the 'plot-type sujet' for a deformed causal disposition of motifs. And finally is the 'plot-type fabula' where the motifs are reassembled in a chronological-causal sequence.

For the sake of simplicity, the formalist concepts of *fabula* and *sujet* will be adopted in this study but under the more common terms of story and plot. Therefore, whenever story and plot are used, they will be meaning the same as *fabula* and *sujet*, respectively.

With regard to the character, I would like to clarify that although this must be seen as a whole in Ubersfeld's terms⁵⁸, for the purposes of my analysis of documentary and the character, a major focus will be placed on the textual character. What I mean by textual character is the character that inhabits the dramatic text; that is to say, the character that has come into existence from

⁵⁸ Ubersfeld considers the character the intersection (in the mathematical sense) of two semiotic sets (text and stage). (1999, 80)

legal and historical documents read and re-envisioned by the playwright and ultimately re-invented by each reader. Several details relating to the enactment of the textual character by the actor will be studied only from the information provided by the playwright in the *didascalia*. These details mainly refer to the movement of the actors on stage and their metamorphic characteristics.

The issue of documentary and time is approached considering the relationship of documents with history. As one of the hallmarks of history is the use of dates, documentary and time analyzes how pervasively historical/clock time is present in a struggle with mythical time throughout the plays. Such a struggle is mostly observed in the way the dated historical facts are not presented following a chronological/linear time but in a fragmentary manner.

Finally, documentary and place mainly focuses on how a sense of place is present in *The Donnellys* and *Balloon* by means of visual documents such as maps. The use of maps in the plays intends not only to document the geographical existence of such place but also to revision the traditional cartographic representation. Place also encompasses the concept of theatrical space. The theatrical space is also used in a revisionist manner in Reaney's

performances of some of his plays⁵⁹, following the tendency of the "alternative theatre" in alignment with post-colonial drama tendencies.

⁵⁹ This particular way of using the theatrical space by James Reaney applies mainly to the performances of *The Donnellys*.

CHAPTER TWO

II. DOCUMENTARY AS REVISION: *THE DONNELLY TRILOGY*

*"Truth and falsehood are what men believe them to be, neither more nor less."
(Scott 1982, 223)*

The documentary aspect in James Reaney's *The Donnellys* becomes materialized in a pervasive use of documentation in the form of an insertion of actual documents and references to historical accounts and religious sources. It is also represented in the stage techniques (that we get to know through the *didascalia*). Clearly, the main aim of documentation in the trilogy is both to document and revise the received history/story⁶⁰ of the Donnellys. On the other hand, the use of documentary theatre techniques such as the presentation of actuality on stage and the authentication of that actuality in the

⁶⁰ Reaney considers history and story at the same level in the sense that any history (in the sense of factual account) is also a story (mythos).

process, the trial situation and the presentational stage documentary, is also a means of revision. In this case, what is being revised is the traditional concept of the dramatic genre. *The Donnellys* is thus an example of deconstruction of both traditional views of history and of the dramatic genre. Ric Knowles (1987) refers to this type of plays that make a revision of the traditional concept of history and drama, by adapting Hutcheon's term, as "historiographic metadrama". Historiographic metadrama thus makes use "of self-reflexive, metadramatic forms to highlight the instability of both history and of dramatic texts"(228), being one of its main functions "to engage the audience in the process of imagining history not only to 'make it anew' but also continually to realize it, and in the process continually to reinvent and realize ourselves - including our specific and historicized social formation" (128).

In the analysis of the documentary element in *The Donnellys*, I will concentrate on how this element is used by Reaney in order to deconstruct both the received history/story of the family and the traditional concept of the dramatic genre. In order to analyze how the deconstruction of the history/story is carried out, it is necessary to know first of some major documentary sources that Reaney consulted and from which he recreated his own history/story. Such documentary sources encompass mainly historical accounts, some of which include actual documentation regarding the family (news, photographs, legal documents, letters, etc.). The interpretation of such

documentation absolutely varies from one historical account to the other. But, in general, most of the accounts written up to the 1960s contributed to the popularly known image of the Donnellys as villains. That image and the history/story that gave it life are the aspects that Reaney intends to deconstruct by making use of the same documents that created them. His particular use of documentary is studied in relation to the plot, the characters, time and place.

II.1 A Review of Documentary Sources on the Donnellys

Documentary sources on the Donnellys and, mainly on their deaths, exist in a vast amount. The most contemporary ones to the events occurred on February 4th 1880, are the news published, among others, by two newspapers, the *London Free Press* and the *London Advertiser*. The news from both were to be gathered and compiled by Donald L. Cosens (1980) in a document published on the commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the Donnellys' deaths, entitled *The Donnelly Tragedy 1880-1980*.

Each of these papers represented a political ideology at the time: the *London Free Press*, representative of the Tory ideology (Liberal-conservative party in current terms) and the *London Advertiser* of the Grit ideology (Reform Liberal party). The news offered by both, rather than attempts to give as "objective" accounts as possible of the events (if this is feasible), are quite

subjective constructs in which the positions towards the Donnellys family are clearly conveyed by the writers.

The *London Free Press* version started by giving an account of the "facts" prior to what was baptized as the Biddulph tragedy in order to demonstrate the possible reasons why the events took place. In spite of covering from the moment of the massacre (February 4th 1880) until the trials of the suspect murderers, the main focus of this version is on the way things were before the fatal incident. There is an absolute insistence on giving details about the relationship of the Donnellys with other neighbours. Also with Father Connolly (priest of St Patrick's Catholic church and in charge of forming a vigilance committee whose function was supposedly to keep order and peace in the village) and with members of the vigilance committee; with regard to the trials, depositions by two of the defense witnesses: Johnny O'Connor, the boy that was in the house and survived the night of the massacre, and William Donnelly are alone offered. None of the interventions by the accused is given while all depositions by Johnny O'Connor, insisting on the weaknesses and slight changes in each of his speeches, are shown.

The *London Advertiser* version, quite contrary to the previous one, first shows the portraits and descriptions of four prisoners accused of murdering the Donnellys, then a record of 35 years of the history of Biddulph as told by William Donnelly, moving then to an account of the tragedy. The language

used in the sub-titles and the whole narration is clearly sensationalist. This version also displays a much more thorough account of the evidence at the inquest, since the reporter appeared to be present in all events from the moment the ruins of the burned homestead and members of the family were found.

As I already stated, both papers showed extremely biased positions with regard to the event that undoubtedly were influential at the time. In Feltes's view "the Conservative papers seem by and large at least to emphasize the crimes alleged against the Donnellys, with some going on to argue that the murders were justified." On the other hand, "the Reform papers tend to focus on the horror of the murders and to call for swift, sure justice" (1999, 169). There is no doubt that both accounts contributed to a great extent to the emergence of a legend that has largely survived out of the tragic event.

Besides these two newspapers from London, an overwhelming amount of news offered by papers from places such as Toronto or Detroit attempted to present different readings of popular opinion, thus showing for and against positions towards the tragic event. One of the stances and, in my view, the most controversial one was offered by the weekly *Western Dispatch* justifying the murders. The extract reads as follows:

While the majesty of the law and the well-being of society require that the perpetrators should be sought out and punished, yet it is difficult to get rid

of the feeling that the provocation called for the deed, heinous though it was. The murder is awful to contemplate, and yet the state of things which undoubtedly called it forth, is also awful to contemplate when things have come to such a pass,... . Severe measures are an absolute necessity... . We are far from advocating Lynch Law, but as sure as day follows the night, when the law fails to punish the lawless, people will take it into their own hands to right society and punish the wicked. All power is in the people, and when those to whom they delegate that power for the preservation of law and order, fail to execute it, the natural result will be that the people will resume the power and execute it themselves. The great difficulty is that ... the innocent are liable to suffer with the guilty. (February 18th, 1880, 2, in Feltes 1999, 167)

Nearly half a century later, with the coldness and psychological distance that the passage of time involves, a new account of the Donnellys case was offered by Albert R. Hassard in his book *Famous Canadian Trials*⁶¹ (1924). As the author was mainly interested in the history of law, the case was presented with a major focus on the controversial trials of the Donnelly murders. There are no hints, at first sight, of a special interest in the stories surrounding the family except for some key details that could be influential on the trials as the author states:

The origin of the strife, lost in legend, and communicated by tradition, even in its remote beginnings disclosing a manifest inclination towards cruelties and crimes, can scarcely find room in an article which is primarily intended to be a story of the trial of the prisoners. (82)

However, in his account, Hassard compares the Donnelly story with some others from the United States of America in order to show the great degree of criminality involved in it. Without giving too many specifications on

⁶¹ Hassard, Albert R. (1924) *Famous Canadian Trials*, Toronto: The Carswell Company Ltd.

the Donnellys' previous affairs, with the exception of some short biased comments, the author moves on to the story of the trials. Throughout it he offers an account free from the heat of the moment in which the previously commented sources were published, but that somehow justifies the final decision of the jury as these words confirm:

A youth of thirteen years, who had admitted constant untruths and mistakes, however unintentional they may have been, was not safe witness to be the means of consigning a host of people to the gallows. Witnesses, with long-harboured grievances against the prisoners, were equally objectionable. Reliance on the identification of human voices and people, the former [William Donnelly] heard through a window, on a moonless night, even though the gloom may have been relieved by the presence of snow on the ground, was but little, if any, better. Perhaps these irrefutable arguments produced the acquittal of Carroll on his trial. Whatever the reasons, certain it is that no one ever was punished by human law for the greatest crime Canadian annals record. Equally sure is it that after the patient and careful judicial investigation presided over by Justices Armour and Osler, ended the long reign of terror in Biddulph. (104-5)

Some years later, in 1931, a new account of the Donnelly murders was included by W. Stewart Wallace in his book, dedicated to unresolved, violent and mysterious cases in Canada, called *Murders and Mysteries. A Canadian Series*⁶², under the title of "The Lucan Murders". In his article, he depicts the story as an example of the Italian vendetta in the New World. After giving the antecedents of the massacre, quite in the way of Hassard, he moves on to a retelling of the trials. In it the author includes the transcripts of the depositions of young Johnny O'Connor besides an interview to a Lucanite

⁶² Wallace, W. Stewart (1931) *Murders and Mysteries. A Canadian Series*, Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited.

published by the *London Advertiser* on February 21, 1880, where the interviewed manifests his contentment for the murders. In his account of the trials, Wallace does not make any personal comments but insists on offering the charge delivered to the jury by one of the judges, Mr. Justice Cameron in order to show its utter difference from the one delivered in the previous trial by Mr. Justice Armour. Contrary to Hassard, Wallace puts into question the influence of the judge on the jury as these comments reflect:

But one may perhaps be forgiven for wondering whether, in making this charge, Mr. Justice Cameron was not more concerned in scoring off Mr. Justice Armour, who had undoubtedly laid far too much stress on the Vigilance Committee, than in directing the jury. (...) But the judge's charge gave the jury a cue; and it brought in a verdict of not guilty. The fact is that probably half the township of Biddulph (in which Lucan was situated) was an accessory either before or after the murders; and if James Carroll was found guilty, no one could tell where the prosecutions would end. With Carroll's acquittal, however, the charges against all the other prisoners were dropped, since the evidence against him was identical with that against them; and the Lucan murders remained unavenged. (216-17)

Quite a few years elapsed until a new account of the Donnellys woke up general interest in the case. This time, a complete book dedicated to the family and their murders saw the light in 1954 under the title of *The Black Donnellys*⁶³. According to its author, Thomas P. Kelley, this was to be "the true story of Canada's most barbaric feud". But rather than offering a "true" account of the "facts", the book echoed and popularized the black legend of the Donnellys of Biddulph Township. This is immediately noticed when reading the

⁶³ Kelley, Thomas P. (1954) (1993 ed.) *The Black Donnellys*, Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books Ltd.

introduction, which is preceded by four lines of what seems to be an old song that reads:

"So hurry to your homes, good folks,
Lock doors and windows tight.
And pray for dawn, The Black Donnellys
Will be abroad tonight."⁶⁴

Although Kelley claims to have based his account on "old newspapers, police and court records, as well as other unimpeachable sources" (x), the book does not offer any bibliographical references whatsoever, and it is filled with personal comments against the Donnelly family. There are many examples of such comments as "...Jim Donnelly was returning to Lucan, grim and sinister as ever" (47) or "But William and James Donnelly could not silence the ever-increasing number of stories told about them or the family. Even then, in Lucan as well as its surrounding villages of Granton, Centralia, Elginfield and Exeter, mothers were silencing unruly children with the dire threat, 'Hush - or the Black Donnellys will get you!'"(75).

When reading the book, one has the impression of reading a piece of Western fiction since the whole of it is quite a simplistic portrayal of good *versus* evil, with the Donnelly family the incarnation of evil in Kelley's view. Finally, when almost finishing the book, the reader comes across another big surprise. Despite having stated at the very beginning that the story is based on

⁶⁴ In the preface to *Sticks and Stones* James Noonan comments that "this 'Old Song' from which Reaney mercilessly quotes several times, was composed by Kelley himself." (1975,13).

reliable documentary sources, the author unhesitatingly points out: "And that is the story of the Donnelly massacre, as told to the writer by a man who heard it from his own father - a father who was one of the mobsters!" (172). Definitely, this is a book full of contradictions, but more than anything, filled with totally biased opinions which have influenced a good part of the population's opinion, since after its first publication, it has been reprinted twenty-nine times and became one of Canada's all time best sellers.

With regard to Kelley's work, Richard Stingle, in an article entitled "The Donnellys: Ritual Victims" (1963) posed the question of such a book being a piece of fiction rather than of history in stating that "it is possible to argue that Kelley was not writing history at all. Certainly he does preserve a rollicking fidelity to the genre which he has in fact chosen - the Gothic novel. Or rather, he is faithful to one version of that genre, that of *The Monk* and not that of the finely constructed *Frankenstein*" (11). Stingle, in a way, was suggesting that the boundaries between what we know as history and fiction are not that clear. Historian Hayden White (1978) has made this subtle and vague suggestion a clear statement. White states that "how a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot-structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say, fiction-making operation" (48). Thus depending on the historian's viewpoint

and goal in telling his own historical account, either type of history will come up. That is, as White points out "most historical sequences can be emplotted in a number of different ways so as to provide different interpretations of those events and to endow them with different meanings" (48). Good examples of such different interpretations of the same facts are the works published after Kelley's *The Black Donnellys*, among them Orlo Miller's *The Donnellys Must Die*⁶⁵ (1962).

Its title may lead us to think that *The Donnellys Must Die* offers the same type of depiction as Kelley's book. But the portrayal presented by Orlo Miller intends to be as "factual" as possible. He argues that he consulted "thousands of legal documents, letters, and journals, which relate to the feud, the murders, and the trials, (...) as well as the newspaper accounts and a number of Irish source materials" (ix). Personal comments and opinions against or for the family are omitted, thus giving the reader the impression of reading a much more reliable piece of information. Miller devotes the first three chapters to the murders on February 4th, 1880, then moves on to giving an overview of the origin of the Canadian feud in Tipperary, Ireland, provoked by religious matters as these words convey:

The initial cause of the social cancer referred to somewhat vaguely, as 'the Tipperary feud' was religious. In that bloody conquest and resettlement of Ireland which has caused the name of Oliver Cromwell to be forever execrated by the Irish, a colony of German and French Protestants was

⁶⁵ Miller, Orlo (1962) (1995 ed.) *The Donnellys Must Die*, Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Limited.

planted in the northern half of what was, and still is, a predominantly Roman Catholic county. Thus, as an eighteenth-century writer said: 'Religious intolerance gave new stimulus to the disorders which poverty had occasioned.' (21)

By starting from a focus on religious matters, highlighted by problems with the ownership of the land, Miller presents a well-documented account of the Donnelly story. In it, he inserts all kinds of documents such as letters, interviews and transcripts of the trials in order to offer the reader a well of factual information not present in the previous accounts.

Much along the lines of Miller, Ray Fazakas published another book on the family under the title of *The Donnelly Album*⁶⁶ in 1977. Its subtitle *The Complete & Authentic Account of Canada's Famous Feuding Family* hints at the amount of research done for fifteen years by its author with the aim of offering the definitive account of the famous feud and its tragic consequences. The book offers not only a prose narrative but also a surprising amount of old photographs, contemporary drawings, maps, and documents - of the Donnellys, their murderers, and the sites and people involved in the events. Fazakas' book intends not only to tell the story of the Donnelly family but also to explain the socio-historical context in which the family lived. The author documents, when possible, all of the facts he includes in his account, thus offering a much more complete version than that of Miller. It is in this sense, that the book has a more "historical appearance" since the narration is backed

⁶⁶ Fazakas, Ray (1977) (1995 ed.) *The Donnelly Album*, Willowdale, Ontario: Firefly Books Ltd.

up by innumerable sources. Good examples of these sources are a copy of a map of the Huron District at the time accompanied by an ad offering land to emigrants, old settlers and others, explaining the facilities surrounding such lands. Also are copies of the original letters of Margaret Thompson to William Donnelly as well as of the original book of Father Connolly showing his declaration and the signatures of all those who joined his association (the Vigilance Committee) (See appendix 5). Although the author claims his book "is not intended as a refutation of previously published works on the Donnelly story" (I), he actually does it in the case of Kelley's book by retelling the story in an apparently less biased way. Regarding Miller's book, Fazakas simply adds more information that was missing and whose lack could contribute to depicting, in Fazakas' view, a rather too ordinary picture of the family. *The Donnelly Album* continues to be considered the most historically (in the sense of factual) accurate account of the Donnelly family case.

The latest written work related to the Donnelly family is Professor Norman Feltes' *This Side of Heaven: Determining the Donnelly Murders, 1880*⁶⁷. Feltes' is quite an interesting piece of work in terms of geography, history, and economics knowledge since he attempts to place the Donnelly murders in a specific historical, social and economic context, thus considering them a product of several factors that influenced the end results. His account is

⁶⁷ Feltes, Norman N. (1999) *This Side of Heaven: Determining the Donnelly Murders, 1880*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

informed by a Marxist point of view. Feltes does not indulge in retelling the Donnelly story but adds new perspectives to the treatment of the historical fact that these murders are. In this sense, Feltes' book "rearranges or re-places this tale in the history of Ontario and Canada in the nineteenth century, according to particular understandings of that history that (...) [he] share-s with other Marxists, and other historians, presenting a different idea of that story, and of 'story'"(xii).

The main focus of his work lies both on the fundamental sense of "place" in the story of the Donnelly murders and of "time". "Place" is understood by Feltes as "a geographical location 'in difference', the overlay of a set of differentiating processes, a 'situation'", and "time" as "a similar instantiation, the collocation or literally the coincidence, of a set of differential times, of determinate duration: a 'moment'"(3). Taking into account these two main aspects, the author starts by making an overview of the geographical formation of the Biddulph township demonstrating how in the long run, it influenced the way the land was surveyed and ultimately, bringing about the murders. Once the "place" is clearly determined, Feltes moves on to showing the different ideologies of settlement practised at the time in Canada and the repercussions in the social formations of which Biddulph is an example. In Feltes' view, this township represented a social formation in which a series of geographical, social, political and economic factors and the conjuncture of all

of them led to the Donnelly murders and the subsequent trials in which no one was found guilty. Therefore, this book is an attempt to place the murders in a specific context that goes beyond the "little history"⁶⁸ thus including much more than religious matters transferred from one country to another and personal vendettas. It attempts to show how the murders were both "overdetermined" and "underdetermined" by given inherited circumstances, as the author explains:

Because of the land inherited from that glacier, because of the way in which it was settled, because of how it came to be traversed and to what end, because of the history of wheat production in Upper Canada in relation to elsewhere and a particular electoral history, a society was produced with a distinctive structure (a social formation) that in turn produced the material circumstances of the murder and its aftermath – circumstances, that is, that the Donnellys' murderers did not themselves freely choose (176).

Nearly all of the above overviewed sources, (except for Fazakas' and Feltes') somehow appear reflected in Reaney's *The Donnellys*. The playwright consulted all of these as well as other sources he found in the Regional Archives at the University of Western Ontario, when he immersed himself in a thorough research in 1967. As Reaney recalls, he already had a version of the play in 1969 "which tried to do the whole story in three hours. [But he] (...) couldn't stop researching though; the well of material [was] (...) bottomless: old newspapers, registry office records, criminal records for Middlesex and

⁶⁸ By "little history" I refer to what Levi-Strauss (1966) calls the biographical and anecdotal history, which constitute the low-power facts in the whole of history.

Huron Counties - the sort of material that you find in the attics of old courthouses and in the minds of ninety year olds" (1977,10).

Although Reaney started doing research in 1967, his interest in the topic was present from his childhood. He first heard the story of the Donnelly murders when he was eight years old, and "since it happened not twenty miles from where (...) [he] was born, the effect of the story was unforgettable: terror and fascination." An example of his interest in the Donnelly story is this reference to the legend in his poem "Winter's Tales", written in 1949:

Then the farmer told them stories
Of the massacre at Lucan
Where the neighbours killed all the Mckilligans⁶⁹
Except one little boy who crawled under a bed;

Generally speaking, Reaney's trilogy follows the story told by Orlo Miller, since he fundamentally uses the events narrated by this author in order to build the plot of his plays. However, Reaney, quite logically, adds his personal touch, doing in this sense much more than turning the fatal events into a Gothic drama or a Jacobean tragedy. James Reaney has carried out a complex collage in which "nineteenth-century melodrama, folk drama, most modern theatrical 'languages' (Yeats's, Brecht's, Artaud's and so on), medicine and minstrel show, mime, puppets, magic lantern show, and the circus"

⁶⁹ Although the name of the family has been changed, the reference to the Donnelly story is clear.

(Parker 1978,152) are all included as fundamental structures that give shape to the story.

II.2 A Study of 'Documentary' in *The Donnellys*

In the several articles existing on *The Donnellys*, the trilogy is defined in a number of ways since this work of art cannot be easily labelled under any type of specific theatre but just as a somewhat encyclopedic compendium of literary genres, theatrical styles and languages, and popular rituals.⁷⁰ Among the different approaches to the trilogy is Gerald D. Parker's view of the plays as a presentation of the story as "document, as religious rite, as popular melodrama, and as tragic myth" (1983, 165). The documentary material present in the plays is thus seen by him as part of the melodrama that this trilogy enacts, i.e. as "another prominent source" of it (1983, 168). James Stewart Reaney (1977, 68) addresses the trilogy, and mainly the first play, *Sticks and Stones* as "a full canvas of the pioneer life", considering the whole work "a documentary and epic about pioneer life in Upper Canada" (1977, 69). On the other hand, Manina Jones, concentrating mainly on the documentary aspect of the plays, approaches the first Donnelly play as a 'documentary-collage' that "theatrically displays - and in doing so frequently disrupts - the documentary 'frames' that incriminate the Donnelly family" (1993, 86). And

⁷⁰ Despite the fact of *The Donnellys* being a complex collage, I have decided to label it as a 'history play' mainly due to its historical subject matter.

Ric Knowles (1987), acknowledging its deconstruction of both history and the dramatic text, sees it as an example of historiographic metadrama.

All of these approaches to *The Donnellys* attempt to give a definition of the trilogy taking into account the major role of the documentary aspect in the plays. Bearing this in mind and considering the dramatic text as intertexts of other texts, the whole trilogy may be viewed as a "document". That is, as a personal account of the society of Biddulph Township in which all its components (historical, social, political, economic, cultural and religious) are addressed by means of intertextuality. In being a "document" that brings to the forefront other documents, the dramatic text becomes the vehicle used for recontextualizing and subverting the history/story dealt with in the three plays. In doing this, the author joins the post-modern stance that challenges the reliability of the 'written inherited historical texts' and that poses the question of where the boundaries between a historical narrative and a literary narrative are. The key question that the author poses, in my view, regarding the claim that it is "a true account of the Donnellys feud", is whether Kelley's *The Black Donnellys* is more reliable as history (in the sense of authoritative and factual) than Reaney's *The Donnellys*, which is labelled as drama. By starting from this viewpoint, *The Donnellys* will be analyzed in terms of a "revisionist document", thus approaching all the above-mentioned intertexts as fundamental constituents of the whole document that the trilogy represents.

Such intertexts inform the trilogy's plot, developed in time and place by a series of characters.

II.2.1 "A Canvas of the Pioneer life": Documentary and the Plot

If the formalist definition of plot is considered, it has to be acknowledged that it is hard to summarize the plots of the plays because of their specific temporal displacement of the events exposed. Therefore, a brief overview of the story (in terms of the main motifs in their chronological sequence) told in the plays will be offered in order to help the reader of this dissertation follow the subsequent analysis.

Sticks and Stones, the first play of *The Donnellys*, takes us back in time to 1761 and develops the events up to 1867. More than one hundred years of history are reviewed on stage by means of several theatrical techniques such as flashbacks, simultaneity of scenes, etc. Nevertheless, the main motifs enacted in the play are James Donnelly's settling in Biddulph Township and his killing of Pat Farrell at the logging bee in the first act. Mrs. Donnelly and her children's efforts and struggles before and after his sentencing until his return from prison seven years later, the attempts of neighbours to drive the Donnellys from Biddulph and their final decision never to leave the township are addressed in the second and third acts.

The St. Nicholas Hotel. Wm Donnelly Proprietor covers a lesser span of time, from 1870 to 1879. Most of the main motifs of the story are recalled by means of continuous flashbacks from William Donnelly in his conversation with a traveller named Donaldson who happens to stay in his hotel. These motifs are chiefly the quarrels between the Donnelly boys and their enemies on the issue of leading the stagecoach business, the platonic love relationship between William Donnelly and Maggie Thompson, Pat Finnegan's homestead burning, William Donnelly's incarceration, Carroll's appointment as county constable and Mike Donnelly's stabbing to death.

Finally, *Handcuffs* places the initial action some years after the 1880 massacre, but again by means of memory flashbacks, the motifs dealing with the situation preceding and following the massacre are presented. These motifs are Bob Donnelly's return home from Kingston Penitentiary, Pat Ryder's barns and stables burning, the five Donnelly murders, the inquest of the murders, Donnelly's funerals and the trials.

The events that give form to the plot are introduced by means of historical intertexts that refer to facts classifiable into Levi-Strauss' high-power and low-power historical facts. The so-called high-power facts are those that take part in the writing of a universal history thus being the most valuable in the traditional historical texts and the less considered in the literary writings. Such facts are generally marked by a specific code, that of the chronology.

That is to say that they are absolutely linked to dates since as Levi-Strauss states "there is no history without dates" (1966, 258).

Examples of the type of 'high-power' facts in *The Donnellys* are the references to historical events whose main goal is helping the reader to place the story in context. Since the author is attempting to write a particular history, he therefore does what the historian usually does when writing a history, i.e. "to place an event within a context by relating it as a part to some conceivable whole" (White 1978, 56).

However, the references to those 'high-power' historical facts hardly indicate the dates when these happened, in an attempt to diminish their importance in the development of this particular history. Such events are mainly the political problems between English and Irish citizens originated by Cromwell's reform in Ireland, the Canadian elections in 1857 and the Federal general election in 1878.

The first of the above-mentioned facts is enacted by giving voice to the affected people who are presented in an anonymous way. Both by giving voice to the oppressed class and by imitating the way traditional history has avoided giving a name and an image to this class, a strong criticism of the traditional historical approach is offered:

MALE VOICE from the Others

Six eggs to you Rody, and half a dozen of them rotten

GIRL'S VOICE

The landlords are tyrants - English robbers and murderers that rob the people of their little spots, and turn'em out to perish. 'Tis justice to punish the bloody robbers! (S.S., 38)

The other two 'high-power' historical facts alluded to in the trilogy, i.e. the Canadian and the Federal elections, are named by the Chorus. The Chorus takes on various roles throughout the plays, one of them the archival role. That is to say, it functions as old documents naming dates and places and explaining unilaterally the events. In this case, the Chorus represents the right-wing political party:

CHORUS

The election of 1878
Then shout John A. forever boys,
That is the heading cry;
Every election we will win,
The time is drawing nigh,
The scheming Grits may bag their heads
That is if they've a mind,
Or go and dig up taters
With their shirts hung out behind (S.N.H., 107)

The so-called 'low-power' facts, those that are included in the local, biographical and anecdotal histories, turn out, logically, to be the 'high-power' facts in this particular history. Such facts acquire a special relevance, since they provide information, in this case, about the pioneer settlements. Such

information contributes to make of *The Donnellys* what J.S. Reaney called "a full canvas of the pioneer life" and what in my view is a personal document that by means of selecting specific texts attempts to offer a different and distinct vision of the Donnelly history/story. Let us see in detail how these local historical facts are selected and enacted in such a way that their main goal of subverting the widespread popular story about this family is successfully achieved.

The first local historical fact referred to is the burning of the Shea family homestead back in Ireland because of religious problems between the so-called Blackfeet and the Whitefeet⁷¹. The fact is enacted simultaneously in two ways. The first is by means of the dialogue between Mrs. Donnelly and her son Will in which she explains to him the antecedents and causes of the burning:

MRS DONNELLY

In the old country, Will, where your father and your brother James and your mother were born – you were called a Blackfoot if you wouldn't join the Whitefeet.

WILL

Who were the Whitefeet?

MRS DONNELLY

Who indeed. They were a faction, they were a secret society, a secret people. (...) Will, there was one family – the Sheas – they lived twenty miles off, they said no to the Whitefoot Society, no they wouldn't give the farm they'd just rented, and a good farm it was in those hard times, just because the Whitefeet wanted nobody ever to rent that farm at all to spite the landlord. So no, says the Sheas. Well, what the Whitefeet did to the Sheas one night is so terrible I'm going to whisper it to you and don't ever talk about it again (S.S., 38-9)

⁷¹ 'Blackfeet' was the name that the Whitefoot Society, composed of members and descendants of a secret society in Tipperary, sworn to attack their English landlords, gave to the Irish Catholics that did not want to join their society.

The second is by means of the representation of the burning thus obviating the narration of the event and offering a self-representative image as indicated in the *didascalía*:

Someone in a dress rolls a barrel on stage; "she" covers it with a sheet of rusty tin and then places on top of the tin a model of the Shea's house. As "she" departs, two men disguised in dresses, bonnets and masks or veils strike matches and burn down the house. The fire makes their shadows grow into the branch map of Ireland. All this proceeds under Mrs. Donnelly's speech and illustrates it. (S.S., 38)

Such an enactment of this fact is the first key to the type of revision James Reaney is committed to. In including this event, he intends to show how most of the problems in Biddulph seemed to be a transference of the religious problems in Ireland and not the cause of one family's affairs as some of the already commented documentary sources led the readers to believe. All of the facts selected are arranged so that they serve well the purpose of the author: to make the reader aware of the existence of other perspectives to be taken into account.

Another example of this commitment is the enactment of a fact that proved to be decisive in the origin and development of a good number of problems in Biddulph, that of the land survey. The land was one of the main problems in Ireland, or to be more precise, the lack of land. This did not seem to be a big deal in the New World, but not all the soil in the New World was

equally productive, as pointed out by John McDonald. McDonald was the surveyor of Biddulph in 1836 and in his field notes he recorded the manner of proceeding in the survey, besides his impressions of the geography. With regard to Lot 18, the one that would become the farm of the Donnelly family, he noted "Good level land Elm Black Ash and Birch swale. Good level land - Timber Elm Beech Maple Bassd" (Feltes 1999, 29). Because of the type of soil that happened to be one of the most productive and also of its placement near a source of water, the possession of this lot should have been considered to be an asset at the time. Thus, the way the land survey was carried out and the lots delivered had a major influence on the state of affairs in Biddulph. And this is what the playwright tries to demonstrate by enacting the survey in the form of a foretelling conversation between the surveyor and his son:

BOY

So what's this lot, pa?

SURVEYOR

Concession Six Lot Eighteen

BOY

I wonder who'll come to live here. Driving in stakes which indicate the borders of the Donnelly farm

SURVEYOR

You're always wondering about that, aren't you Davie? Well, it won't be any more coloured settlers. The company's tired of them. So it will be Irish squatters more than likely - Big Jim Johnson is bringing over a horde of his relatives from Tipperary and he's bringing every sort evidently so he'll feel at home again.

BOY

I wonder what they'll be like.

SURVEYOR

Oh, Paddy will fight the coloured folks and drive them out if he can. Then he'll fight his Paddy neighbours and then he'll fight himself and then he'll move on somewhere else and repeat the process.

BOY

What'll they fight about pa? His father washes his face in the stream.

SURVEYOR

Well, to begin with the way this lot is laid out, there's a small creek enters it from the next farm, crosses it and then flows into the next farm. Farm that is to be. It'll be the subject of a lawsuit, quarrels about water rights, flooding - they'll love that creek.

BOY

Couldn't you stop that?

SURVEYOR

Well now, what would you suggest?

BOY

Make the farms a different shape?

SURVEYOR

I'm not allowed to do that, Davie. The laws of geometry are the laws of geometry. Looping the chain so as to measure the next lot: we begin to focus on the next scene. No, people must make do with what right angles and Euclid and we surveyors and measurers provide for them. (S.S., 46-7)

The type of survey referred to by the surveyor is the so-called double-front township system, which meant "cheaper, more manageable lots for immigrant settlers [and] (...) also hastened road opening and made for easier road maintenance" (Feltes 1999, 28). In a sense, it was intended to create a more ordered disposition of the township. Ironically, this order would bring total chaos.

In the conversation between the surveyor and the boy, the former recalls one local historical fact, that of the "Negro" settlements and their protests, as well as one documented practice for acquiring the land at the time, that of squatting.

The "Negro" settlements took place before the Irish immigrants' arrival, though no specific date is given but the temporal reference "ten years before any of us came from Ireland" (S.S., 50). This settlement, due to its strategic position for the railroad line, among other causes, was annihilated. One of the ways used to carry out such annihilation appeared to be the burning of the settlers' properties. This event is enacted once more by burning a model of the houses as indicated in the *didascalia*. But this time, one of the characters, George Stub shows himself as one of the responsible as his speech illustrates:

STUB

Darkie, if you don't sell me that corner five acres you've squatted on there I'm going to heat it hotter than hell, and something else so serious might happen that they'll have to erect a gallows for me. Pinned by a ladder, the Negro cannot prevent them from burning his property (S.S., 51).

In order to show how the firings were a common practice in Biddulph that went unpunished most of the times Reaney inserts the reward notice and the police record of George Stub. The notice is read aloud by anonymous voices except for Stub and his assistants, who read the section referring to the arsonists as "Incendiaries at present unknown". The document thus becomes

parodied, showing its uselessness in applying the law under certain circumstances.

Also with the intention of showing how the practices of arson and robbery were commonplace in Biddulph and not the only task of the Donnelly family, an example of the Return of Convictions that took place in 1858 is inserted. The document as such is enacted on stage by the cast acting as the document itself. In Reaney's words, "the company should look like an old document which suddenly bristles with stones that hurt as they come zinging through the air." (S.S., 55)

Squatting, though it could seem to be an illegal practice, was a common way of acquiring some land at the time. If the squatters cleared it and paid a certain rent, they could have easy access to buy it from the owner after a certain period of time. That was the case of the Donnellys who squatted on Lot 18 and who saw their land in danger of being won by other people interested in getting the lot. As this could happen, notices warning the squatters and trespassers to secure their lands were issued at the time (see appendix 5). This type of document is briefly cited in the play with the aim of showing how the Donnellys were affected by this situation that provoked a good number of problems with their neighbours.

The pioneer life in Canada in its process of turning from wilderness into civilization is also illustrated by another local historical fact, that of the census taking. Two different references to the census taking are shown. The first one corresponds to the one carried out in 1848 and the second to the one in 1858. The typical discourse of this type of documents (questions in one row and answers in the other) is used, but what is important to highlight here is how the answers to the questions regarding productivity of the Donnellys' lot vary. This change was the logical result of an increase in the number of sons working in the land:

Census taker asks the row of questions on left hand: Donnelly answers with words in right-hand column.

Situation-lot?	Eighteen
Concession?	Six
Religion?	Church of Rome
Natives of Ireland in each family?	Three
Total number of persons resident in the house where the Census is taken?	Four
Lands-number of acres held by each family?	One hundred
Uncultivated, of wood in wild land?	One hundred
Neat cattle	None
Horses	None
Hogs	Three
Proprietor or Non-Proprietor?	Non-Proprietor
Landlord?	James Grace, carpenter, London township (S.S.,48)

The second model of document inserted focuses on land productivity mainly. The change is quite noticeable:

CENSUS TAKER	DONNELLY
How many natives of Canada?	Five, five boys
How many acres?	One hundred
In cultivation?	30 in crop, 70 acres of wild land
Wheat?	28 acres, yielded 15 bushels per acre
Potatoes?	2 acres-30 bushels (S.S., 63)

By inserting both models of documents, the playwright intends to prove once more that the land was a key factor in the problems that originated between the Donnelly family and their neighbours, besides their political creeds and religious beliefs.

In relation to political matters, a specific historical fact that illustrates how problematic this township was, is recalled by one of the characters (Keefe) involved in one of the events. This event was the riot originated after the Canadian elections in 1857, which led to the burning of Keefe's homestead for being Catholic and voting Liberal as the Donnellys did. Keefe starts narrating by using a typical presentational technique which introduces himself and very briefly comments on the events:

KEEFE in apron with tray of bottles

A friend of the Donnellys, my name is Andy Keefe and I own the tavern at the first tollgate into Biddulph just across St Patrick's church. On Christmas Eve, 1857, just after the election in which Mr. Holmes defeated Mr. Cayley, the Blackmouth Proddies paid me a visit. (S.S., 56)

After his brief presentation, the event is enacted grouping the cast into Sticks (Tory voters) and Stones (Liberal voters) and acting as in a real riot by means of miming their actions accompanied by sounds "from saws on wood,

rended wood, sounds of broken glass" (S.S., 56). While the event is enacted, the narration continues not only by Keefe but also by a Negro Woman who reports the events as an eyewitness while the enactment of the action she is narrating takes place. Two points of view are then given about the same event in an attempt not to concentrate the role of the narrator in one of the implied persons that could offer quite a biased narration. This is balanced by offering the narration of an anonymous character that is impartial to the problems of the Donnellys and their friends. It is the intention of the playwright to make the audience aware of the importance of handling different perspectives in order to achieve a fair judgement of the events.

Most of the above-mentioned facts such as the burning of the homesteads in Biddulph, the riots, and the robberies were originally published in the local newspapers. Their treatment of the events mostly offered quite biased accounts by obviating information or recreating it in a mythical way. Such accounts reflect, as G.D. Parker points out, "the main features of the black and white world which permeated the 'environmental bubble' of the nineteenth-century newspaper world" (1978, 169). That is what Reaney himself found out while doing his research on the Donnelly family and stated in his article "Some Myths in 19th century Ontario Newspapers"(1974). In this article, Reaney attempts to show how in these papers we may find "myths and shapes they were only dimly conscious of at all" (266). He also insists on how

these histories/stories can endlessly be reinvented in such a way that helps us in getting to know not only the past but also our present world. In Reaney's words, "the papers involved are an endless world which can be returned to again and again, each visit bringing up some more insight not only into the structure of their mental world (what McLuhan would call the water they lived in) but of our own" (266).

The news published at the time somehow reflected the type of society that Biddulph was. This was a society dominated by a growing intolerance towards people's beliefs and creeds, an excessive parochialism and an overwhelming "garrison mentality" that led to a chaotic state in which everybody accused everybody, but mainly those who did not follow the rules of the ones in power.

Newspaper intertexts have been inserted into the plays with the clear intention of calling the reader/spectator's attention to how the news had the power - and still have - of creating a myth by means of exaggerating and magnifying the information. Good examples are headlines such as "RURAL ROUGHS ON RAMPAGE", "ATTEMPTED ABDUCTION IN BIDDULPH" or "THE MIDDLE AGES REVIVED" (S.N.H., 56-57). These are instances of the news published in relation to the attempt of William Donnelly to abduct Margaret Thompson in order to marry her. Similarly, all minor and major

affairs were published. The news then became the literature that people devoured as if they were novels by chapters.

By inserting these extracts, James Reaney questions the veracity and reliability of these sources that turn "real" events into the main motifs of mythical recreations. Such is also the goal pursued when the author inserts a reference to Thomas P. Kelley's *The Black Donnellys* in order to discard the type of sensational and monologic account that Kelley presents under the mask of a "true account" based on unimpeachable sources. In order to carry out a revision of this specific history, the technique of the play within the play is used. Reaney presents a travelling medicine show in which Thomas P. Kelley is portrayed as Showman Murphy and the performance that his Shamrock Concert Company is delivering is called "The Black Donnellys". This show is described in the *didascalia* as "a viciously biased melodrama (...), also the title of the book everyone reads about the Donnellys." (*Sticks and Stones*, 78). The criticism towards this "historical account" is fiercely ironic since Reaney presents Showman Murphy showing "a few scenes which I have had painted on canvas for your historical information" but which turn out to be "a paper sample book, with nothing drawn on its pages."⁷² The act of creating their own history/story by means of selecting from the different 'histories' is clearly left

⁷² The fact that the book is presented with nothing drawn on its pages reinforces Reaney's idea that history is not a final product but a process made up by people.

to the readers/spectators. Once more, as he had done in the retelling of the 1857 riot, Reaney offers dual perspectives.⁷³

That history is not absolutely reliable is also shown by inserting corrections regarding the date of Farrell's killing and the killing weapon. This is done by having the character of Mr. Donnelly seeing the play within the play and correcting erroneous information that the false Mr. Donnelly is giving. In this regard, James Noonan (1975, 14) has pointed out that this incident is an indication of the extent of Reaney's own research on the Donnellys. But rather than correcting mistakes from previous documentary sources, the playwright's goal seems, in my view, to be that of demonstrating how the history we read may be full of inaccuracies and even of inventions by the historian. In order to prove this we can see how Reaney inserts a fictitious event preceded by a specific date that helps to create a sense of historicity, with historical characters as protagonists. This event, as presented in the play, could be taken as a historical fact by a reader/spectator who does not know anything about the Donnelly history/story (which is usually the case) and therefore, is unable to distinguish the "historical facts" from the invented facts. This specific event is the meeting between the Governor General Edmund Head and his wife Lady Head with Mrs. Donnelly, dated by the Chorus on the evening of July 7, 1858 in Goderich, on the occasion of the Governor General's

⁷³ Offering dual perspectives about the same event is typical of the political documentary as Bessai has pointed out (1983, 200).

attendance to the celebration of the opening of the railroad. What seems to be historically verifiable is the existence of a letter from the Governor General responding to Mrs. Donnelly's request for clemency on the matter of Mr. Donnelly's hanging for killing Pat Farrell, but not a personal meeting. Once more, the veracity or falsity of history is put into question. The scene of the trial of the Donnellys' murders accentuates the reader's distrust towards history and the process by which it is constructed.

The trial scene is enacted on stage in juxtaposition with the Donnellys' funeral scene. As the *didascalia* informs, "on one level we are proceeding through the funeral service and its images sift in with images from the trials & c" (H., 138). Thus Reaney intends to make a revision of both legal and religious institutions. For the trial scenes actual depositions from different witnesses are inserted in the dramatic text. Such depositions mainly belong to the Donnelly enemies and to Johnny Connors, the eyewitness of the massacre. Once more, dual perspectives are shown and although the intention is to allow the reader/audience to decide and judge about the fairness or unfairness of the process, the insertion of a passage, in which the dark side of the trial is presented, tends to unbalance the intended duality. The passage shows one of the accused, Mr. O'Halloran, in conversation with his defence lawyer:

MR O'HALLORAN *he's getting mad!*

Why don't you get up and testify yourself, McWhin, sure you're the lawyer that helped us plan so many of the things, but your foresight didn't deal with a boy under a bed.

DEFENCE LAWYER

Well, patience. You see our difficulty is, O'Halloran, that the boy is telling the truth. And the jury knows that. But we have to:

MR O'HALLORAN *angrily shouting*

Johnny Connors is not telling the truth. He's lying, he's been posted by Bill Donnelly, he's

DEFENCE LAWYER

Bravo! That's it. Now don't be afraid to make a scene in court. Before they can stop you, Mr and Mrs O'Halloran – you should plant a few ideas in everybody's heads. Let's have it all again. Draws curtains aside so as to reveal the Judge. (H., 151)

The insertion of such comments intends to destabilize the traditional view of legal verdicts as correct by making a mockery of them. On the other hand, placing these images in a continuum with the images of the funeral service extends this criticism towards the role of the Church in connection with politics. Irony certainly pervades the scene in which the priest delivers the "Pater noster," while the jury finds the suspect Donnellys' murderers not guilty. Only the last two sentences from the prayer are completely uttered thus highlighting the underlying ironic tone:

PRIEST

... And lead us not into temptation

CHORUS

But deliver us from evil.

PRIEST

Requiescant in Pace

CHORUS

Amen (H., 156)

As shown, Reaney has successfully used the documentary element with the aim of destabilizing the widely known story of the Donnelly family and giving shape to a new one in which many of the traditional givens (history, religion, justice, etc.) are put under examination and revision.

II.2.2 Irish, Catholics and 'Blackfeet': Documentary and the Characters

Most of the characters in Reaney's trilogy are documentary. That is, they have a reference in documents and it is in those documents where their origins are. Public and private letters, newspaper headlines, trial transcripts, and legal documents provide, as G.D. Parker states, "both protagonists and chorus alike with a shape and a voice" (1978, 154). That is to say, the documents become fundamental in the creation of such characters and their actions, just as they give the basis for the story/plot. There is a basic link between the actual and factual existence of such characters and the documents that articulate them. Thus, the only way to analyze their documentary identity is by means of referring to their presence in the documents that are inserted in the plays. Since the character, in Ubersfeld's words, "never speaks alone; the author speaks at the same time, through the character's lips" (1999, 87), the character's discourse cannot be entirely trusted as a basis for extracting their documentary characteristics. Those basic documentary features can only be guessed firstly from their names that are constantly repeated throughout the plays in order to certify their existence as inhabitants of Biddulph and from the

documents, mainly the legal documents inserted, which give "historical information" about them.

From the names of the characters, the reader/spectator can guess at the Irish origin of the protagonists, a fact that becomes confirmed when Mrs. Donnelly refers to the old country where she was born while talking to her son William. From this same conversation, other features such as their religious beliefs are also obtained. They are Catholic and 'Blackfeet'. These simple but key features, that is Irish, Catholics, and Blackfeet, are fundamental categories in obtaining a first general image of the protagonists of the trilogy since these names are the characteristics that made them different from the rest of the Biddulph population.

This first image becomes more complete by means of the information coming from documents such as the census taking, the squatters and trespassers warning notice, and the police records. Those documents and others, such as the return of convictions and some affidavits also give information about the other characters of the plays.

From the insertion of the model of the census-taking questionnaire the reader/spectator gets to know the number of sons in the family in 1848 and later on in 1858 as well as the name of the landlord. From Mrs. Donnelly's comment on reading the warning notice to squatters and trespassers we learn

of their condition as squatters on lot 18. From the numerous court documents inserted in the plays we learn of the many accusations against members of the family for arson, robbery, and such activities, and also of the different names by which Mrs. Donnelly is legally identified (Julia, Judith, Johannah). The insertion of the latter is, in my view, an attempt of the playwright to show once more the lack of accuracy in history. Also from the insertion of an affidavit regarding the quest of James Donnelly, the reader/spectator can document this character as having killed Pat Farrell as well as from the reward notices for his apprehension and delivery. From the insertion of the letters between William Donnelly and Maggie Thompson, we learn of the love story between them (see appendix 5).

Legal documents such as the police records of characters like George Stub (S.S., 52) and Tom Cassleigh (S.S., 63), accused of arson and murder respectively, as well as the return of convictions in which many other characters' names and crimes are detailed (S.S., 55), prove their existence as actual and factual characters.

Whereas legal documents help create the documentary characters (that is their basic identification features), documents such as newspapers contribute to make of them fictional characters by means of highlighting certain psychological features. In fact, the Donnelly family turns out to be the

protagonist of the newspapers both in life and after death. This is clearly seen in the following quotation:

VOICE *Lady reading newspaper*

Well, it says here that William Donnelly is very sick of a low fever in the jail and is not expected to live much longer – his wife is petitioning the Attorney General to let him off his sentence. (S.N.H., 105)

Their affairs and definitely their lives were converted into the raw material of sensationalist news that contributed to a great extent to turn the family into legendary evil characters even while alive. Therefore, it is within this type of popular document where the characters are fictionally born, grow and die and it is precisely this documentary biased identity that the Donnelly characters intend to fight throughout the plays. As Parker argues, "Reaney's Donnellys strive to escape their strictly documentary role, and, to a degree, their story: they strive to achieve a more human face within the 'maze of truth and life that rests unsolved'. On the other hand, their passion for justice, for a legal clarity unequivocally beyond the corrosive pressures of prejudice and rumour, necessitates (...) an almost obsessive attachment to documents of all sorts" (1978, 155).

In order to show a new face of the Donnelly characters, Reaney, as previously seen, has carefully selected and inserted the documents needed to present a revised image of the family and their neighbours. Many of the documents inserted or referred to become alive in the discourse and

movements of both the characters and the Chorus. A good example of this is the enactment of the return of convictions in which, as already pointed out, "the whole cast is drawn in three files to say and illustrate the three columns" (S.S., 55) that stand for the categories Name of Prosecutor, Name of Defendant and Nature of Charge. But, it is chiefly the Chorus that takes on the documentary role. Besides representing the community as a whole, at times divided into Sticks (Protestants) and Stones (Catholics), the Chorus is, as in most Greek tragedies, in charge of unfolding the historical context, that is, of exposing the documentary features of the story told. Thus, the chorus informs about dates:

CHORUS
The evening of July 7, 1858 (S.S., 116)

It also provides information on places:

CHORUS
The Raising Bee at Gallagher's on the Cedar Swamp Line. (S.S., 129)

It gives historical references from the past, present and future, as representing the voice of the oldest inhabitants of Biddulph that got to know some of the characters;

CHORUS *a drifting voice*
Yes, Bill Donnelly ran the St Nicholas Hotel down here at Appin. Was still running it when he died in the nineties. My father bought me some ice cream there in 1924. (S.N.H., 25)

The Chorus also guides the reader/spectator in his/her geographical journey throughout the places referred to in the plays:

CHORUS

Concession 8

Montgomery House, there, the bar goes east and west!

Concession 6

Monaghan's Talbot's - both bakes bread and brews beer.

Concession 5

Up the hills, cross the creek, down the hill to the

Concession 4

River Valley: McMarkin's and the last tollgate (S.N.H., 45)

Moreover, it usually takes on one viewpoint of the events portrayed as representative of the information issued at the time:

CHORUS

We've got him who stole my disk and stole my pig
rode my horses and drove my cows
cut out their tongues and cut off their ears
(S.N.H., 136)

In some cases, it enacts those events as in the representations of the Shea's and of the "Negro" settlers' homesteads burnings. The Chorus is then an equivalent of those documentary images provided by the camera as visual backup to the narrated material in films. In this play, the Chorus materializes both the image and the voice of archival documents, that is, "(...) [it] functions as a panning camera-eye, providing in its words and mobile physical conformations an equivalent to film's material evidence" (Bessai 1983, 199).

The Chorus serves as backup or as counterpoint to the speech delivered by the characters.

All the documents referred to and inserted are known to exist as such, but once more the reader/spectator, by the way these documents have been interpolated within the history/story, faces the hard task of figuring out where the limits between the historical and the fictive characters are. Those limits seem to be non-definable, as the characters have been born, up to a certain point, out of "historical documents", which undoubtedly contain fictional elements. However, the main goal of the insertion of such documents, that of revising the history/story, has been absolutely achieved.

Such a revisionist stance, provided by the documentary sources, is completed at the level of the theatrical act by the way the character is presented on stage with the aim of revising traditional approaches to its role. Most of the characters, each in his/her turn, introduce and unfold by means of their narration the key events depicted throughout the trilogy as these are enacted by the rest of the cast. These characters then take on the role of storytellers that display different points of view (at least two) about the same event. The storyteller, according to Gilbert and Tompkins, may have different dramatic functions such as "master of ceremonies, impartial narrator, social commentator, antagonist, or adjudicator" (1996, 127). Some of these roles are developed by Reaney's characters in *The Donnellys* thus having the same actor

representing the role of narrator and a specific character. An actor may also stage different roles as varied as Mr. Donnelly, an anonymous member of the community, and an enemy of the family. This technique that relies on the multiplicity of the actor "challenges the viewer's gaze by articulating the body's fractures and shifting the action and/or point of visual focus" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 232). Therefore, seeing an actor on stage who plays multiple characters or, in contrast, two actors performing the same character, challenges the traditional unitary concept of the actor and aims at emphasizing "the performativity of the body and thus to frustrate viewer's desire for a fixed and unitary subject" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 234).

The actor may also stage not only characters but also objects and animals. Some examples are the enactment of the race between the stagecoaches in *The St Nicholas Hotel*, where a group of members of the cast represent the stagecoach while some other actors become the sides of the road and some others a herd of horses. The semiotization of the actor clearly mirrors the mobility of the sign that applies with special force to him/her (Nunn 1996, 4). It therefore converts him/her into a metamorphic body that in Gilbert and Tompkins' view "transforms itself into numerous shapes that help to rework imperialist systems of representation and to develop more inclusive and culturally specific depictions of identity" (1996, 237).

Such transformations of the body are theatricalized by means of rhythmic movement such as dance, which brings into focus the performing body. Good examples of the enactment of popular dances are found in *The St Nicholas Hotel* and in *Handcuffs*, where all the musical and dance themes of the whole trilogy are reprised: *Schottische*, *Buffalo Gals*, *Elgin Girls*, *John Barley Corn*, *Sticks and Stones*, *Stamping and Clapping*, *Jig with solos* and the curtain dance "The Haymaker's Reel" (H., 98). The insertion of such songs and dances, besides showing the metamorphic characteristics of the actors, attempts to document an epoch and its cultural traditions, mainly rooted in Ireland and with developments from the New World such as *Buffalo Gals* and *Elgin Girls*, songs whose lyrics show a Biddulph setting.

As it has been shown, the analysis of the documentary element in relation to the characters is developed at two levels: literary and theatrically. At the literary level, we have seen how Reaney makes a successful use of all documents that gave life to the evil Donnelly characters in order to revise and reconstruct them in a new, different manner. At the theatrical level, we are able to see how characters are also presented in a revisionary manner, thus deconstructing traditional approaches to their role.

II.2.3 Fragmenting Chronology: Documentary and Time

The issue of documentary and time in *The Donnellys* is absolutely related to the conventional role of history, mainly characterized by an obsession with dating events. As Reaney presents his own 'history', he documents the historical facts and marks them following the traditional historical code, that is, by means of dates. Such dates are announced by the Chorus that, as we have seen, assumes the role of history.

The Donnellys basically moves in historical time since there is an obsession with dates. However, the way Reaney makes a revision of historical time is by displaying the facts in a fragmented manner, that is, not following a linear narrative.

Time, as presented in the plays, is completely warped and only through the help of the Chorus and the temporal references by the characters, the reader/spectator is able to follow the numerous back and forth movements in time that pervade the whole trilogy. In this sense, Reaney's time defies the rules of historical time by presenting a fragmented time that breaks the linear discourse of history - a time that clearly resembles the fragmented society that Reaney portrays in his personal account.

The total period of time covered by the action presented in the three plays spans one hundred and forty years, that is from 1834 to 1974. Such a long period of time is unequally distributed in each of the plays.

Sticks and Stones covers from 1834 to 1867. *The St Nicholas Hotel* refers to a much lesser period of time, from 1867 to 1879. And *Handcuffs* concentrates on the two months previous to the massacre. The events occurred during these two months are told by different characters at different moments in the play. The action moves up to 1974. However, this amount of time is not enacted following the historical-literary chronology of events provided by James Noonan in the conclusion of *Sticks and Stones*. Rather, throughout the whole trilogy there is a movement backward and forward in time which easily confuses the reader/spectator who can only rely on the constant date naming by the Chorus and some of the characters. The dates are then, as Karen Grandy points out, "clues the audience needs to help them make sense of the continually changing settings [and] (...) one of the few stable elements with which we can orient ourselves" (1994, 160). By making this obsessive use of dates, Reaney intends to make a parody of how history is excessively reliant on them to give legitimacy to the facts. His clear intention is to make the reader/audience aware of the questionability of all traditional givens such as history.

But historical time is used not only as a revisionary element but also with the aim of creating a fundamental dramatic element, which helps maintain the reader/spectator's attention. Thus, historical time, as Grandy (1994) mentions, becomes an element of pressure that is felt throughout the

trilogy mainly in key images related to death. The first scene where this pressure is felt is in Mrs. Donnelly's journey to Goderich. Her journey is presented along with the building of the scaffold where Mr. Donnelly is to be hanged. Although no specific temporal references are made, Mrs. Donnelly's fight against time is accentuated by Stubb's hurry in having the scaffold ready for James Donnelly's execution. Thus, when reading the passage, the reader may be able to feel the asfixiating sensation Mrs. Donnelly might have felt in her effort to prevent Mr. Donnelly from being executed. This sensation is superbly conveyed by the way both scenes, i.e. Mrs. Donnelly's journey and Stubb's construction of the scaffold are parallelistically presented.

Similarly, the pressure of time is felt in *The St Nicholas Hotel*, pervaded by references to clock time that announce and remind the reader/spectator of the final death of Mike Donnelly. The sense of pressure even increases in *Handcuffs*, as the chorus names the days and hours left before the final massacre so as to clearly cause a state of nervousness and desperation to the reader/spectator as well as create suspense.

The technique of creating suspense is precisely achieved, as Grandy (1994) also points out, by the presentation of time in a fragmented manner, i.e. moving back and forth. Thus, breaking linear chronology, as well as historical time, is used not only as a revisionary element but also to create the dramatic effect of suspense.

Fragmenting the chronological order of events and merging different time frames are also ways in which Reaney poses the uncertainty of the existence of only a historical time. By introducing scenes such as the Medicine Man Show in which the dialogue between Showman Murphy and Mr. Donnelly could not have taken place in historical time, the conversation between William Donnelly and James Carroll in which the former mentions events to happen in the future, the awareness of Mr. Donnelly as a character when he comments: "I'm not in Hell for I'm in a play", and the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly's ghosts at the end of *Handcuffs* and of *Sticks and Stones* in which Mrs. Donnelly's ghost has a revealing conversation with her, Reaney tells us of the existence of a time outside the historical realm, i.e. of the mythical time.

One of the characteristics of mythical or cyclical time is, as Karen Grandy (1994, 181) states, the repetition, used in order to avoid linear time. There are abundant instances of repetition being used throughout the trilogy, such as the different narratives and the visual enactment of the same event. But one of the most illuminating examples of how repetition works as a key structure in the play is seen in *Handcuffs* in which a scene from Act I is completely repeated in the second act. At this point, the notes explain "the audience should now begin to grasp the structure of the play". It is in this

moment when the play clearly shows its temporal structure, characterized by the meeting of linear time and cyclical time.

The structure characterized by the intersection of both times in space is, as Grandy points out, representative of Reaney's attempt "to undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language, frustrating the reader's normal expectation of a sequence and forcing him to perceive the elements of the poem as juxtaposed in space rather than unrolling in time" (Frank 1963, 10 as quoted in Grandy).

II.2.4 Naming and Mapping on Stage: Documentary and Place

In its relationship to documentary, place becomes materialized in two ways. On the one hand, it is depicted by means of both naming and mapping. In this sense, visual documents such as maps are inserted on stage in order to document the "real" existence of those places in history and geography. On the other hand, place implies the theatrical space which, following a good number of the documentary theatre tendencies, presents a different concept from the conventional approach to theatrical space.

The sense of place present in the trilogy is very much influenced by the presence of maps on stage. The first map that the spectator sees is the shadow map of Ireland drifting away. Its function is to situate the audience in the geographical place where the problems for the Donnelly family started. The

image of this place, referred to as the old country, becomes diffused as opposed to the new country, "these Canadas" towards which the family travels crossing, as the map silhouettes, "the coasts of Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland, the River, Lake Ontario, Hamilton, the province of Upper Canada." The province of Upper Canada is the place where they will live. It is surveyed, as the plays show, following the system previously utilized in Ireland and which led to territorial disputes. This type of survey, which follows the laws of geometry to order and name the "disordered" and "unnamed" land is represented on stage by means of Jacob's ladders and cats' cradles done by the cast while reciting:

Wild lands	Wild lands	Wild lands
Cut into concessions		Cut into farms
Canada West		Canada West
In the New World	the new world	the new world (S.S., 47)

The use of these figures shows the entanglement that this survey, which imitated the imperial system, led to. Such images are accompanied by the projection of "an early map of Biddulph Township showing the net of concessions, roads, farms, with owners' names on them and a feeling that we have come from Ireland to a closer look at what is happening." Reaney's use of this early map of Biddulph Township intends to show how the land was divided in the New World following the previously established method by the British central power, that ultimately brought about major disputes about the

land. It is then a way to highlight how the imperial ideology was pervasively present in the New World by means of its particular way of distributing and classifying the soil. The insertion of maps and the representation of survey methods are, as Gilbert and Tompkins point out, a key feature of the postcolonial literature. This feature, in their view, mirrors how "colonial space was inscribed according to the imperatives of settlement, initially by European cartographers whose segmentation, classification and hierarchisation of space transformed it into a place that could be known and inhabited" (1996, 145).

In the elaboration of this map and thus of a geographically recognized place on paper, the naming of rivers, mountains and roads is fundamental, since "naming" becomes a primary colonising process because it appropriates, defines, captures the place in language" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1995, 391-92). The roads take a fundamental role in *The Donnellys* and these are represented on stage by means of ladders, that, as Mr. Donnelly comments, "(...) [they] crawled up and down on and up other ladders - up to Goderich for justice, down to London to pay (...) [their] rent" (S.S., 49). The way the survey and subsequent mapping was done marked the life and affairs of the inhabitants of Biddulph and left no way out to the people supposed to live there as Mr. Donnelly argues:

Why are the roads here rather than here? Why do I live here rather than here? Wild lands cut by surveyors into people - with your chain you decided that it would be here, my farm - that people say I squatted on Concession Six Lot Eighteen - and you decided -. (S.S., 50)

Such a survey also led to the particular geometric shape of Biddulph, that of a triangle, and to the almost exact division of the land, that is 100 acres per lot, which clearly shows how the boundaries in order to identify ownership were fundamental in the imperial system. Definitely, these surveys show "how so-called empirical methods of calibrating space were in fact deeply ideological since they established grids, acre lots, and boundaries that became the explicit determinants of white land ownership" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 145). Such an ownership led to major disputes over the land exemplified in the quarrel between Mr. Donnelly and Mr. Farrell. The dispute included even a road, as it is shown in *The St. Nicholas Hotel*, in which "the actors stop being actors and become fighters for the ownership of that road, a map of which goes all around the walls of the theatre from Crediton to Exeter to Clandeboye down to Lucan to Elginfield to London to St Thomas to Waterford..." (S.N.H., 17). Space thus becomes "a site of anxiety and struggle" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 146).

The process of mapping the land also meant a way to access the wilderness that the land in "pure state" represents. This is clearly conveyed in the scene of Mrs. Donnelly's journey to Goderich. While travelling, the places she walks through are named by the Chorus, symbolizing the making of the land into geographical existence. The names given to those places indicate the sense of possession imposed on the land by the settlers: Marystown, Irishtown,

Francistown, Rogersville, Henshall, Brucefield, etc. This naming absolutely contrasts with the vision that Mrs. Donnelly offers of the landscape, a vision full of images of the land previously to the white settlements and in relation to the Indian association to the land:

MRS DONNELLY

Oak tree with your shadow Indian dark

From this hill I see the river. I see the blue lake (S.S., 114)

This is a vision that becomes spoiled by images of the road "like a knife I cut through the bush with" or "the ship in the harbor flew a red and gold flag" representing the influence of the white settlements on the landscape.

The map in Reaney's plays becomes not only a document that confirms the geographical existence of the places named but also a document that revises the traditional cartographic representation. That is to say, the map not only documents but also attempts to re-envision the land by judging the traditional surveying and cartographic methods. Therefore, the role of cartography in Reaney's trilogy consists, as Huggan comments with respect to the role of cartography in contemporary Canadian and Australian writing

in the implementation of a series of creative revisions which register the transition from a colonial framework within which the writer is compelled to recreate and reflect upon the restrictions of colonial space to a post-colonial one within which he or she acquires the freedom to engage in a series of 'territorial disputes' which implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the relativity of modes of spatial (and, by extension, cultural) perception. So while the map continues to feature in one sense as a paradigm of colonial

discourse, its deconstruction and/or revisualization permits a 'disidentification' from the procedures of colonialism (and other hegemonic discourses) and a (re)engagement in the ongoing process of cultural decolonization (1995, 411).

The revisionist quality of the map as a way to deconstruct and reconstruct place is observed at the level of theatrical space in a good number of distinct techniques and approaches to the theatre that differ and attempt to revise the traditional theatre. These approaches mainly address a different concept of the theatre as a physical building. As a rejection to the conventions of the traditional theatre, the Canadian "alternative theatre" showed a certain preference for the type of buildings that avoided the usual proscenium-arched architecture, thus choosing premises such as old churches and factories refurbished as theatres. Illustrating a fundamental characteristic of the revisionist theatre that intends to erase the "fourth wall", thus encouraging closeness between actors and audience, this type of buildings did not offer a hierarchical classification of seats. This feature is pervasively present in Reaney's trilogy in which the actors fuse with the audience making them feel as part of the cast whose main role is that of members of the community that act as eyewitnesses.

A closer approach of the cast to the audience is also achieved by the former being already on stage and at the back of the auditorium thus giving the audience the sensation of being in the middle of the representation as they approach their seats. This characteristic was highlighted by Myron Galloway in his review of *The Donnellys* performances at the Neptune Theatre in Halifax:

Each evening the actors are present, either at the back of the auditorium, or on stage when the audience arrives. Accompanied by a fiddler they are singing familiar old songs, or, as in the case of the second play, *The St Nicholas Hotel*, dancing jigs and reels and playing a game with a dozen old time spinning tops (1977, 153).

As we have seen, the documentary element is, in *The Donnellys*, the key to revise the traditional view of both history as a reliable and trustworthy account and the dramatic genre. Inserting historical documents and offering new readings and new perspectives about the history/story and its protagonists help carry out such a revisionist task. The task of revising the traditional concept of history becomes completed, as previously shown, by destabilizing the linear discourse of history, thus presenting a completely fragmented time as well as parodying the excessively reliance of history on dates. On the other hand, the revision of the conventional approach to the dramatic genre is mainly carried out by re-addressing the traditional view of the characters and the concept of place, both geographical and theatrical.

The documentary aspect is therefore, the instrument through which Reaney attempts to both dismantle the traditional history/story of the

Donnelly family and create a new one by juxtaposing it with the mythical element, as will be seen in the fifth chapter. It is also one of the key influential elements in the development of a different concept of the dramatic genre, which encompasses many other genres within it.

CHAPTER THREE

III. DOCUMENTARY AS EXPLORATION: *BALDOON*

*History is always in practice
a reading of the past.
(Belsey, Catherine 1985, 1)*

The documentary element is also absolutely present in *Balloon*, though the use of historical documentation in this play is not as pervasive as in *The Donnellys*. In *Balloon*, the documents and references to historical facts are given its common use, i.e. they are used mostly in an attempt to document and authenticate the real occurrence of such facts. That is not the case though of the many religious documents inserted through which the playwrights attempt to show and explore how the same religious sources may be interpreted in many different ways. The religious sources along with certain historical references thus constitute the main documentary core. Such documentary aspect, as in *The Donnellys*, is completed by the use of

presentational stage documentary and the trial situation that develops within the Church.

By means of exploring different approaches towards the same religious source, that is, the Bible, *Baldoon* does with religion what *The Donnellys* does with history. That is to say, it attempts to deconstruct traditional views of religion, which usually show the image of God as a punisher and of the Devil as an ever-present lurker eager to make us fall.

How the documentary element is used in *Baldoon* in order to document and authenticate the events depicted in the play and to deconstruct traditional views of religion will be the core of analysis of this chapter. To carry out this task, first a brief review of some of the documentary sources existing on the mysterious happenings in *Baldoon* will be offered in order to show how these are somewhat present in the history/story developed by Reaney and Gervais.

III.1 A Review of Documentary Sources on *Baldoon*

Baldoon presents quite an attractive combination of local history and folklore of 'both oral and literary dimensions', which again makes the task of placing boundaries between both a hard one. In fact, most of the scarce documentary sources existing in relation to *Baldoon*, though they fall either under historical accounts or popular/folkloric accounts, offer both history and legend in a greater or lesser extent. In all of these accounts there are references to the historical characters involved and to contemporary historical events

related to the occurrences in Baldoon such as the witchcraft trials, celebrated at the time and later abolished.

The first original account of the Baldoon happenings seems to be a pamphlet written by Neil McDonald, the son of the victim of the events, in 1880. In this book, McDonald offers statements from all those who remembered what had happened. His text was revised and reprinted by Hugh Colwell in 1910. Most of the subsequent accounts of Baldoon and its strange happenings somehow follow the story originally told by Neil McDonald. Good examples are Lambert's *Exploring the Supernatural. The Weird in Canadian Folklore*⁷⁴ (1955), Smith's *Ontario Ghost Stories*⁷⁵ (1998), Barrett's *Lore and Legends of Long Point*⁷⁶ (1977) and Colombo's *Mysteries of Ontario*⁷⁷ (1999). Out of those, Lambert's account is the most detailed and complete in the sense that much of the information included in McDonald's and Colwell's works is inserted. Lambert's account tells of the events placing them in context by giving factual information relating to the foundation of the Baldoon settlement and customs among the inhabitants at the time. Besides telling the events as close as possible to the original version, Lambert includes his opinion about the origins of the mysterious happenings. In his view, these were poltergeist events having their origin in John McDonald's foster daughter. Lambert bases his argument on the similar events occurred in several places some years later.

⁷⁴ Lambert, R.S. (1955) *Exploring the Supernatural. The Weird in Canadian Folklore*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

⁷⁵ Smith, Barbara (1998) *Ontario Ghost Stories*, Toronto: Lone Pine Publishing.

⁷⁶ Barrett, Harry B. (1977) *Lore and Legends of Long Point*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd.

⁷⁷ Colombo, J.R. (1988) *Mysterious Canada*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd.

This and the previous accounts gave a good starting point to Reaney and Gervais for their plot⁷⁸ as will be seen.

Besides such accounts that show both historical and folkloric aspects of Baldoon and the mysterious events, are the historical accounts that deal mainly with the history of the foundation of the settlement. These accounts are based on the existing historical records. Good examples are Fred Coyne Hamil's *The Valley of the Lower Thames 1640 to 1850*⁷⁹ (1951) and A.E.D. MacKenzie's *Baldoon. Lord Selkirk's Settlement in Upper Canada*⁸⁰ (1977). The first presents an account of the origin of the settlement and its evolution in relation to its founder, Lord Selkirk. The second, although it also relates the existence of the settlement to Lord Selkirk, offers a much more detailed account of the origin going back to how the idea emerged in Selkirk's mind. It also accounts for the efforts of the Lord in his attempt to obtain permission from the British Crown and take the settlers to the new land in the American continent. In a chapter devoted to the study of the settlement experiment as a success, a brief reference to the mysterious happenings is included. This book includes maps and documents of the time where the actual existence of the characters that are depicted in the play is verifiable. It is also very helpful as a

⁷⁸ Besides such accounts, Marty Gervais absolutely relates the story of *Baldoon* to the oral tradition kept alive mainly by women. He comments: "*Baldoon* really starts for me with my mother's stories of poltergeists at Pointe-aux-Roches, a French-Canadian village near Lake St. Clair in southwestern Ontario. It begins with my great grandmother, of German origin, who had been converted to the Roman Catholic religion and because of serious doubts in that faith, she promised at her death bed that she would return with a sign, if she required more prayers to assist her entry into heaven" (Reaney and Gervais 1976, 116).

⁷⁹ Hamil, F. Coyne (1951) *The Valley of the Lower Thames 1640 to 1850*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

⁸⁰ MacKenzie, A.E.D. (1978) *Baldoon. Lord Selkirk's Settlement in Upper Canada*, Ontario: Phelps Publishing Company.

guide of the settlers' background, information that becomes absolutely relevant in their depiction in Reaney and Gervais' play.

III.2 An Analysis of 'Documentary' in *Baldoon*

The events portrayed in *Baldoon* are said to be "based on fact - on actual occurrences that took place in the 19th century settlement of Baldoon near Wallaceburg, Ontario" (Gervais and Reaney 1976, 105). However, a great deal of folkloric elements such as witchcraft and poltergeist pervades the whole play. These elements have been combined with documented religious tradition and historical events in order to provide an authentic 'document' of 19th century Ontario pioneer settlements in which attitudes towards religious and secular beliefs are explored. In order to carry out such an exploration, religious and historical documentation has been used so as to authenticate and document the story of the events occurred to specific people in a specific time and place.

III.2.1 Exploring Pioneer *Baldoon*: Documentary and the Plot

Baldoon develops the story, as previously told, of a pioneer family from Scotland in this Upper Canada settlement between 1828 and 1830. The McTavish family (McDonald in real life) is having serious problems in their house where strange phenomena have been occurring for three years. The play starts in the middle of a journey that Mr. McTavish and Mr. McDorman, a

friend of his, make to Long Point. There lives a famous "witch hunter" named Dr. Troyer with his granddaughter⁸¹, gifted with second sight, and his grandson. All the events occurred up to that moment in McTavish's house such as the falling of the barn beams, the bullet showers, and strange noises and footsteps in the house, are recalled in the manner of flashbacks by McTavish. Therefore, the play, which is composed of two acts, develops the encounter of McTavish and Dr. Troyer in Long Point in the first act and in the second act, the encounter of both with the Presbyterian community, to which McTavish belongs, back in Baldoon.

Most of the events depicted in the first act remain faithful to Lambert's account. That is to say, the plot structure of the first act is mainly based on this documentary source although the temporal order has been changed. The central motif of the play is the journey and from this image all other motifs develop giving a coherent form to the plot.

Once McTavish and McDorman arrive at Dr. Troyer's house after a long and scary journey through the wilderness, McTavish is asked to tell his problem by Mary Troyer. While he tells his story, McTavish makes references to the first two happenings referred to in Lambert's account: the fall of the beams in the barn and the bullet showering. Following the same order as Lambert's account the next happenings are narrated: the strange noises in the

⁸¹ In the play, it is Troyer's granddaughter and not his daughter the one that is gifted with second sight.

house, the cradle violently rocking, McTavish's encounter with Mrs. Pharlan (his enemy), and McTavish's relation to Re-nah-sewa and Par-Tar-sung, two Indian neighbours.

All the strange phenomena narrated by McTavish caused the visits of many people from the neighbourhood just for the sake of curiosity or for attempting to help the family. Among those visitors were, according to the account, Patrick Tobin, a pedlar from Chatham, Neil Campbell, an unnamed American visitor and Robert Barker, a schoolteacher from Michigan. All of them are included in the play as eyewitnesses of the strange happenings and their comments are shown very much like in the original accounts. With regard to Robert Barker, the account explains how this schoolteacher was accused of pretension to witchcraft in his attempt to help the McTavish. References to the trial taken place on April 14th 1830 are included in the play as well as Barker's comments regarding the events in McTavish's house. Also there is a reference to the annulment of the act against pretensions to witchcraft in Upper Canada.

After discovering the main cause of all the problems, Troyer's granddaughter asks McTavish to follow several instructions once back in Baldoon, so the trouble will come to an end. The instructions given to him are basically the same Lambert mentions in his account. Thus, the first act of the play follows very closely the existing accounts and even includes verbatim

comments and opinions included in such accounts. However, in their attempt to create their own history/story, Reaney and Gervais insert information that is lacking in such accounts. This information is related to "the character and personal relations of the afflicted family" (Lambert 1955, 67). By basing fundamentally on their religions, Reaney and Gervais develop the inner side of the main characters, that is, McTavish and Troyer. In order to depict the psychological characteristics of both, the writers explore the different visions of life as seen by the Presbyterian (McTavish's) and the Protestant (Troyer's) religions. The second act of the play basically develops the confrontation of both approaches. In order to do that the authors insert verbatim biblical documents such as psalms, hymns, commandments, and extracts from *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*. By inserting and contrasting such documents, the authors intend to deconstruct traditional interpretations of the Bible.

The revision of the religious extracts is done in the context of the theatrical re-creation of a Presbyterian Sabbath church meeting⁸². During the Mass, Reverend McGillicuddy delivers his sermon directed to justify the excommunication of McTavish for his contacts with the witch hunter and the re-acceptance of Mrs. Pharlan in the church. One way of revising such documents is attained by means of parody⁸³. Dr. Troyer parodies the words

⁸² To offer the audience "an impression of what a Sabbath church meeting was like" (Gervais and Reaney 1976, 63), the authors resorted to documentation such as the Scottish psalter of 1635 and Ralph Connor's "Man from Glengarry".

⁸³ The parody is, in Hutcheon's terms, "a typical postmodern paradoxical form that uses and abuses the texts and conventions of the tradition (...) [and] also contests the authority of that tradition." In the case of *Balloon*, the Bible becomes the text and the authority put into question.

uttered by Revd. McGillicuddy as the latter intends to deliver his sermon to the assistants:

REVD MCGILLICUDDY

Almighty and everlasting God! We acknowledge and confess, before Thy Holy Majesty, that we are poor miserable sinners, conceived and born in sin prone to do evil, unable of ourselves to do any good and that by continued transgression of Thy Holy Commandments we have incurred Thy righteous sentence of condemnation and death.

(...)

DR TROYER

Almighty and everlasting Devil! We acknowledge and confess before Thy Holy Majesty, that we are poor miserable do-gooders, ... unable of ourselves to do any evil and that by continued obedience to Thy Holy Commandments we have incurred Thy righteous sentence of condemnation and death. (69)

As Reverend McGillicuddy starts to fear the influence of Dr. Troyer on the community, he begins to recite passages from the Bible that support his sermon against people "that hath a familiar spirit, or that it is a wizard" (70). The reading of these passages intends to move the community to hit the accused of witchcraft, that is Dr. Troyer and McTavish. Reverend McGillicuddy's biblically based points are immediately dismantled by Dr. Troyer's also biblically based arguments:

REVD MCGILLICUDDY

...a man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death. Stone him with stones. *They are about to do so when...*

DR TROYER

Ach, but the verses continue right after; "I am the Lord. Thou shalt rise us before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear Thy God: I am the Lord, and if a stranger sojourn with thee in your hand, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers once in the Land of Egypt (84).

When Revd. McGillicuddy accuses Troyer of being a sorcerer and of having divided him from his congregation, the same sources McGillicuddy uses to justify his position are used by Troyer to justify his:

DR TROYER

Yes, if it is sorcery to purify and cast out – for it also says in Leviticus several chapters earlier already than your text: "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: he shall be brought unto the priest: and the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water; (...) (89)

The opposition generated between the two religious approaches to life becomes utterly highlighted by the way both are depicted in the *didascalia* at the beginning of the play, which reads

As the company enters from the back of the theatre they should be singing Tunkard, Mennonite and Shaker hymns; there should be a great feeling of bells, wind instruments - joy in God, the easy attainment of His light, joy in His creation. This should be a contrast with the more austere, bleak music of the Presbyterian Psalm-book which I'll use at the beginning of Act Two.

Reaney and Gervais absolutely achieve the goal of offering different views of the Bible and consequently of revising the traditional approach to the

Holy Word as untouchable and unchangeable, as the previous examples have shown. In doing this, the authors somehow follow post-colonial tendencies in taking the Bible as one of the "chief canonical texts targeted for strategic reform" (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996, 43).

III.2.2 Pennsylvania Dutch and Scottish: Documentary and the Characters

As in *The Donnellys*, most of the characters in *Baldoon* exist as factual characters in the existing accounts on the mysterious happenings in the settlement. However, contrary to the characters in the trilogy, historical depictions of the family involved in the events and of their neighbours are scarce. In fact, the only documentary information regarding the family is related to their original birthplace and their religious creeds, that is, Scottish and Presbyterian. Those two pieces of information, as seen in *The Donnellys*, along with the names were vital in order to be identified as members of a community at the time. It is quite surprising to see how the authors have changed their original names. Thus, the MacDonald family becomes the McTavish family and Mrs. Buchanan becomes Mrs. Pharlan in the play. Therefore, the only documentary information that we may get with regards to the family from the play comes through their accent reflected in the writing and the songs that identify them with their Scottish background.

Conversely, more detailed information from Dr. Troyer is offered in relation not so much to his birthplace and religious creeds but to his interest and belief in the occult sciences. Several Dr. Troyer's characteristics such as his superstition, his absolute terror and fear of the witches, and his particular mix of religious creeds and magic are carefully depicted at the beginning of the play. Such identification features of the character, in spite of having been adapted for the play, seem to be quite factual if we remit to the documentary information regarding the real Dr. Troyer. In accounts such as Barrett's (1977) Troyer is described as

a competent botanist and very knowledgeable about the medicinal properties of the flora of his forest home. He was also unbelievably superstitious. Coupled with this, he seemed to possess extrasensory perception or "second sight", as well as the ability to use a divining rod of willow to "witch" for both water and metals (53).

Also Colombo's account related to Dr. Troyer in his book *Mysterious Canada* (1988) shows some of these features accurately depicted in the play. Colombo points out that Dr. Troyer "performed incantations to raise evil spells. With his divining rod or dowsing stick he boasted he was able to locate running water and buried treasure. He was knowledgeable about the unseen world" (1988, 167).

An example of his superstition, which reflects quite well the above-mentioned descriptions, is the following Dr. Troyer's comment in his conversation with his grandson Jonathan:

DR TROYER

Give it to me, Yonnie. Jah, it's about time already for the witching rod. Yonnie, what has happened to the horseshoe over the front door? There's someone coming to see me and I don't want them to come into an unprotected house as mine is now once with no horseshoe over the lintel yet. (11)

Also his fear of the witches is shown in this comment:

DR TROYER

Travellers are coming here - Mary, feel them coming on the divining rod, they are running, Yonnie, and guess what is pursuing them through the woods - witches. If they get here and there's no horseshoe over the door the witches will come right in after them. Chust run as fast as you ever able. No wonder my luck has been bad today. (...) (11)

The existing accounts also make reference to Dr. Troyer's religion, which becomes represented through the music and hymns as well as by Dr. Troyer's particular interpretation of certain biblical passages, previously seen. The music and hymns chosen by Dr. Troyer are qualified by Presbyterian Mr. McDougald as "gay heathen and ungodly merry tunes" (82) since they do not show repentance as Presbyterian hymns do. Such a contrast is observed in the following verses sung by Troyer on one hand, and by the Church people, on the other hand:

DR. TROYER

(...)

O this pretty little trumpet I will blow,
O it is from the heavens I do know.
I'll blow, blow my trumpet, toot, toot, toot,
I'll blow my trumpet, toot, toot.

CHURCH PEOPLE

Delyver mee, I say,
From lyers lips alway
And tongues of false report.

DR. TROYER & JOHN MCTAVISH

I'm a scotch bonny wee on, my Mither sae gude
Has sent ye la le some sa fa-en and fude.

CHURCH PEOPLE

What vantage or what thing
Gets thou thee for to sting,
Thou false and flattering lyer. (81-82)

The documentary features that identify Dr. Troyer and relate him with a specific type of pioneers in Canada are his accent, also shown typographically, and the use of expressions in his mother tongue, i.e. Dutch. In the introductory *didascalia*, it is pointed out that "he speaks the language of the Pennsylvania Dutch Dunkards among whom he was raised before the American Revolution drove him up to Long Point" (3). His accent is conveyed by the authors by transcribing certain words as they should be pronounced by Troyer:

DR. TROYER (...)

The diefel is in both of you! (...) but I know that's chust not enough ...
(5)

Also words such as 'groszdoddy' and 'schnabelganz' are used by Troyer in order to emphasize his descent. The recreation of Troyer's accent together with that of the Scottish dialect represented by John McTavish is, as Parker

(1991, 256) points out, an attempt to suggest "something of the shaping of the area's linguistic heritage."

As in *The Donnellys* the characters in *Baldoon* introduce themselves by means of presentational documentary techniques. This technique is quite noticeable in the case of characters such as Robert Barker, Neil Campbell or Patrick Tobin that are portrayed and presented as eyewitnesses and as such, telling their own experience in McTavish's house.

The Chorus carries out much of the narration from an omniscient point of view. In this play, it does not take on a historical role as in *The Donnellys* although it is in charge of providing historical information such as that related to Robert Barker's trial:

CHORUS

The King Versus Robert Barker, Schoolmaster. Pretensions to Witchcraft. April 14, 1830.

It also serves as witness to the strange events:

CHORUS

What could it be. Jennie. Sarah. Marie. There's someone shooting at the house. Look here's the bullet. Someone's throwing them at the house, they're drilling holes in all the winderpanes like a woodpecker. Corks. Bottles. Stoppers. Bullets. Throw them out of the house. (1976, 26)

The Chorus also plays a didactic role offering the audience possible explanations of the mysterious happenings as well as comments and reflections on their causes as it is shown in the conclusion:

CHORUS (...)
2 Confession is a story
that troubles us all
it is something in words
about the way we can fall
Something that draws us
Away from the mirror
To pull us from ourselves
Or the truth that we fear
The conflict in this
Lies in the gosling that is sold
Not in mysteries
Or in the lies that are told
For the story of Baldoon
Is made for us all to see
To focus on the other
Who must be set free. (103-104)

The archival and documentary role that the Chorus takes on in *The Donnelly's* at the level of history is developed in this play at the level of religion. Many biblical extracts inserted in the play are recited by the Chorus. An illustrative example is the recitation of the Commandments while in the Sabbath meeting simultaneously with Revd. McGillicuddy's private prayer.

III.2.3 Dating a Popular Tale: Documentary and Time

Although *Baldoon* is based on "a historically documented event" (Walker 1994, 36) references to historical time are quite ironically scarce. However, certain major historical dates have been inserted with the aim of proving that the story told actually occurred in a specific time and place. Thus, when McTavish is asked to tell his story, the popular "Once upon a time" turns into

"It all started on my farm on the Snye River in Sombra Township, on the second last day before Halloween, 1828."

The typical remoteness of the popular folktales is not kept by giving specific information regarding time and place in which the events happened. References to historical time are also used when certain historical events are referred to, such as the trial of Robert Barker for pretension to witchcraft. The Chorus gives such information specifying the date: April 14th, 1830.

No more references to historical time are inserted in the play. Nonetheless, these two are enough to historically contextualize the story told and to pose once more the confrontation between history and fiction. If in *The Donnellys*, historical time was challenged by presenting a fragmented time that breaks the linear discourse of history, in *Baldoon*, it is challenged by providing a popular folktale with the hallmark of history, that is, dates. This is a good example of how the documentary element is also an attempt to revise the traditional concept of literary genre, and more specifically, of the classical folktale.

In *Baldoon* the primary fictional time only covers three years, from 1828 to 1831. The events occurred during those years are recalled by McTavish by means of memory flashbacks. These flashbacks follow a chronological order, since McTavish selects and retells the events from the very beginning up to the

moment he decides to visit Dr. Troyer, which is the time exposed in the first act of the play. The play thus starts presenting Dr. Troyer's environment while waiting for McTavish and McDormand. Next, there is a move back in time to the first mysterious happenings from 1828 onwards. In the second act, time moves from the moment of the journey of Dr. Troyer and McTavish back to Baldoon to the future. The play finishes in the manner of a typical folktale with the Chorus narrating what happened after the strange events:

CHORUS

Doctor Troyer then went back to Long Point and, not many years after, died and was buried in his own orchard, buried with his moonstone and divining rod, his hat and his other arcana. One late September night when windfalls were thudding sullenly down from the trees he'd brought across Lake Erie the century before, two thieves came with spades to rob his grave. No sooner had they touched the lid of Dr Troyer's coffin when a great white bird swept down on them from the sky and drove them out of the orchard forever. The thieves were a man and a woman. After the white bird had finished its work, she perched on the topmost branch of the tallest apple tree and closed her eyes as also did a hawk who had watched from another tree in the nearby bush and a wild goose with certain black feathers nesting in the rushes at the edge of the flats. In the story of these two sleeping birds' lives, the white bird in another form had once taken the part, had once acted the role we have this night shown you. (1976, 104)

III.2.4 Creating a Sense of Locale: Documentary and Place

As in *The Donnellys*, the story presented in the play takes place in an area of Southwestern Ontario. Even the name of the place, Baldoon, gives title to the play. This area is perfectly described in the introductory *didascalía* and a specific sense of place is also given by the use of a map dominating the stage,

"which shows the shoreline and hinterland from Walpole Island sweeping over to Long Point." The function of the map as a local identifier is highlighted by the comment: "This map places us in a locale and now its legends enact themselves in front of us." By using the term "locale", Reaney and Gervais absolutely underline the sense of locality which is present in most of Reaney's works. The locale, as described in the *didascalia*, clearly reveals the wilderness characteristic of the time (first pioneer settlements) and place inhabited by fens and wilds (Upper Canada).

In the portrait of the place that the playwrights make, the contrast between history and fiction is also present. Although many documentary aspects related to the geographical situation where the events took place are provided, there is a clear tendency to create the proper atmosphere, typical of the folktales. Thus, the place where the phenomena took place, that is, the problematic house, is presented as a stick house, quite skeletal, whose beams are made of styrofoam. The house is also described "like a hand puppet stage, [that] can open out to reveal interior rooms and [which] is in effect a magic box wherein witchcraft and poltergeist will be seen at their work perhaps more effectively than if the local magicians had to work in the naked stage area; so, an illusion box" (1976, 3). By presenting a puppet stage and thus, considering the characters as puppets, the authors intend to keep the folkloric aspects of

the oral tradition, as well as to present theatre as the way to keep alive this tradition by means of imaginatively re-creating the local stories.

The sense of place is also given by continuous references to specific geographical localities. From the very beginning, we learn of the geographical place where Dr. Troyer lives, i.e. "*Long Point on the shore of Lake Erie*" (5). We also know about the places from which some of the eyewitnesses come. Thus, Patrick Tobin comments he is a pedlar from Chatham and the anonymous American visitor confirms he comes from Detroit. We also learn of Sandwich, the place where the trial of Robert Barker took place.

Names of places passed by in their journey back to Baldoon and their distances are given in order to clearly identify the area. Thus Dr. Troyer comments: "we're ten miles up the Sydenham or is it Big Bear Creek from them..." (65).

A sense of locale is also indirectly developed by references to local elements, typical of the settlers' area. Those local elements are mainly the presence of Indians and their rituals.

As in *The Donnellys*, we can see how the documentary element, in the form of either actual religious, historical, and geographical documents, or references to actual places, local customs, rituals, songs, and dances, is key to the exploration and revision of tradition.

SECOND PART

On Myth

CHAPTER FOUR

IV. AN OVERVIEW OF MYTH

*"Myth is now so encyclopedic a term
that it means everything or nothing."
(Gould, Eric 1981, 5)*

Myth, like many other words, is a term that has grown imprecise. In its most ordinary meaning myth is usually defined as "a story about a god or some other supernatural being; sometimes it concerns a deified human being or a ruler of divine descent" (Lee 1993, 596). But it may also be a belief, conviction or higher truth. And it can be found as a synonym for "illusion", "legend", or false propaganda. Thus, myth encompasses, as Bell (1997, 1) states, "both a supremely significant foundational story and a falsehood." We cannot escape then, the feeling of myth being a "too comprehensive [term] to be usable", as Richard Chase suggested. It is, therefore, my attempt in this overview to show the different general approaches from various major

disciplines to the study of myth in order to arrive at a working definition of the term for the purposes of this dissertation. As it is known, the study of myth has been amply and largely addressed and innumerable have been the books and articles published on the issue. Here, the most influential on the subsequent developments of myth and literature will be referred to. In order to carry out the following overview, some key works have been considered and taken as the main references. Such works are basically Ackerman's book on the myth and the ritual school, published in 1991, Champagne's work on the structuralists on myth, Meletinsky's known *The Poetics of Myth*, Walker's *Jung and the Jungians on Myth* and Russell's book on Frye on the issue of myth.

IV.1 A Brief Review of Approaches to Myth

In its original meaning the Greek word *mythos* was equivalent to *plot*. But this meaning did not become fixed. Myth thus started to acquire different meanings accorded by the scholars from different schools of thought. Even in Greek times, the philosophers interpreted the term in different ways. For instance, the Sophists interpreted myth as allegory. Plato seemed to find in his doctrine of the universal the basis of mythology and Aristotle considered the term a synonym of fable. On the other hand, the Stoics regarded the Greek deities as the personification of the functions attributed to the gods. Epicureans saw myths as being based on natural "facts" and Euhemerus

regarded the mythical protagonists as historical characters imbued with a divine aura.

From Aristotle onwards, there was a predominance of allegorical interpretations of myth as reflected by the work of Medieval Christian scholars that approached the Old and New Testaments in a figurative and allegorical manner. In the Renaissance, still the allegorical interpretation of myth was in vogue. It was considered "a series of poetic allegories tinted by a moralizing veneer; as a manifestation of the sentiments and passions that accompanied human emancipation; or as an allegorical expression of religions, philosophical and scientific truths" (Bakhtin 1971 in Meletinsky 1998, 3).

The Enlightenment produced the first formal academic works on myth by Joseph Lafitau, Bernard de Fontenelle and Giambattista Vico. Out of the three, the work by Vico, entitled *The New Science*⁸⁴, has been granted the anticipator of both Romantic and modern interpretations of myth due to, among other aspects, his regarding every metaphor or metonym as a miniature myth. In his view, myth was "the representation in imaginative form of popular sentiment" making mythology "a kind of cultural allegory, composed by the spirit of the naturally mythopoeic age, that enlarged particular men or events or institutions to representative stature" (Ackerman 1991, 9). He also considered myth a historical source from the viewpoint of its

⁸⁴ Vico, G. (1984) *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, translated by T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (orig. ed. 1744).

peculiar mode of reflecting reality and favoured a cyclical view of history. Vico is the first to create a philosophy of myth, which would, in Meletinsky's words, anticipate many of the later developments that were to characterize modern research into myth (1998, 7).

The allegorical vision of myth was recovered by the Romantics who viewed it as an aesthetic phenomenon and as the symbolic prototype of artistic creation. For Romantics myths were "repositories of experience far more vital and powerful than those obtainable from what was felt to be the artificial art and poetry of the aristocratic civilization of contemporary Europe" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Johann Gottfried von Herder was the main representative of this attitude, expressed in his work "Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples". Schelling was also another representative of the Romantic view. His major contribution was the consideration of myth as transcending and preceding history, a concept that was of influence in subsequent scholars such as Eliade (Meletinsky 1998).

Studies of myth continued to proliferate in the second half of the nineteenth century with the emergence of two different schools of myth interpretation. The first of them, based on the "Germanic mythology" of Jakob Grimm and on the Romantic tradition, focused on philological and comparative studies of myth. Its main leader, Müller, defined each myth as a mixture of two elements: the real and the ideal, or the actual and the

imaginary. Theirs is considered a folkloric approach to the study of myth. Within this trend is also the German scholar Wilhelm Mannhardt, who regarded "lower mythology", that is, the ancient and popular traditions, as basic to all formation of myth. For him, the source of mythology was in the traditions passed on among the peoples.

The second school, that is, the anthropological school led by Lang, Tylor and Robertson Smith in England concentrated on studying myth from an anthropological point of view. This school based its results on comparative ethnography research. They arrived at the conclusion that myths were the result of "savage" people's deductions when seeking answers to incomprehensible phenomena. Thus myths were considered to be part of less developed societies.

On top of the above-mentioned philological and anthropological studies on myth, Nietzsche initiated research on the philosophical and artistic areas. Nietzsche emphasized the significance of rituals in mythology and in the origin of forms and artistic genres. He also linked mythology to the principle of irrational and instinctive chaos. These and some other ideas about myth are included in his book *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*⁸⁵, published in 1872. For Nietzsche, tragedy is the product of the Dionysian spirit, which is collective in spirit. He considered myth to be a special symbolic language with

⁸⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich (1967) *The Birth of Tragedy, and The Case of Wagner*, translated by W. Kaufman, New York: Vintage Books (orig. ed. 1872).

insights of its own. Some of his contributions anticipated a few modern interpretations of the term such as "the opposition of myth and history; the conception of becoming as expressing the motif of the eternal return; and the belief in the illusory nature of all logical and philosophical categories" (Meletinsky 1998, 15). Nietzsche's theories inaugurated the "vitalism" stream of thought that was followed by Henri Bergson, Albert Camus and Georges Sorel among others.

Late in the nineteenth century, the work of the anthropological school re-emerged in the theories of James G. Frazer who extended the ethnological approach to the classical past. Frazer was mainly interested in studying myths that are linked to seasonal cycles thus concentrating his research on the myths of Adonis, Tammuz, Osiris, Attis, Dionysus and Demeter and Persephone. His research was published in *The Golden Bough*⁸⁶, a work revised by the author himself many times. The first edition of the book was published in two volumes in 1890. In it, the author acknowledges, is present the imprint of two of his predecessors and great influences, William R. Smith and Wilhelm Mannhardt. From these anthropologists, Frazer inherited his interest in the study of primitive peoples.

In 1911, a third revised edition of *The Golden Bough* saw the light, but this time composed of twelve volumes, which developed his findings and

⁸⁶ Frazer, James G. (1890) *The Golden Bough* XII vol., London: McMillan, 3rd ed. 1907-1915.

notions of magic, taboos and myths. The revision of his work meant changes in Frazer's ideas, especially on the nature and origin of myth and its relationship to ritual. Therefore, trying to define his concept of myth becomes a hard task. However, in general terms, it could be said that he conceived of myth as the script of ritual. In what was to be his last pronouncement in the field, he asserted:

By myths I understand mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature. Such explanations originate in that instinctive curiosity concerning the causes of things which at a more advanced stage of knowledge seeks satisfaction in philosophy and science, but being founded on ignorance and misapprehension they are always false, for were they true, they would cease to be myths (1921, xxvii).

His linkage of myth and ritual profoundly influenced the so-called Cambridge School that used this aspect as their starting point in their research. Many studies against the Cambridge School's arguments that myth and ritual were the foundations of all cultural forms, even of philosophy, emerged at the time. Among these were Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism, a new and challenging theoretical development for the classic English anthropological school. Both anthropologists worked on how any given social behaviour contributes to maintaining the system of which it is a part. In Malinowski's view, myth "is not a means of expressing theoretical or pre-scientific or even pre-rational knowledge of the environment. (...) Myth has a purely practical function. It maintains traditions and cultural continuity by linking past events to the supernatural. Myth codifies thought, reinforces

mores, defines precise rules of behaviour, sanctions rituals, and rationalizes and justifies the social order" (Meletinsky 1998, 25).

In reaction to the English ethnological tradition followed by Frazer and Malinowski, a new school of thought emerged in France, that is, the French Sociological School, led by Emile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. With regard to myth, Lévy-Bruhl's theories meant an important step in the evolution of the concept since he broke with the nineteenth-century conception of myth as "an ingenuous, pre-scientific form of knowledge that exists merely to satisfy primitive man's curiosity about the world" (in Meletinsky 1998). In his view, myth integrates the individual with the society.

Already in the twentieth-century another branch of the ethnological studies emerged in the work of Ernst Cassirer. His findings initiated the so-called symbolic theories about myth. Along the lines of Malinowski, Cassirer acknowledged that myth has a pragmatic function that fundamentally consists in reaffirming the identification of society with nature. He conceived mythology, like art and literature, as an autonomous, symbolic form of culture that has a particular way of representing emotions. Cassirer's works proposed a complex philosophy of myth that was later revisited by Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism*⁸⁷.

⁸⁷ Frye, Northrop (1957) *Anatomy of Criticism. Four Essays*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

On the other hand, starting from Wundt's ideas on the role of emotional states, dreams and chains of associations in the genesis of myth, the psychology of the unconscious developed by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung among others, took off at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his theory, Freud linked myth to the unconscious psyche thus seeing it as "the obvious expression of an important psychic complex and as the satisfaction of sexual urges that can no longer freely express after the formation of the family" (Meletinsky 1998, 40). Jung, following Freud's link of myth and unconscious psyche, developed his own approach to mythology mainly based on the concept of archetype.

From the Jungian perspective, myths are "essentially culturally elaborated representations of the contents of the deepest recesses of the human psyche: the world of the archetypes" (Walker 1995, 4). Jung defined the archetypes or "archaic remnants" as those elements that often occur in a dream that are not individual and that cannot be derived from the dreamer's personal experience. These elements are defined by Jung as "mental forms whose presence cannot be explained by anything in the individual's own life and which seems to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind" (Jung 1964, 67).

In his theory, Jung sketched out a classification of archetypes that inform what he called "the strange mythology of the psyche." These

archetypes are fundamentally the shadow, the anima/animus, the wise old man, the great mother, the divine child and the self. Very briefly, the shadow, according to Jung, contains the hidden, repressed, and unfavorable (or nefarious) aspects of the personality. The anima/animus archetype is the representation of the unconscious in the form of the opposite sex. The wise old man is equated to a figure of wisdom who can take various forms: a wise seer, a shaman, and so on. The archetype of the great mother becomes an equal of the old wise man in the female psyche. In Jung's words, the divine child or *puer aeternus* "is simply the personification of the infantile side of our character, repressed because it is infantile" (Jung 1964, 175). Finally, the self operates as the unconscious inner core of an individual's being, as the ultimate principle of harmony and unity. This archetype of the self can express itself through a number of archetypal images.

Most of Jung's archetypes have been used in combination with the findings of James G. Frazer and the Ritual School, thus giving birth to the so-called archetypal literary criticism of which Northrop Frye is a major representative. Jung's influence on the study of mythology has been particularly evident in the works of Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade among others. In Campbell's works, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*⁸⁸ and *The Masks of God*⁸⁹, the Jungian psychoanalytical theories are absolutely present as

⁸⁸ Campbell, J.(1949) *The Masks of God*, IV vol., New York: Viking Press.

⁸⁹ Campbell, J. (1948, 1st ed., 1968) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

well as the influence of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner. In Campbell's view, mythology and ritual are the keys to understanding the universal and eternal principles of human nature, as they are the expressions of the historical and cultural context in which people live.

Mircea Eliade, rather than approaching myth in a historical sense, advocates a mythopoetic view. His study of mythology is basically tied to the function of myth in ritual. Eliade thus classifies myths according to their functions in ritual. His major contributions are his placement of myth in a continuous battling with "profane" time, with history, and with the irreversibility of history and time, and therefore, his negation of historical time in myth.

The structuralists and particularly anthropologist Levi-Strauss and critic Roland Barthes added interesting viewpoints to the existing theories of myth. Both regard myth as a source of universal human expression that can be analyzed either structurally or textually. On the one hand, Lévi-Strauss, mainly interested in the logical aspects of myth, defines it as "a means of gaining insight into the human spirit because the unconscious, collective mythological imagination is relatively untouched by a community's other vital structures and by the social and economic dimensions" (Meletinsky 1998, 57). He also regards myths as the products of the resourceful ingenuity of indigenous peoples selecting narrative materials from their environments. As

Lévi-Strauss was especially interested in the survival of myth, he analyzed the oral folklore of North and South American Indian tribes in order to derive insights into how the "human spirit" expresses itself (Champagne, 1992). Like Eliade, Levi-Strauss considers myth outside historical time. In fact, he contrasts myth to history arguing that "while history is an open system of communication because it is always adding new information, myth is a closed system of communication because it is a static form with the same elements combined over and over again" (Champagne 1992, 32). Thus, like Eliade, Lévi-Strauss sees myth as a "machine for destroying time."

Roland Barthes, like Lévi-Strauss, is concerned with explaining the survival of myth, but grounding it in its language. According to Barthes, the survival of myth is motivated by the combination of social need and language. He defines myth as a "means of meaning," an expressive form that has an a-historical basis but is totally independent of "real" objects and events. For Barthes, myth and ideology are inextricably related, being myth a part of ideology. Thus, as an ideological construction, myth uses symbols; i.e. words that have a different meaning from their literal one, to portray a culture's values. In this sense, myths can be described as speech acts, which present a similar structure to that of the sign.

Barthes was one of the first structuralists to offer a theory of the structure of myths. In a sense, he was trying to follow Propp's work with the

folktales. This task was, however, carried out by Levi-Strauss who attempted to incorporate Jakobson's structuralist model in his analysis of form and content in the myths. In this sense, as Levi-Strauss "identified structures among myths from different peoples and disparate geographical and historical backgrounds, he began to maintain that the structure of myths would lead to the universal properties of the human mind"(Champagne 1992, 5).

Another development of Propp's approach was made by the German historian of religion Walter Burkert. He applied the actions' patterns to Greek myths and detected how there were certain recurrent patterns. In his book *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*⁹⁰ (1979), he shows how certain Greek myths make use of a specific pattern that he calls "the girl's tragedy." This pattern presents a girl leaving home, then, after a period of seclusion she is raped by a god. A period of tribulation follows, during which the girl is menaced by parents or relatives. Finally, the girl gives birth to a baby boy, she is rescued and the boy's future is assured. Another recurrent pattern in some myths, according to Burkert, is the driving of the scapegoat. In Burkert's view, the persistence of these patterns through time is due to the fact that they are grounded in basic human needs.

Many of the above-mentioned studies on the nature of myth have had their echo in applications to literature. Good examples are Jung's theories in

⁹⁰ Burkert, Walter (1979) *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*, University of California Press.

conjunction with the mythical and ritualistic theories of the Cambridge School and Eliade's works. Let us see more in detail how literature and myth have been approached.

IV.2 Main Approaches to the Study of Myth in Literature

The issue of myth in literature was first addressed by the Cambridge School at the beginning of the twentieth-century. This school of thought took Frazer's approach to ritualism as well as the works of classical scholars belonging to the Cambridge School as its starting point. The Cambridge Ritualists were initially Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray, Francis Macdonald Cornford and Arthur Bernard Cook. From about 1900 to 1915 they worked on the origins of Greek religion and Greek drama. They started their work from the assumption that ritual and myth are inextricably linked, considering the ritual the main source from which myth, religion, art, and philosophy of antiquity emerged. Among their most significant works are Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*⁹¹ and *Themis*⁹², and Cornford's *From Religion to Philosophy*⁹³.

One of the first applications of the original Cambridge School's research to literature was Gilbert Murray's *The Rise of the Greek Epic*⁹⁴ (1907), in which

⁹¹ Harrison, J.E. (1903) *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge University Press.

⁹² Harrison, J.E. (1912), *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, Cambridge University Press.

⁹³ Cornford, F.M. (1912) *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, Cambridge University Press.

⁹⁴ Murray, Gilbert (1907) *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, Oxford University Press.

the author compares the abduction of Helen of Troy with the ritual kidnapping of the betrothed that was a prelude to marriage in Sparta and Samos. In this work Murray insisted on ritual as the source of epic poetry. Many of the works following this study concentrated on linking the epic to primitive ritual syncretism. Such attempts were not particularly successful, since the origins of epic, in Ackerman's view, cannot be traced to rituals, though epics of archaic agrarian civilizations use models linked to seasonal rites.

The myth and ritual school continued to develop and flourished in the 1930s and '40s with works that dealt with ancient Oriental culture, epos, the history of religion, and art. Good examples are Hooke's *The Labyrinth*⁹⁵ and *Myth and Ritual*⁹⁶, Gaster's *Thespis*⁹⁷ and E.O. James' *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East*⁹⁸. Other followers of the new ritual school were Lord Raglan and Stanley Hyman. Raglan offers a theory, which is based on the migration and diffusion of rituals and their associated myths, and Hyman, in accordance with Harrison, thinks that myth and ritual are a single entity, which is the basis for the dramatic genre.

⁹⁵ Hooke, S. H. (ed.) (1935, 1976, 2nd ed.) *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.

⁹⁶ _____ (1958, 1933 1st ed.) (ed.) *Myth, Ritual and Kingship: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Kingship in the Ancient Near East and in Israel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁹⁷ Gaster, T. H. (1950) *Thespis: Ritual Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East*, New York: Schuman.

⁹⁸ James, E.O. (1958) *Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeological and Documentary Study*, London: Thames and Hudson.

Preceding the new ritual school, in 1920, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*⁹⁹ described how rituals concerned with the victory of fertility over the wasteland provide the imagery of the quest romance. Weston focused her analysis on the medieval romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Her work, in Ackerman's view, paved the way for a ritualistic interpretation of the origin of the chivalric genre. Besides the chivalric genre and romance, drama, and especially Shakespearean drama, became one of the key aspects of analysis of the myth and ritual school as shown by the number of publications in the field by Herbert Weisinger, Northrop Frye, Harold Watts and Francis Fergusson among others.

Many of these works were, as Ackerman points out, the result of the influence, to a certain extent, of G. Wilson Knight, a proponent of the New Criticism. He developed a 'symbolic' analysis of Shakespeare. Along the lines of Knight, Francis Fergusson, in his book entitled *The Idea of a Theater*¹⁰⁰, analyzes Shakespearean dramaturgy as a ritual state whose main goal is purification and the maintaining of well being. Watts' studies focus on the connection of the birth of the comedic genre and the cyclical use of myth in drama. On his part, Weisinger works on the similarity between the ideology and the structure of tragedy and mythological and ritual models.

⁹⁹ Weston, Jessie (1920) *From Ritual to Romance*, Cambridge University Press.

¹⁰⁰ Fergusson, F. (1949) *The Idea of a Theatre*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

The myth and ritual school also incorporated the psychoanalytical approach, especially Jung's theory of archetypes, to their research. The results of combining Frazer's studies and Jung's theories are seen in William Troy's work on Stendhal and Balzac that centers on the concept of the scapegoat, in which the protagonists are sacrificed to protect or to purify the community. However, among the first to apply the Jungian idea of the collective unconscious to the study of literature was Maud Bodkin.

In *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*¹⁰¹, Bodkin tests Jung's hypothesis that the emotional effects of literature are due to its activation in the reader of recognizable archetypes. Bodkin's work mainly concentrates on examining the emotional and psychological prototypes of specific protagonists and literary genres that are constant over time. Bodkin basically examines literary symbols and their relationship to Jungian archetypes, especially the archetype of rebirth. Thus, she concentrates on the symbols associated with the transition from death to life.

In his study on myth, entitled *Quest for Myth*¹⁰² (1949), Richard Chase equals myth and art arguing that myth "is something dynamic and operative and that it depends upon art rather than vice versa – that in fact it is art." In his more specific approach to literature as an artistic expression Chase clarifies

¹⁰¹ Bodkin, Maud (1934, 1963 2nd ed.) *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination*, Oxford University Press.

¹⁰² Chase, Richard (1949) *Quest for Myth*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

that "myth is literature and therefore a matter of aesthetic experience and the imagination" (vi).

Along the lines of Chase, Philip Wheelright also sees models in myth and ritual as the basis of the verbal arts. However, he concentrates his research on the symbolic character of primitive myth following the line established by Levy-Bruhl, Jung, Cassirer, and Langer.

Besides the Western approach to the study of myth in literature, it is important to consider the work of a few Russian scholars (Losev, Frank-Kamenecky, Freidenberg, Ivanov, Bakhtin, Toporov and Averincev) on the role of myth in the development of literature.

As Meletinsky (1998) shows, Soviet research on myth follows mainly two paths. One is that by ethnographers who study myth as the first link in poetic narration and focus on its religious aspects. The other path is the one followed by philologists, fundamentally concentrated on the study of the role of myth in the development of poetry.

Two of the Russian ethnographers to study myth from the viewpoint of religion are Sternberg and Bogoraz. Following Tylor's line and Boas' respectively, they, together with other scholars such as Tokarev, Zolotarev, Anisimov, Francev, Sharevskaja and Shakhnovich, concentrate on the study of the relationship between religion and mythology and between religion and philosophy.

Focusing their work on the poetics of myth, Potebnja and Veselovsky are among the first Russian scholars that study myth in relation to literature. Potebnja studies myth in relation to language, folklore and literature, taking the word in the context of myth and symbols as the paradigm for all the verbal arts. Thus the key concept of his theory is the 'figurative inner form of the word' which is the visible sign of its semantic value. In his view, myth "is a conscious creation of the will to explain the characteristics of a particular object by means of pre-existing signs whose impact on consciousness is felt through the word or verbal image" (in Meletinsky 1998, 93). Potebnja argues that myth cannot be understood without the agency of the word thus belonging to the same type of phenomena as literature. His understanding of the metaphorical nature of myth was absolutely innovative at the time and, in Meletinsky's view, he anticipated many aspects of Cassirer's theories of mythological symbolism.

Veselovsky, in contrast to Potebnja, develops his theory from ethnology and the study of literary plots. He is mainly interested in the forms of genres and in the classifications of plots, and in his study links many folklore plots to primitive traditions, institutions, and rituals. He is considered a direct predecessor of the Cambridge ritualists (Meletinsky 1998, 96) since he "believes that rituals play a key role not only in the origin of diverse literary genres and plots but also in the genesis of poetry and art in general."

Ethnographic research on myth and religion is developed by scholars such as Tokarev, who states that myth only becomes religious when it explains ritual, thus denying the identity between religion and myth. Conversely, scholars like Asanimov and others link myth to religion and, very rigidly, consider every plot with no direct religious function a tale, thus regarding tales as the expression of popular creativity in contrast to idealistic and religious orientation of plots used by shamans, priests, etc.

An example of the combination of ethnography and philology for the study of myth, or specifically of the folktale, is the work by Propp, who for his book *Historical Roots of the Folktale*, bases on "ethnographic material and the comparison of motifs (the allomorphic character of syntagmatic functions in tales) between mythological representations on the one hand and primitive rituals and traditions on the other" (Meletinsky 1998, 97).

Other major contributions to the study of myth from the Soviet academic circles are those by Losev, Frank-Kamenecky, Freidenberg, Golosovker and Bakhtin, among others. Losev's work evolved over the years and a proof of that are his different ideas about myth shown in his early book *The Dialectics of Myth* and then in his late book *Ancient Mythology*. However, Losev's study of the historical evolution of myth, and thus his contribution to the study of mythology and classic cultures is very important.

Frank-Kamenecky and Freidenberg take the study of myth in the context of poetics. Their main goal is to study the transformation of plots and their basic ideological elements, though they do it following different approaches. Their research, and especially that by Freidenberg, meant an important contribution to the understanding of mythopoesis "by her analysis of the development of various genres as a result of changes within the semantic paradigms of the myths of antiquity" (Meletinsky 1998, 108).

Golosovker, in his work titled *Logic of Ancient Myth*, focuses on the poetic and aesthetic logic of the myth and on the systematic features of the mythological imaginations. His theories along with those by Frank-Kamenecky and Freidenberg have been regarded by Meletinsky as "forerunners of Levi-Strauss's structural approach" (1998, 109).

Finally, among the works by Soviet scholars, one of the best known by Western academists is the one by Bakhtin on the links of the burlesque aspects of myth and ritual to carnivalesque elements in popular culture. His work on Rabelais has also meant a major contribution to the poetics of myth.

Nevertheless, besides these and other contributions, one of the most significant achievements in the study and understanding of mythological symbols in literature is left to Canadian critic Northrop Frye. His extensive work on the theory and practice of literary criticism and on the role of creative imagination in human culture has been widely influential in the twentieth

century literary criticism, especially for his substantial contributions to the study of mythopoesis. In addition to archetypal criticism, that is, the theory of myth, Frye approaches several levels of analysis in his brand of literary criticism such as "historical criticism" (the theory of modes), "ethical criticism" of images (the theory of symbols), and "rhetorical criticism" (the theory of genres). Given the particular concern with myth in this thesis, his theory of myth, his major contributions on the field, and his influence on James Reaney's work, will be dealt with in more detail.

IV.2.1 Frye on Myth

Northrop Frye's work is, as Segal (1998, Foreword) points out, not a theorist of myth, but " a theorist of the mythic origin of literature - specifically, Western literature." He basically focused on constructing a grammar or taxonomy of literature, mainly developed in his encyclopaedic *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957). The *Anatomy* encompasses most of Frye's postulates about the whole of literature. For Frye, Western literature has its origins in biblical and classical myth and what he attempts to do in his work is to explain all of the main literary narratives as derivations of myth and ritual. In order to devise his literary theory, Frye took into account Frazer's work on myth and ritual as a starting point as well as some other writers' such as Spengler, Cassirer and Jung.

Frye adopts and adapts their contributions from the anthropological (Frazer), psychological (Jung), cultural (Spengler) and philosophical (Cassirer) categories, and transforms them into literary ones.

Frye's readings of Spengler provided the cultural background he required for his knowledge of the Bible and literature. Frazer provides Frye with a literary critical approach, or rather, a mythical approach to literature. From both authors, however different their theories may seem, Frye inherits his assumption that the four seasons are "the mythical backbone of all literature."

Jung and his theory of the archetypes is also essential to Frye's theory of myths. In fact, the adaptation of Jung's system of archetypal figures is, Russell (1998, 120) comments, "important for understanding [Frye's] system of literary archetypes."

As Russell (1998) comments, Frye's readings of philosopher Cassirer were of immediate effect on him. From this author, Frye inherited many concepts and notions that he adapted in his theory of literature, mainly developed in *Anatomy of Criticism*. Cassirer's laws of myth become one of the definitive hallmarks in Frye's subsequent analysis of literature and myth. Thus, the first law of myth which, in Cassirer's view, is that myth provides the material out of which other cultural forms arise, is adopted by Frye but limited

in scope. As Frye's major preoccupation is with literature, he states that it is literature the only one of the arts that has a "direct connection with myth" (NFCL, 69).

Likewise, Frye adapts Cassirer's second law which reads "everything may be turned into everything" in the world of myth (108), turning it into "everything is potentially identical with everything else" in the world of literature (Anatomy, 124).

Not only does Frye adopt and adapt Cassirer's laws of myth but also his theories of the symbol, as Russell (1998) shows in his analysis of Cassirer in the *Anatomy of Criticism*. According to him, Cassirer's most relevant presence is in the essay devoted to symbolism, i.e. the second essay.

Before delving into his theory, I consider it fundamental to present Northrop Frye's concept of myth in order to delimit the scope of the term. As it is often characteristic in a critic's work or body of work, the crucial term of his/her theory acquires several meanings. That is what happens with the term "myth" in Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* that, as Ford Russell (1998) points out, is employed in a variety of ways. Thus myth is used "in the common sense of a story about a god" (1957:33). It is also defined as plot (52) or narrative (53,72).

Out of the four essays that constitute *Anatomy of Criticism*, I will concentrate on the third essay, "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths." In

this essay, Frye makes clear how "the structural principles of literature are (...) closely related to mythology and comparative religion" (134). That is the reason why the critic considers it fundamental to start his study of archetypes "with a world of myth, an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience" (136). Myth then becomes the structural principle of literature.

According to Frye, myths and archetypal symbols are organized in three different ways in literature:

First, there is undisplaced myth, generally concerned with gods or demons, and which takes the form of two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable. These worlds are often identified with the existential heavens and hells of the religious contemporary with such literature. These two forms of metaphorical organization we call the apocalyptic and the demonic respectively. Second, we have the general tendency we have called romantic, the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience. Third, we have the tendency of "realism" (...) to throw the emphasis on content and representation rather than on the shape of the story (139-40).

Frye first analyzed the structure of imagery of the apocalyptic and the demonic world drawing heavily on the Bible, which he considers "the main source for undisplaced myth in our tradition" (140). In both apocalyptic and demonic imageries, the divine world, the human world, the animal, the vegetable and the mineral worlds acquire a different meaning. Each imagery, on its turn, is related to a specific fictional mode being the apocalyptic imagery

"appropriate to the mythical mode, and demonic imagery to the ironic mode in the late phase in which it returns to myth" (151).

However, Frye argues that most imagery in poetry deals with much less extreme worlds than the two above. He speaks of "three intermediate structures of imagery, corresponding roughly to the romantic, high mimetic and low mimetic modes" (151). The imagery present in these modes is called "analogical." In the mode of romance it presents "a human counterpart of the apocalyptic world which we may call the *analogy of innocence*." The innocent world depicted by its imagery is "an animistic world, full of elemental spirits" (153). The analogical imagery corresponding to the high mimetic mode is called an *analogy of nature and reason*. We find here "the emphasis on cynosure or centripetal gaze, and the tendency to idealize the human representatives of the divine and the spiritual world, which are characteristic of the high mimetic" (153). Finally, to the low mimetic mode corresponds the so-called *analogy of experience* "which bears a relation to the demonic world" (154). Similarly, in each of these structures of imagery the divine, human, animal, vegetable and mineral worlds acquire a different meaning.

According to Frye, the apocalyptic and demonic worlds suggest the eternally unchanging, thus representing heaven and hell. The analogies of innocence and experience, on the other hand, represent the adaptation of myth to nature thus being subjected to the cyclical movement of nature: "the

alternation of success and decline, effort and repose, life and death, which is the rhythm of process" (158). In this sense, each of the worlds represented by its corresponding imagery falls under the influence of natural cycle as explained by Frye in these words (162):

The top half of the natural cycle is the world of romance and the analogy of innocence; the lower half is the world of "realism" and the analogy of experience. There are thus four main types of mythical movement: within romance, within experience, down and up. The downward movement is the tragic movement, the wheel of fortune falling from innocence to hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe. The upward movement is the comic movement, from threatening complications to a happy ending and a general assumption of post-dated innocence in which everyone lives happily ever after.

From this, Frye establishes his four narrative categories that do not correspond to the literary genres. These are the romantic, the tragic, the comic, and the ironic or satiric. Frye calls these categories *mythoi* or generic plot. In relation to the natural cycle each *mythos* is related to a season thus having the mythos of spring for comedy, the mythos of summer for romance, the mythos of autumn for tragedy and the mythos of winter for irony and satire. Each of these *mythoi* is structurally and thematically analyzed with the result of obtaining specific characteristics of each one. These structural features very much guide the reader to place in general terms any work of literature in the context of the whole literature. At this point, I will make an overview of the main characteristics of each generic plot since it will be of use for my subsequent analysis of *The Donnelly's* and *Balloon* in chapters five and six.

In his analysis of each *mythos* Frye addresses three main aspects, that is, the plot structure, the characterization and the structures or phases into which each narrative may be divided. The first *mythos* analyzed is that of the comedy. It, as generally known, presents a simple formula: "a young man wants a young woman, (...) [but] his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal and (...) near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will" (163). In his review of this type of narrative, Frye points out its main characteristics in terms of recurrent elements such as the happy ending, the repetition overdone or not going anywhere and the humour. The humour is defined as "someone with a good deal of social prestige and power, who is able to force much of the play's society into line with his obsession" (169).

With regard to its characters, these are the *alazons* or impostors, the *eirons* or self-deprecators, the *bomolochoi* or buffoons and the *agroikos* or rustics. Within these general types all comic characters may be included such as the *miles gloriosus* in the *alazon* type, the *dolosus servus* and the vice in the *iron* type, the parasite and the cook in the *buffoon* type and the Elizabethan gull or the straight man in the *agroikos* type. These characters are also present in the *mythoi* of tragedy, irony and satire.

According to Frye, "the comedy ranges from the most savage irony to the most dreamy wish-fulfilment romance, but its structural patterns and

characterization are much the same throughout its range" (176). This blending of the comedy into irony and satire at one end and into romance at the other leads the critic to establish six phases, which are present in each *mythos*. In the case of comedy the first three phases are parallel to the first three phases of irony and satire, and the second three to the second three of romance. Each of these phases is characterized by specific themes. The first or most ironic phase of comedy, that of the ironic comedy, presents a humorous society that triumphs or remains undefeated. The so-called "point of ritual death"¹⁰³ is used by the author and then reverses the action as quickly as possible. The second phase of comedy, that of comic irony is a comedy "in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving the structure as it was before" (180). Generally, a society is constructed by or around a hero but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself. It is what Frye calls the "quixotic phase of comedy." The third phase presents a *senex iratus* or other humor giving way to a young man's desires. The incest theme is usually present in this type of comedy and its action moves from law to liberty. With the fourth phase there is a movement from the world of experience to the ideal world of innocence and romance. Here we usually find the action presented on two social planes, "of which one is preferred and consequently in some measure idealized" (182). The movement which characterizes the fifth phase is "into a world that is still more

¹⁰³ The "point of ritual death" is the expression used by Frye to refer to a potentially tragic crisis near the end of the play.

romantic, less Utopian and more Arcadian, less festive and more pensive, where the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience" (184).

In Frye's view, these five phases of comedy represent

a sequence of stages in the life of a redeemed society. Purely ironic comedy exhibits this society in its infancy, swaddled and smothered by the society it should replace. Quixotic comedy exhibits it in adolescence, still too ignorant of the ways of the world to impose itself. In the third phase it comes to maturity and triumphs. In the fourth, it is already mature and established. In the fifth, it is part of a settled order which has been there from the beginning, an order which takes on an increasingly religious cast and seems to be drawing from human experience altogether (185).

Finally, the sixth phase of comedy represents the collapse and disintegration of the comic society thus moving to a world where the individual detachment from routine existence dominates. In this world the favourite setting is that of "secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys and happy islands," (185) the ones that predominate in ghost stories, thrillers, and Gothic romances.

The *mythos* following that of comedy is the *mythos* of summer represented by the romance. As we know, virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines who represent the ideals and the villains the threat to their ascendancy inhabit the romance. The plot structure of the romance is given by the adventure carried out by a central character "who never develops or ages

That is, a point "near the end at which the tone suddenly becomes serious, sentimental, or ominous of potential catastrophe." (Frye 1990, 179)

[while going] through one adventure after another" (187). And it is this major adventure, called by Frye, the quest, the one that gives literary form to the romance. Such a quest presents generally three or four stages that are the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, the *sparagmos* or disappearance of the hero, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, also present in the comedy. The hero of the romance is usually a representation of the mythical Messiah and his enemy, against whom he fights constantly, represents the demonic powers of a lower world. Although the main characters are attributed apocalyptic and demonic mythical qualities respectively, the conflict usually takes place in the middle world, characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. The central form of the quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme, which may acquire several and varied forms.¹⁰⁴

Frye argues that the four *mythoi* -comedy, romance, tragedy and irony- may be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth in which

Agon or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvellous adventures. *Pathos* or catastrophe, whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy. *Sparagmos*, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world is the archetypal theme of irony and satire. *Anagnorisis*, or recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy (192).

The characters of the romance are usually organized in dualities, that is, those against or for the quest. Thus we find the hero *versus* the traitor that can

¹⁰⁴ One of the various forms it may take is Leviathan.

be represented in the figure of a magician, the heroine *versus* the siren or beautiful witch and the horse *versus* the dragon.

The six phases of the romance display the evolution of the hero thus presenting in the first phase the myth of the birth of the hero often associated with a flood, "the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle." The second phase deals with the innocent youth of the hero. Here a pastoral and Arcadian world, that is, a world of magic or desirable law, is usually presented. The third phase develops the normal quest theme whereas the fourth phase has as its central theme the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience. The fifth phase presents an "idyllic view of experience from above, in which the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place." Finally, the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure takes place in the sixth phase, where most of the tales are included.

It is also characteristic of the romance to have a so-called "point of epiphany." This is defined as "a point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment" being commonly represented by the mountaintop, the island, the tower, the lighthouse, the ladder or staircase.

The *mythos* of autumn, that is, tragedy, is analyzed in less detail than the rest of the *mythoi* since Frye considers that "thanks as usual to Aristotle, the

theory of tragedy is in considerably better shape" (206). Nonetheless, he applies to it the same type of analysis used for the other *mythoi*. Frye, then, starts by addressing its plot structure. He argues that two reductive formulas have often been used for explaining tragedy. One is the theory that "all tragedy exhibits the omnipotence of an external fate" (209). The second is the theory that "the act which sets the process going must be primarily a violation of *moral* law, whether human or divine; in short, that Aristotle's *hamartia* or "flaw" must have an essential connection with sin or wrongdoing" (210). In Frye's view the characterization of tragedy is similar to that of comedy in reverse. The *nemesis* or action of vengeance that characterizes the tragedy is usually carried out by an *iron*, represented by a variety of agents ranging from "wrathful gods to hypocritical villains" (216). The tragic hero usually belongs to the *alazon* group, "an impostor in the sense that he is self-deceived or made dizzy by *hybris*"¹⁰⁵ (217). The tragic character corresponding to the comic buffoon is often female and presents a picture of "unmitigated helplessness and destitution" (217). In tragedy there are also characters such as the messenger "who plays the role of focussing the tragic mood by announcing the catastrophe." Also are the plain dealer "who may simply be the faithful friend of the hero", and the chorus, who usually "represents the society from which the hero is gradually isolated" (218).

¹⁰⁵ *Hybris* is a term which, in classical Greek ethical and religious thought, refers to an overweening presumption suggesting impious disregard of the limits governing human action in an orderly universe. It is the sin to which the great and gifted are most susceptible, and in Greek tragedy it is usually the hero's tragic flaw. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Opposite to comedy, the phases of tragedy move from the heroic to the ironic. The first three correspond to the first three phases of romance and the last three to the last three of irony. In the first phase, the hero is usually presented as full of courage and innocent. The central and typical figure of this phase is "the calumniated woman, often a mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected" (219). The second phase, corresponding to the youth of the romantic hero, is dominated "by the archetypal tragedy of the green and golden world, the loss of the innocence of Adam and Eve,..." (220). In the third phase a strong emphasis is put on the success or accomplishment of the hero's task. The fourth phase implies a movement from innocence to experience since it is in this phase when the hero falls through hybris and hamartia. In the next phase, the irony increases and this is achieved by "putting the characters in a state of lower freedom than the audience" (221). Finally, in the sixth phase of tragedy, "a world of shock and horror in which the central images are images of *sparagmos*, that is, cannibalism, mutilation, and torture" (222) is presented. The point of epiphany is also attained in tragedy in this phase, but a point of demonic epiphany which is "the cross under the sunset", i.e. the antithetical image of the tower under the moon of the romance.

The final *mythos* addressed by Frye is that of winter corresponding to irony and satire. Both irony and satire represent the mythical patterns of

experience. With regard to the structure, the central principle of ironic myth is best seen as a parody of romance. Satire is defined by Frye as "militant irony" (223), as irony "which is structurally close to the comic" (224). In satire two elements become indispensable: wit or humour "founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd" and an object of attack (224).

The six phases used in the previous *mythoi* become here displayed as follows: the first three phases are of satire and correspond to the first three or ironic phases of comedy whereas the last three phases correspond to the ironic phases of tragedy.

The first phase of satire offers "a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic." It is called the satire of the low norm and takes for granted "a world, which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable" (226). Its most common form is the encyclopaedic scheme. The characterization is the same as the one in comedy and tragedy, that is, mainly the *alazon* and the *iron*. However, in low-norm satire, the *alazon* is "a Goliath encountered by a tiny David with his sudden and vicious stones, a giant prodded by a cool and observant but almost invisible enemy into a blind, stampeding fury and then polished off at leisure". On the other hand, the *iron* is "irony's substitute for the hero" (228).

The second phase of satire corresponds to the second phase of comedy. Its satiric counterpart is the picaresque novel. In Frye's view the central theme of this phase is "the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain" (230). Here skepticism, satire on religion, in brief, intellectual satire predominates. Thus this second-phase satire shows "literature assuming a special function of analysis, of breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement (not necessarily, of course, the progress) of society" (233).

The third phase satire is the satire of the high norm. Here we find adaptations of romance themes: the fairyland of little people, the land of giants, the world of enchanted animals,... and society is presented whether in a telescope as "posturing and dignified pygmies" or in a microscope as "hideous and reeking giants" (234). In the fourth phase there is a movement to the ironic aspect of tragedy and satire starts to recede. In this phase the character is not made fun of and tragedy is looked at from below, "from the moral and realistic perspective of experience" (237). The fifth phase presents irony "in which the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune" (237). Finally, the sixth phase presents "human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage" (238). The human figures

in this phase are *desdichado* figures of misery or madness. Again the point of demonic epiphany makes its presence through the image of the dark tower and prison of endless pain, the city of dreadful night in the desert, or the *tour abolie* (239).

Although Frye's structural approach to literature gives the reader the impression of having to include each piece of literature under a specific label, I believe this is not the case. We know that not all literary works are "pure" genres in the sense of presenting only one plot structure, specific characters corresponding to that structure, etc. Frye's theory takes this aspect into account and this can be easily seen in the examples of literary works he uses. Most of them are used as instances of works where a main plot structure is completed by other types of *mythoi* acting as subplots. Thus, for instance, we may find a romantic comedy where a tragic subplot is included.

Frye's literary theories present certain weaknesses such as

the anti-historical undercurrent, the relative lack of importance accorded to the realistic principle in literature, the almost complete lack of interest in the author's individual qualities, the arbitrary interpretation of Aristotelian terminology, the lacunae in the analyses of various concepts in theories of literary criticism, and the dogged insistence on always tracing literature back to these mythological and ritual roots (Meletinsky 1998, 89).

Despite such weaknesses and flaws in Frye's theory of myths, I believe that the many varieties of archetypes and their expression in different genres

and stylistic systems continue to be a very helpful method of myth analysis in a work of literature. My analysis of the mythical aspect in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* will therefore include a study of both plays within the Frygian mythical framework.

IV.2.1.1 Frye and Reaney

Frye's influence on a whole generation of artists and literary writers is absolutely out of question. His presence on their work has been such that many Canadian writers of the 1950s and 1960s were said to belong to the Frygian mythopoeic school of poetry. James Reaney is one of these writers. Nevertheless, as Stingle comments, "this does not mean that Reaney's work is Frye's criticism versified and dramatized" (1983, 59). This view would absolutely disregard the author's originality and own concept of literature. It is true that Frye's theories are present in much of Reaney's work. The playwright himself has never hidden this fact and has been quite open in pointing out how Northrop Frye, his lectures and his books helped to "open out the verbal universe for [him]" (1980, 30). The influence that Frye exerted on Reaney was chiefly related to the function of Frye's theories as a guide in attaining a much clearer vision of literature as a whole. In his various articles on Frye, Reaney insists on this aspect. Thus referring to *Fearful Symmetry* he says that this is "a book that came along just in time to help (...) [his] own despair at there apparently being no other possible levels of existence than just

our all too natural selves." Reaney considers this book the source of changing "an experience many would-be lovers of Blake used to have in that they took out the *Collected Poems* from a library and never got past the Book of Thel. As a commentary, it then challenges you not only to wrestle with the Blake prophecies but do other remarkable things" (1994, 126).

In spite of considering *Fearful Symmetry* quite a useful and helpful book, *Anatomy of Criticism* is the work that absolutely captivates Reaney. In his view, this book

enables the reader to pick up a work of art by the scruff of the neck rather than by the tail; that is, it gives you a method for finding a poem's centre of gravity, surely a valuable thing to know in the world of literature where, quite often, through the lack of such knowledge, many objects do not get picked up at all (1964, 76).

Definitely, Reaney considers Frye's criticism a great literary fact in the Canadian poetic landscape and refers to both *Fearful Symmetry* and *Anatomy of Criticism* "as something that can completely change your life, (...) a vision that maps out for the poet a symbolic language with the precision with which it was once mapped out for him by the Renaissance mythographers and by a long extinct attitude on the part of learned people to Ovid and the Bible"(1959, 188).

He finds in each book hundreds of designs for poems, designs that he would apply to many of his poems and plays. From Frye's readings Reaney

gets to think of the existence of spatial diagrams underlying all literary work, as he explains in his article "Search for an Undiscovered Alphabet." Thus he explains works by Donne, Spenser, Frye, Yeats, etc. in terms of diagrams and symbols, as he does with Spenser's *Legend of Temperance*. From this poem, Reaney tells us:

Guyon and Arthur come to a castle which is partly triangular, partly circular with a quadrangle as its base. This is the Castle of Alma and it represents Man; the circular part of the castle stands for the intellectual soul and is spoken of as "immortall, perfect and masculine;" it represents a piece of paradise within us: "And likest is unto that heavenly towre,/That God hath built for his own blessed bowre" (1965, 39).

Reaney emphasizes how these powerful designs work for any literary, comparing them with magnets. He even recommends: "Learn them and you are ready to start playing Literature" (1964, 74). He also insists on how Frye's literary criticism "gives you a method for finding a poem's centre of gravity, (...) a very flexible map to literature which shows underlying structures as circles, circles that sometimes whirl more tightly into knotted centres of vision (1964, 76).

After having read Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, interest in literary criticism becomes indispensable for James Reaney. In fact, he even comments in an interview with Jean McKay that his major interest in plays is directly related to his growing interest in criticism, "particularly in Frye and Aristotle,

and so on. And I got a lot of new ideas just from thinking about their ideas. And then you'd like to put them into action" (1983, 144).

One of the ideas that shows Frye's presence in Reaney's concept of literature is related to his vision of the ideal theatre. This theatre, according to Reaney, would be based on *Anatomy of Criticism* and

it would probably be a building whose proportions reflected the cosmos as traditional poetry sees it: hell beneath, heavens up there, a middle earth section where actors get torn in two by the conflicts in the already named areas.

Also his idea of juxtaposing documentary and myth, which became the main organizational principle of *Alphabet* and much of his dramatic work came from studying with Northrop Frye and reading William Blake. The author comments that both "had slowly convinced (...) [him] that one way you can organize reality as well as your thinking about words, is to see the documentary world we live in as a displaced reflection of a mythical or "model" one (1977, 9).

Another book by Frye that was also greatly acclaimed by Reaney was his first study of the Bible, i.e. *The Great Code*. Since his initial years at the school, Reaney read and studied the Bible, many times without clearly understanding it. In his beginnings as a poet he felt again attracted towards the Bible, especially towards its stories. From that time the author recalls "there was a tradition in our neighbourhood of people reading the Bible

through many times, even of copying it out, so at first I didn't skip, and, as a result, got stuck in Leviticus" (1994, 127).

Discovering *The Great Code* helped him reinforce his attraction to the biblical stories, since as Reaney points out "what *The Great Code* early establishes is that there is, in reading the Bible through, a slow and steady further intensifying of the prophetic vision. As the stories acquire more and more levels of meaning, there is a cumulative transforming effect on the listener" (1994, 127).

Reaney's admiration for Frye's work on the Bible also extended to this second book titled *Words with Power*. About this book, in his tribute to Northrop Frye on his death, published in *The Globe and Mail*, he points out: "by the time you're through with this last great book, you've experienced just on the last two pages the rather unusually strong experience of being asked, as in the Bible God asks Job, to stop living horizontally and instead see your life vertically" (1991, A24).

However, his professional admiration began much before, when he decided to take his PhD courses and write his thesis on Yeats under the guidance and supervision of Northrop Frye. Frye's influence on Reaney becomes even clearer when reading Reaney's reviews and articles on other writers' works. The world of literary archetypes and myths studied by Frye is underlying Reaney's analyses of the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett, Henry

James's *The Sacred Fount*, or Jay MacPherson's *The Boatman*. Thus he points out how Northrop Frye's concept of the verbal universe is present in MacPherson's book:

Both Noah and Silenus [referring to Le Pan's poem] are humanizations of Frye's concept and the idea is, I suppose, that eventually all will be verbal universe. The concept is obviously a very valuable one to poets and should be a far more fruitful one to discuss than the usual chestnut of "obscurity", especially since one can see it as lying behind those two fine poems, Le Pan's "Silenus" and Mis MacPherson's "Anagogic Man", which achieve so much intensity and communication (1960, 27).

Besides himself, other authors such as Richard Stingle have also accounted for Frye's influence on Reaney. He has pointed out that Frye's view of literature has "both influenced Reaney and helped to locate him in the tradition Frye has always claimed as his own - the Romantic and revolutionary" (1983, 36). Stingle even states that the motif of the cycle of lyrics developed from Frye's theory of modes "recurs in Reaney's poetry (...) and it has been equally important in his other creative life of teaching" (1983, 40).

Similarly, Margaret Atwood, in her analysis of Reaney's *Poems*, acknowledges the presence of Northrop Frye. Nevertheless, Atwood does not hesitate when saying "the influence of Frye, however, was probably a catalyst for Reaney rather than a new ingredient." Therefore, in her view, Frye made a

difference "not so much to Reaney's choice of materials, or even to his choice of forms, but to the kinds of resolutions made available to him" (1973, 114-15).

Atwood's view of Frye's influence on Reaney's works is one I certainly agree with since I believe that the raw material for the Romantic world he depicts in most of his poetry and drama was absolutely present in Reaney from the very beginning. Therefore, Frye's theories acted as "eye-openers," so to speak, in the sense that they provided the organizational mental structure of literature that Reaney had been looking for. Such structure made it possible that he could finally "be able to stand in the house of literature and close the door on philosophy, theology and history until (...) [he] needed them" (1980, 28).

Frye's influence on Reaney's work is thus unquestionable. However, his plays, and specifically *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*, despite their mythical universalizing tendencies, present new developments which can be identified as typical features of the post-modern and post-colonial myth, and especially of the so-called "New World Myth." Let us approach this concept and its relationship with Reaney's concept of myth.

IV.2.2 The "New World Myth"

The term and concept of "New World Myth" is used for the first time by Margery Fee in her article "Making New World Myth." Later on, Marie Vautier, in her book titled *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism*

in *Canadian Fiction*¹⁰⁶ (1998), extends on Fee's ideas on the concept. In this book, she analyzes six works both from English and French Canadian literature as examples of the various ways in which the New World Myth is present in these pieces of fiction.

New World Myth is basically a postmodern myth since it is meant to destabilize the accepted workings of traditional myth. Vautier explains that whereas "traditional myth criticism portrays myths as true stories, as sacred narratives about the actions of the gods, as explicatory models or explanations of the origins of the universe, (...) New World Myth opposes this origin/divine paradigm with one focused on beginning (s), on the historical" (6). In this sense, the concepts of history, biblical and classical myth, and indigenous myth acquire a special significance in relation to New World Myth.

All the works, analyzed by Vautier as representatives of the New World Myth, show a turn toward history in their exploration of a different sort of myth. This turn implies, however, a challenge to history and historiography, thus making use of postmodernist techniques such as autoreferentiality, playful self-reflexivity, parody, irony, and multiple retellings of the same event. These works also posit themes which have been identified as the concern of postcolonial literatures like the centre/margin debate; place and displacement; language, speech, and silence; and written *versus* oral history.

¹⁰⁶ Vautier, Marie (1998) *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction*, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press.

History is thus rewritten "in a fictional mode that has much to do with challenging any monolithic sense of how we acquire knowledge of the past in the postmodern age" (39). The deliberate, self-conscious play with fiction, history and myth becomes a hallmark of New World Myth. One of the ways the boundaries among the three of them are blurred is by means of incorporating real historical documents with the aim of illustrating that "these traditional aids to historical objectivity are only what the imagination makes of them" (50). Thus New World Myth implies "not only a notion of flexibility but also a social, political, historical, and temporal component [that is introduced] into the traditional concept of myth as something immutable, eternal, and, especially, transhistorical. (...) It deliberately introduces a historical dimension into traditional notions of mythic universality" (35).

New World Myth texts do not show an interest in classical myths. Rather, they turn away from it and prefer to use what is at hand, that is, the local, in order to create their New World Myth. However, that does not mean that all New World Myth works put classical myths aside. In fact, it seems to be that many of them highlight their rejection of classical myth as a paradigm for it. A preference, though, for turning to the biblical tradition is shown in this type of New World Myth works in which "some narrators tend to denounce vehemently and to attempt to destroy the traditional hold of the

Christian belief system over the imagination; others use biblical myths to confer importance on the characters and events they recreate" (43).

These works show, in general, an awareness of biblical myths as a strong force that dominated the literary canons inherited from Europe. In contrast, the myth of the New World presented is not the European one, in which this is "a natural uncontaminated paradise where humankind can begin anew." In contrast, New World Myth works attempt to offer "a new, but not naïve, historico-political vision of the New World" (41). In Fee's view, New World Myth is then an attempt to re-make Old World Mythology (17). And by including "a wide variety of conventional patterns: native myth and local legend; literary genres, modes and archetypes; popular stereotypes; and even intellectual categories," (45) New World Myth also attempts to re-make Old World literary genres "to suit the New World" (17). It makes use of what Fee calls "indigenous popular genres" such as the legend, the tall tale, gossip, rumours and hearsay, in reaction to the influence of more traditional givens. Nevertheless, some of the traditional markers of myth such as "cyclical structure, naming as a creative and magical act, and the poet as the voice of the gods" (54) are not abandoned.

New World Myth works present both an "installing" and a "subverting" process in which, as Vautier (55) explains, "the installation process self-consciously enhances the significance of the historical characters and events

being retold (...) [and] the subverting of the mythologization process keeps New World Myth from becoming fixed and rigid." It is, then, a new concept of myth which attempts to mythologize the past in a manner appropriate to the New World nations, or rather, in Fee's words "a paradigm of myth, revealing how myth is created to suit a particular need in a particular time and place."

Many of the above mentioned characteristics of New World Myth are undoubtedly present in Reaney's *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* in spite of "the universalizing tendencies of Reaney's mythopoeic, Frygian conception of 'pure story,' (...) and what often seems to be a Jungian belief in a collective imagination or unconscious" (Knowles 1999, 128).

Two local stories, filled with legend, rumor, and hearsay, are the basis of the recreation of an important part of English-Canadian history, that of the pioneering. In the retelling of the historical events dealt with, the use of documentary sources, which have always been the aids to historical "truth," are inserted in order to question such a veracity. The reliability of historical and other "metanarratives"¹⁰⁷ is explored, mainly in *The Donnellys* by means of metadrama. Metadrama is also the key to explore "the contradictory social myths of the 'true' and 'false' Donnellys" (Bessai 1983, 195) by opposing both in a mythical time.

¹⁰⁷ The term "metanarrative" refers here to what Hutcheon defines as "the received wisdom or the grand narrative systems that once made sense of things for us." (1988, 15)

In both plays, *The Donnellys* and *Balloon*, Reaney attempts to illustrate how documents, both historical and religious, must be subjected to the imagination. Thus, he intends to prove how all traditional "givens" such as history, religion, myth, etc. may be seen as based on a story able to be continuously realized. He clearly insists on this idea when saying "maybe if we get used to seeing our society as being based on story, we'll wake up and realize that we can get a better story..." (Dragland 1983, 222). Reaney recreates *The Donnellys and Balloon* stories in order to create a different myth. This new myth does not flaunt, as Kröller (in Vautier, 41) points out, "a utopian concept of America, [i.e.] the promise of a mythic new space in which European notions of man-made order are no longer applicable."

CHAPTER FIVE

V. THE DONNELLYS: RE-MYTHOLOGIZING

*"I was not in safety, neither had I
rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came."
(Job 3:26)*

The documentary aspect is, as previously seen, the key element used by Reaney to deconstruct an existing myth, that of the Black Donnellys, and simultaneously create a new one, in which the Donnellys are depicted as heroes and not as villains.

The dramatic genre chosen by Reaney in order to portray his new myth in a magnificent way is quite logically, the tragedy. Tragedy was traditionally the genre that dealt with serious issues and in which characters were presented with a higher stature. Since Reaney intended to depict the Donnelly family as heroes and because of the seriousness of the theme dealt with, it was quite logical for him to choose the tragic drama as the genre to create his own

Donnelly myth. Throughout it, the story of the Donnelly family is depicted as a fertility myth in which the typical dichotomy good *vs.* evil is revisited.

V.1. *The Donnellys: A Canadian Tragedy*

The tragedy has traditionally been the most suitable vehicle for giving heroic stature to the protagonists of a story. This is what Reaney intended when he recreated the popular story of the Donnelly family. That is, he intended to convert them into heroic figures unique in Canadian history and legend.

The day after the premiere¹⁰⁸ of *Sticks and Stones*, the first part of *The Donnellys*, *The Globe and Mail* published an interview with Reaney under the heading: 'Canada's own Greek tragedy.' In it, the playwright himself declared that the Donnelly story was "full of levels and generations of people, [being] the Faulkner novels and the Greek tragedies, the closest thing to [it]."

Undoubtedly, certain typical elements of the Greek tragedies such as the universal theme and the shaping of the main characters into tragic heroes are present in *The Donnellys*. It is widely known that the tragedy usually deals with universal issues such as the problems and conditions of life lived under the shadow of death and disaster. This basic theme is developed in this

¹⁰⁸ This premiere took place at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto on November 24, 1973 and it was critically acclaimed. Some of the most important theatre critics of the time showed their unanimity in considering the play a unique piece of drama. Thus Urjo Kareda, from *The Toronto Star*, commented that "its premiere at the Tarragon Theatre Saturday night affirmed that theatre's status as the most important source of new plays in this country, just as it reaffirmed Reaney's position in the front ranks of all our imaginative writers." Also another well-known theatre critic of the time, Herbert Whittaker, called the play "a thoroughly involving theatrical experience."

trilogy, in which the struggle for survival in a violent place and era of Canada is poetically depicted, acquiring epic and tragic proportions. Besides, two characteristic elements of the tragedy are clearly present in *The Donnelly's*: "(1) its high seriousness, befitting matters in which survival is at issue and (2) its involvement of the entire community in matters of ultimate and common concern" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

Despite presenting the above-mentioned characteristics, *The Donnelly's* does not wholly stick to them, since satiric, comic, and melodramatic elements have been used throughout the plays. *The Donnelly's* is, in this sense, a play that emulates the Shakespearean tragedies as regards its mixed nature with comic and melodramatic elements jostling the tragic. But, in contrast to most Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, *The Donnelly's* does not deal with divine or high-class characters but with the common man. In fact, the trilogy presents the story of an Irish family with seven sons and one daughter who lived and struggled and died in and around the largely Irish township of Biddulph in the nineteenth century. In his dramatization of their lives and deaths, Reaney turned the Donnelly's story and, in turn, the pioneer history of Southwestern Ontario into a work of art that has universal appeal, thus converting the characters into heroic figures.

V.1.1 The Donnellys: A Fertility Myth

In order to develop his new Donnelly myth, Reaney recreates their story in the manner of a fertility myth, thus placing the family in a mythical realm and depicting it as possessors of both an earthly and a divine quality that stresses their heroic stature.

The fertility myth develops the image of the cycle of nature: birth, growth, decay and renewal. Throughout the plays, all kinds of parallelisms between the family and the natural cycle are established. As a matter of fact, images of fertility related to the seasonal pattern of nature are a constant element in the plays. As J.S. Reaney points out, "the family is constantly seen harvesting, planting, clearing the land, bringing up their eight children, even dying into soil" (1977, 63). That the family resides in the seasonal world of nature and fertility is immediately noticed by the insertion of the "Barley Corn Ballad"¹⁰⁹ with which *Sticks and Stones* starts. The song tells of the process of

¹⁰⁹ The lyrics of the song tells the process through which the barley grain goes. It is a metaphor of the Donnelly family life:

Oh, three men went to Deroughata
To sell three loads of rye.
They shouted up and they shouted down
The barley grain should die.
(Refrain)

Tiree igery ary ann, Tiree igery ee,
Tiree igery ary ann, The barley grain for me.
Then the farmer came with a big plough;

He ploughed me under the sod.
The winter is being over
And the summer coming on,
Sure the barley grain shot forth his head
With a beard like any man.

Then the reaper came with a sharp hook;
He made me no reply.
He caught me by the whiskers and
Cut me above the thigh.

Then the binder came with her neat thumb;
And then they hired a handyman
To stand me on the ground.

Then the pitcher came with a steel fork;
He pierced it through me heart.
And like a rogue or highwayman
They bound me to the cart.

Then they took me to the barn and
Spread me out on the floor.
They left me there for a space of time
And me beard grew through the door.

Then the thresher came with a big flail;
He swore he'd break me bones
But the miller he used me worse
He ground me between two stones.

Then they took me out of that and
Threw me into a well.
They left me there for a space of time,
And me belly began to swell.

They they sold me to the brewer
And he brewed me on the pan
But, when I got into the jug
I was the strongest man.

Then they drank you in the kitchen
And they drank me in the hall,
Said, not sung
But the drunkard he used you worse;
He pissed you against the wall.

the corn from the moment the land is ploughed, moving through the stages of growing, harvesting, threshing, distillation, and ending up in being pissed against the wall by a drunkard. The Donnelly family is, as Craig S. Walker (1993) points out, utterly identified with the natural process of the dying and reviving god, represented in the Western culture by Adonis. This god, according to Sir James G. Frazer, "represented vegetation, especially the corn, which lies buried in the earth half the year and reappears above ground the other half" (1968, 291), thus being the image of the cyclical ever-recurring pattern of decay and regeneration. In this sense, the "Barley Corn Ballad" and, in turn the Donnelly family, resemble the "Adonis myth", that of "a beloved god who grows to maturity only to be sacrificed for the good of society, but who rises again in a different incarnation to repeat the cycle" (Craig S. Walker 1993, 128). The association of the family with the old ballad form is, as Noonan (1975, 167) states, "another way in which Reaney gives heroic stature to the Donnellys."

The ballad is sung throughout the trilogy as a reminder of the story of the family. In the initial conversation between Mrs. Donnelly and her son Will, while she tells him of the events in Ireland, the song is softly sung as a hint to the audience of what is to come:

OTHERS *at back of theatre, singing softly*
Oh, three men went to Deroughata
To sell three loads of rye.

Days until
June and July
July! Until ready for harvest
August
Shivering and rippling
Cloud shadows summer wind
Cloud shadows

A golden light sweeps the stage. We should feel that around the Donnelly farmyard lies a big field of wheat ready for harvest. (H., 157)

Images of fertility also become represented in the way the cultivated land, the animals, and the children increase in the Donnelly homestead, as the census taking of 1858¹¹⁰ shows (S.S., 63). The insertion of the biblical excerpt, relating to the conception of Jesus by Mary right at the moment Mrs. Donnelly enters the church, is also absolutely representative of her identification with fertility (S.S., 64).

The family's special relationship to the natural world is shown in their strong link to the land that causes them to suffer so many problems, as stated by Mr. Donnelly:

Because I loved my land so and stuck to it
I killed and in turn you broke my bones, burnt my home
Harvested me and my sons like sheaves and stood
Us to die upon our ground
Where now nothing will ever grow.
(...)
And this earth in my hand, the earth of my farm
That I fought for and was smashed & burnt for
(...)
Now my body belongs to its dust
Which dust once belonged to me.

¹¹⁰ Refer to Chapter 2, p.p.118-19.

As it is blown away, I forget
Concession Six Lot Eighteen
South half or North half which was mine?
We are blown away and both lost
----- Like actors' words¹¹¹. (S.S., 71-72)

Their absolute identification with nature becomes even more explicit through Mrs. Donnelly's resemblance of a bird "with arms like wings" that give her a sense of freedom and apprehension of the eternal. Both elements, as G.D. Parker (1978) comments, inform the mythic dimensions of her character that are highlighted by her ethereal appearances representative of her eternal being:

I stand. I'll stand here years after tonight - a seal in the air - long after my house and my gate and my curtilage have become dust. A lamp hanging in the air, held by a ghost lady. (S.S., 136)

The bird becomes a symbol of the whole family in the scene in which the bishop's chimney is cleaned and a bird, trapped in it, is rescued from the ashes and flies away triumphant and free. The allusion to the phoenix that rises from its ashes is a clear metaphor of the Donnelly family that in the final act of *Handcuffs* rise from their ashes in St Patrick's Churchyard in 1974, on the anniversary of their death. In being able to return to life they have achieved both immortality and freedom. Their immortality is confirmed at different key moments throughout the trilogy. One of these moments is in *Sticks and Stones*, when Mr. Donnelly shows his awareness of being a dramatic character by

¹¹¹ When comparing the characters' disappearance with actors' words, the author intends to show the theatricality of the history/story performed by the actors.

saying: "I'm not in Hell for I'm in a play." Also in *Handcuffs*, the bodies of the murdered family are represented by four stones in order to show their link to the land and their eternity. Although, as Leggatt points out, this image could lead us to regard them "as if they have finally been reduced to something merely physical," (1977, 185) it is not so, since five actors accompany the props so as to show that the characters are still spiritually alive. Such eternal state also allows them, on the one hand, to be everywhere, "in the clouds, in the treebranch, in the puddle, there. There. In your fork, in your minds" (H., 133) and, on the other hand, to haunt the audience in order to convince them of opening their minds and leaving their narrowness:

BOTH
UNDO THE HANDCUFFS, Indeed! First unlock the handcuffs in your
mind that make you see us as
MR DONNELLY
That fierce harridan
MRS DONNELLY
That old barnburner!
BOTH
We weren't like that/this!... (H., 132)

By means of addressing the audience, the playwright attempts to open our minds with respect not only to the Donnelly events at a specific time, but also to our being part, in the present, of the type of prejudiced society that judged and destroyed them. In this sense, the society of Biddulph, as presented by Reaney, is, as G.D. Parker says

in a sense trans-historical. It embraces our prejudices, materialism, indifference, violence, intolerance, and our own individual collective

choices: our fates are also entangled within the same string, the same house with "twisty windows." We are united through pity and terror with the fate of Mrs. Donnelly and her family; and, inasmuch as we share in the guilt of a "sick society," we are also part of the mob, and we assist in the legal and illegal fastening of the "disturbing Donnelly family." (1978, 180)

In this mythical realm, the family is portrayed as physically, psychologically and spiritually different from the other members of the society. On the one hand, they are depicted as having a strong attitude towards life and his enemies, which is clearly revealed throughout their speeches, such as the one in the final act of *Sticks and Stones*, where we see Mr. Donnelly saying to Cassleigh, "Donnellys don't kneel," and Mrs. Donnelly telling her daughter, "Jennie, your father and I will never leave Biddulph."

On the other hand, in order to present them as physically different, Reaney makes use of visual effects. This is particularly noticeable when Mr. Donnelly returns from prison to meet his boys after seven years and "the shadows of the seven Donnellys grow huge and by themselves towering over the theatre." His intention to portray them as heroes is clear. Such a portrayal is definitely achieved by Jennie's speech in the final act of *Sticks and Stones*: "Because you were tall; you were different / and you weren't afraid, that is why they burnt you first with their tongues / then with their kerosene."

Also their difference from the others becomes explicit in their personal characteristics at the spiritual level, which is represented by their artistic

qualities. Thus Mrs. Donnelly's writing is praised by Lady Head: "I haven't seen an M like that since I was at school", and also is William Donnelly's by the Bishop: "What beautiful writing".

However, the representation of the Donnellys' artistic qualities is mainly concentrated on Will, who is presented as the crippled artist that feels absolutely fulfilled when dancing, playing his fiddle and riding his horse, symbolically called Lord Byron. In a way, the Donnellys are, as Alexander Leggatt suggests, "poets in a hostile community" (1975, 356).

Those images of fertility, vitality and distinction incarnated by the Donnelly family become especially prominent when put in contrast to the images of sickness and death that the earthly and materialist society of Biddulph conveys. In this sense, the whole trilogy is developed through what G.D. Parker calls "confrontational patterns." Thus, the conventional dichotomy of good and evil with its relatives: life/death and love/hate are present throughout the whole trilogy.

Whereas in the mythical world, the Donnellys appear liberated and free, in the temporal realm, they are depicted as subjugated and menaced by the materialism, prejudice and intolerance that dominate the surrounding society, thus being caught, as G.D. Parker (1978) states, in the middle of opposing forces.

The existence of such opposing forces is immediately noticed in *Sticks and Stones*. First, in its own title and, secondly, in the way the stage is arranged. In the first act of the play, the stage appears as follows: "the central area is bare except for a pile of sticks on one side and a pile of stones on the other, and possibly a pile of four boulders at the back in the centre." This display makes clear the use of two confronting groups that polarize the action between extremes of good and evil. Under this pattern, good is usually represented by the Donnelly family and their friends, whereas evil becomes materialized in the society of Biddulph. Thus, as Richard Perkyns has stated, the Donnellys could be seen as "archetypal figures of innocence, constantly resisting the corruption surrounding them and, through the determination of their resistance, provoking latent evil into inevitable violence." (1977, 162)

However, the reader/spectator of Reaney's trilogy not only receives the good image of the family but also the popular evil one. This is the way the playwright attempts to offer the audience the two sides of the story, and therefore, the two images of the Donnellys in the temporal world and in the mythical world respectively. Reaney thus tries to avoid an excessively biased depiction of the Irish family, although his clear intention is to present the Donnellys as heroes, not as villains. Every time a character utters a positive comment about the family, a negative one is said in order to show the constant presence of opposing forces. Good examples of this form of presenting both

good and evil images of the Donnellys are found throughout the plays as, for instance, in the conversation between the stage driver and Donaldson in *The St Nicholas Hotel* which reads as follows:

DONALDSON

(...) It's strange that young men so good looking and polite as I've always found the Donnelly boys to be, should be so much run down and set on by all parties, Romanists, Protestants and Secretists, when they are so very polite and strive so hard to live down all this opposition, by attention to business, and kind treatment of all who favour them.

STAGEDRIVER

You do not know them, sir. They just put on appearances to deceive strangers. I once thrashed Mike and I will thrash him again. (...) No sir, the people are bound to get rid of that family some way or another and that too before too long. (S.N.H., 28)

This confrontation of positive and negative qualities of the family is also observed in the conversation between George Stub and Dr. Maguire:

GEORGE

You would have met the whole monstrous family then.

DR MAGUIRE

Monstrous, not at all. They were a very handsome, unusual family with a - as if there was something there they weren't telling you. I disagree with you totally, Mr. Stub ... (S.N.H., 37)

Such confronted views about the Donnellys, even among members of the same family, are usually the reason of dispute between them as is the case of the Macdonald family, whose son is completely against the idea of his sister Nora getting married with

Will Donnelly. MacDonald's rejection of the Donnelly family causes an argument with his mother, as shown in the dialogue:

MACDONALD

Mother, you know and I know what Norah's up to with their Cripple now he's lost the Thompson girl.

MOTHER

Don't you dare call him a cripple,... (S.N.H., 82)

The confrontation is also observed in the O'Hallorans, whose son Jerome, the physician of the township, manifests his appreciation for the Donnellys against his parents' hate towards them:

O'HALLORAN

William Donnelly was in your office yesterday.

JEROME

William Donnelly hurt his shoulder lately. Am I not to heal

O'HALLORAN //

Never a sick Donnelly. May they die in a ditch for his brothers Tom and John would let nobody thrash for me all fall and the grain rotted in the field

JEROME)

Oh you're mad with hatred of them.) I love the Donnellys.

O'HALLORANS

Get out of here you miserable ingrate, get out (H., 26-7)

Also a son of the Ryan family shows his preference for the Donnelly family against his own explaining why he sides with the Donnellys. His reasons are: "Because they're brave. They're not afraid. They're so little afraid of living here among you that this morning they started sowing their fall wheat. Two. They're handsome. (...) Yes, high & mighty ..." (H.,136). This is

clearly another contributing speech in the making up of the Donnelly family as heroes.

The confrontations between members of the family show an image of the sickness and death that invades the family institution and, in general, the society of Biddulph against the picture of life and love that is conveyed by the Donnelly family in whose house Tom Ryan claims, "there's love there".

The family was a major theme in previous Reaney plays. Usually, it was depicted as possessed by an overwhelming materialism that leads it to a tragic end. And this is precisely what happens with the nucleus of the family in Biddulph. The family is depicted as disintegrated by the evil forces of society. Multiple examples of how the family institution becomes threatened in Biddulph are shown in the enactments of the weddings. All the weddings in the plays, instead of having a happy end, as is the convention, end tragically whether by the announcement of a barn burning or by having members of the Donnelly family handcuffed on the day of their weddings, as it is the case of William Donnelly:

PRIEST

Let us pray. Bless O Lord, this ring which we bless in Thy Name, that she who shall wear it, keeping true faith unto her husband may abide in Thy peace and will, and ever live in mutual charity. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

He sprinkles the ring with holy water in the form of a cross. The Bridegroom receives from the priest the ring and places it on the fourth finger of his bride.

WILL

With this ring I thee wed, and I plight unto thee my troth. *Silent Lord's prayer*

BAILIFF

Are you just about through. Because which one of you is William Donnelly; we've come with writ against him for debt. (S.N.H., 96)

In contrast to this image operating against love and fertility conveyed by the society of Biddulph, the Donnelly family stays united in love, peace and harmony, and it is their union which gives them strength and success in carrying out one of their major enterprises, that of growing wheat. Growing wheat is an activity, as George Wicken states, "biblically sanctioned, and requires family and community harmony to be successful, for sowing and harvesting are tasks which cannot be carried out single-handedly" (1978, 262). In this sense, the Donnellys convey the image of the prototypical Catholic family united in love, peace and harmony. Such elements give them strength to challenge and defy the surrounding menacing reality. And it is precisely this defiance what marks them in J.S. Reaney's words as "psychological unique" as well as being the source and origin of their tragic end.

The images of sickness and death of Biddulph are also present in the negative images about the Donnellys. Those negative portrayals, besides coming from their enemies in the form of comments such as the one by James Carroll who says of Mrs. Donnelly: "She's a witch (...). And she shall be burnt for a witch." (S.N.H., 147), are also materialized by the Donnelly characters

themselves, thus having Mrs. Donnelly performing as James Carroll depicts her, that is, defying and insulting her enemies,

MRS DONNELLY

You son of a bitch, you thief, you rogue. Give it to him, Tom, on his big head. Point a gun at an old woman milking a cow would you, you bastard, you should be arrested, Jim Carroll, and when they arrest you they should put you back down into the devil with thirty tails you belong to. (S.N.H., 128)

and making low comments about her neighbours,

MRS DONNELLY

Uh, it's his tattletale mother is a fat woman has to be raised in and out and onto her bed with a pulley. No feet at all should be her name and his - the nofeet with all the belly. (S.S., 45)

In this sense, Reaney attempts to counterbalance the somewhat excessive "white" images of the Donnellys by inserting some of their widely known "black" ones in order not to force the complete loss of the audience's power to arrive at their own conclusions and create their own story, which is undoubtedly his main intention. In my view, the playwright intends to offer a not too "white" image of the family. However, at times, as J.S. Reaney states, "in his efforts to correct the impression created by Kelley, Reaney abandons the ambiguity that drew him to the story in the first place and seems to be writing his own wild, energetic, cliché popular thriller called the "White Donnellys" (1977, 62). It is clear that the efforts of the playwright are concentrated on deconstructing the Black Donnellys myth and on creating a new Donnelly

myth, which leads him to clearly take sides and at times to somehow excessively show his stance in relation to the story.

We have seen how the image of the Donnellys, both good and evil, has been conveyed by both their friends and enemies' comments and depictions of them. However, the tension between the Donnellys and their enemies is not just a matter of a family vendetta because of a piece of land. Throughout the whole trilogy there are many examples of how the opposing forces between the family and the community of Biddulph are of a greater stature.

The Donnelly family, as G.D. Parker (1978) comments, in taking a particular stance towards life, chose to fight against fundamental institutions of society, that had a major relevance in the Biddulph township. They chose to fight against their religion (Catholicism), against the law of the region and, therefore, against politics. How Reaney uses this tension in order to depict the family as different will be analyzed in the next lines.

From the very beginning of *Sticks and Stones* we have seen how the Donnellys stand as different from the rest for not wanting to join the Whitefeet society in Ireland. Back in the old country, the Whitefeet threatened James Donnelly for not kneeling down and joining their secret society. His answer was direct: "No, I'm not! Kneel! No! Swear! No! I will not kneel." (S.S., 42) The rejection towards joining their society and his continuous challenges to the

rules established by them (being among them doing business with the English Protestants) brought about the problems to the Donnelly family even in the New World. The New World, envisioned as a paradise by the family where freedom and not fear reigned, as Mr. Donnelly believed it should be,

MR DONNELLY *pause*

No, this is a new country we live in, it's not back in the old country we're living. Mrs. Donnelly and myself are free to do as we please. No one has to be afraid of secret societies, secret people; we're not in Ireland, do you hear, Tom Cassleigh. (S.S., 152)

turns out to be hell for them as Mr. Donnelly clarifies:

MR DONNELLY

(...) after thirty-five years in Biddulph who would find Hell any bigger a fire than that fire I died in. (S.S., 49)

The secret society has its own catechism with its peculiar commandments, as is shown by Cassleigh when questioned by the friar after his confession of having killed an English man called Brimmacombe:

FRIAR

What is the fifth commandment of God?

CASSLEIGH

The fifth commandment of God is: Thou, Brimmacombe - should not have seen me beaten so badly. (S.S., 59)

Among the commandments of the secret society was the prohibition of doing businesses with any protestant. James Donnelly never abode by such a rule, which won him the animosity of a good part of the Catholic inhabitants

of Biddulph. But, at the same time, the fact of being Catholic won him the rejection of the Protestant inhabitants. That is, the family was caught in the middle of sticks (Protestants) and stones (Catholics). As J.S. Reaney says, the Donnellys "may attend Mass with fellow Irish settlers, but (...) are never securely confirmed into the community or the church" (1977, 65). Thus we find the family being neglected by the church that is equated to the community, as Jennie recalls: "We were going to be tested for confirmation in a church called - Biddulph. Most of the people liked us at that time. That doesn't matter though. Those with power did not. Our confirmation came up and although we had known our catechism well, we failed." (S.S., 143) The catechism is, as Bessai (1983, 202) points out, the ritual that informs *Sticks and Stones* since the whole play is structured in terms of questions and answers which are accepted or not by the only institution: the community of Biddulph.

The equation of church and community becomes more explicit when Father Connolly, after listening to the neighbours of the Donnelly family, decides to form a Peace Society in order to stop all troubles in Biddulph, which coincidentally, according to the inhabitants, are done by the Donnellys. In the Mass, the priest delivers the following sermon:

PRIEST *pulpit*

Things will be better in Biddulph. *Congregation kneels in front of him.* I do not care if I get a bullet through my head, but they will be better. I propose to form a Peace Society. I have stated the purpose here at the head of this paper. (...) I want all the men who are interested in

preserving peace and order in the parish of St Patrick's Biddulph, to sign their names. All those who do not sign I shall consider backsliders, blacklegs and sympathizers with this gang of evildoers and ruffians in our midst. Any of you who do no sign if they take sick they may send for William Donnelly. Do not send for Father John Connolly. As an indication of who is with me and who is against me will those that intend signing – kneel.

From that moment, the persecution against the Donnellys obtains the approval of the church, with Father Connolly at the head of the Peace Society. But not only is the Donnelly family against the community and the church for not wanting to join the Whitefeet society in Ireland and later on, the Peace Society in Biddulph; their stance also defied the law and politics of the township. In politics, the Donnellys also made a difference since their vote was Liberal. Being a Catholic meant voting Tory. Therefore, two major signs marked the Donnellys: Blackfoot and Liberal in a predominantly Tory township.

Absolutely related to politics is, as J.S. Reaney (1977) points out, the law in the township, represented by Protestant merchant George Stub, by Catholic Tom Cassleigh and by Constable James Carroll. George Stub symbolizes the materialism that pervades the whole Biddulph society. He is depicted as an ambitious man who is capable of doing anything that makes him powerful. Thus he is shown to have burned the Negro settlement barns in order to obtain their land for doing business in 1847 and getting made a magistrate in 1857. He is also a businessman to whom the Donnelly family is a clear menace with

their intentions of getting more land and developing other businesses, such as the stagecoach in which George Stub is also interested.

Tom Cassleigh is a Catholic Irish man full of hatred for English people, which leads him to kill Brimmacombe. He is the leader of the Whitefeet society and, some years later, he becomes appointed as the first Catholic Justice of the Peace in Biddulph. With such a power in his hands, he feels free to threaten James Donnelly to leave the township. Mr. Donnelly's answer is once more: "Donnellys don't kneel." (S.S., 153)

These two powerful figures become another obstacle that the Donnelly family has to jump over in order to make their life worthy in Biddulph. But, as J.S. Reaney (1977, 67-8) points out, in this world

the natural of the Donnellys is not George Stub, who, as a storekeeper in the village of Lucan, is too different to be a true opposite, but Tom Cassleigh, (...) Cassleigh is as powerful among these people [the Whitefoot faction among the Biddulph Catholics] as George Stub is in the village. As the keeper of the secret flame of vengeance fired in Ireland after Mr. Donnelly refused to join Whitefeet, Cassleigh is the worst enemy. George Stub can use his legal position to taunt them with arrests and mock trials. Cassleigh, through his authority as the new Matthew Midnight, is able to turn the other Irish Catholics – their own people – against the Donnellys.

James Carroll, who is made constable, also represents the power of the law. This character also hates the Donnellys, since he is the nephew of the man killed by Mr. Donnelly. He is committed to get rid of them at any price and finds his way through George Stub, as he states:

CARROLL

Yes. What this man was asking me to do was what my mother on her deathbed made me promise to do. To kill the Donnellys. But a first no one had the courage, no one except my poor dead mother, to say that. At first it was drive them out of the township, they were all out of prison more or less and all back on top of us so I was made a constable in Lucan and my aim was to find one victim of the Donnellys brave enough to stick to his story and fight it out in the courts and keep after them again and again until we had these Donnellys behind bars or out of the township or - out! (S.N.H., 110)

From the moment James Carroll is appointed constable of the township and the Peace Society formed with the approval of the Catholic Church, the "witch hunt" against the Donnellys starts. With church and law united in one single deed, life for the Donnellys turns into a constant fight for survival. Thus, as Richard Perkyns points out, "in the fierce antagonism of good and evil triumphing because, when the power of Church and Law is allied to them, the degree of persecution is too great for even the human wills of the Donnellys to bear" (1977, 167).

The confronting forces that pervade the whole trilogy, besides being present in the way the characters are depicted, are also present in the way the stage props are symbolically used. Props such as sticks, stones, spinning tops, wheels, curtains and ladders acquire different meanings, as Bessai (1983) mentions, when they belong to the temporal world or to the mythical world. Thus, the sticks when used by William Donnelly turn into a fiddle with which he makes music that helps him to combat his enemies, whereas in the hands of his enemies they become weapons. The stones, when thrown against him for

being a blackfoot and cripple, are powerful weapons, but when related to the family they symbolize their eternity.

Spinning tops and wheels are also a stage metaphor of the competing stagecoaches at the centre of the struggle between the Donnellys and their neighbours. They are also the representation of the wheels of Fortune which bring about the fate of the Donnellys. Also the curtain stands in the middle of two opposing forces. It stands, as G.S. Walker points out, for the separation of "present and past, natural and supernatural, life and death" (1993, 132). It also reveals and hides thus transforming what seems to be real into apparent. The curtain reinforces the theme of the appearance and of the instability of the identity. Thus where a cupboard full of bottles of wine is placed, the curtain is drawn in front of Constable Carroll and of Father Connolly in order to show a statuette of Virgin Mary and a crucified Christ respectively. Behind the curtain Father Connolly hides from Mrs. Donnelly in order not to confront her. (H., 94-5)

The ladders, like the sticks and stones, present multiple identities and meanings. Depending on how such ladders are arranged they suggest one thing or the other. As Bessai comments, "five ladders of graduated height arranged one way suggest the surveyed concessions and lots of a township map, in another configuration they are a tangle of branches ensnaring a man at a logging bee; horizontally they demark particular roads, vertically they

become the obstacles in a toilsome journey a wife must travel to petition for her husband's life..." (1983, 190). The ladders are thus clear symbols in the "earthly" journeys Mrs. Donnelly has to do, in *Sticks and Stones* to Goderich to present her petition for the pardon of her husband to the Governor General, and in *The St Nicholas Hotel* to Whalen's Corners in order to confront the mob harassing her son Will. At the end of her journeys, Mrs. Donnelly's determined attitude against "the legal, social, political, and religious manifestations of a 'mindless and soulless reality'" (Parker 1978, 178-79) becomes explicit.

The image of a mindless and soulless reality that the society of Biddulph conveys is reinforced by the way the formation of the community is depicted. Actors playing Jacob's ladders and cats' cradles mimic the entanglement of the roads of Biddulph and the lives of their inhabitants thus showing the pressure felt within such a place. The triangle-shaped Biddulph leads to Mrs. Donnelly to consider the new country a small tight pound that deprives the whole society of freedom. As J.S. Reaney says, "all the characters feel this right-angled confinement, and this congestion is partly the cause of the intensity with which the Donnellys are hated" (1977, 65). However, this confinement is not only physical but psychological, being transferred to the minds of the inhabitants of Biddulph. The evasion from such a claustrophobic

world is only granted to the Donnellys since they have been given the gift of being different.

The story of the Donnellys as depicted by James Reaney would seem, in general lines, to follow the pattern of the tragedy established by Northrop Frye as dealing with "myths of fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice and of the isolation of the hero" (1963, 16). The Donnellys would be victims in the Atwood sense¹¹². However, this would be the image of the family if the reader/spectator sticks only to one of the two worlds depicted in the trilogy, that is, to the temporal world. Conversely, if the reader/spectator is able to activate his/her imagination - which is the ultimate goal of the playwright - he/she will find that *The Donnellys* also present the archetype of romance. This archetype is characterized by "myths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation and of the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter and death." Therefore, the Donnellys are not victims but allegorical representations of resistance, and ultimately of Canada, which intends to show a new image. Thus, as Diane Bessai states, "the Donnellys who die in Reaney's mythology are also the Donnellys who live, not merely as the defiant ghosts of *Handcuffs* deploring the wrongness of the world's judgement, but as imaginatively true ancestors of the better part of the Canadian pioneering

¹¹² Atwood, in his famous book *Survival*, states that Canadian literature is full of victims. In it, she develops her model of basic victim positions that she applies to some Canadian literary works with the aim of proving her theory of Canada and Canadian literature being a representation of survival. The victim position to be applied to the Donnelly family would be position two, whose basic game is victor/victim.

inheritance" (1983, 205). Reaney has converted the Donnelly story into a genuine Canadian myth, thus adding a new name to the Canadian mythology.

Undoubtedly, this genuine Canadian myth has been developed from traditional sources such as the Greek and Shakespearean tragedies and the classical mythology. However, it is worth highlighting that *The Donnellys* goes beyond its predecessors in its attempt to portray a local story that has universal appeal. Reaney's tragedy takes the audience beyond a cathartic state. His intention is to make the audience aware of our condition by bringing the past into our present and thus questioning it. It is also his intention to make the audience aware of the theatricality of history by having these historical characters being aware of their role as characters in a play and, therefore, of their immortality. And finally, it is also his intention to make the audience aware of the veracity of both history and theatre by exposing them to what had been considered a historical truth (the Black Donnelly myth) and to a theatrical truth (the new Donnelly myth), clear features of post-modern and post-colonial literatures.

The intentions that Reaney pursues with his peculiar and unique remythologization of the Donnelly tragedy and in turn, of the Canadian pioneer myth, are many and varied as well as are the techniques that he employs to achieve his task. This is basically the reason why *The Donnellys* has become quite a unique piece of Canadian drama and why it has won the right

to be considered not "Canada's own Greek tragedy" but a "Canadian tragedy"
par excellence.

CHAPTER SIX

VI. BALDOON: MYTH-MAKING

*...this dull township
where fashion, thought and wit
never penetrate.
(Reaney, James
"The Upper Canadian")*

Balloon presents, like *The Donnellys*, a story based on an event that occurred in pioneer Southwestern Ontario, thus combining both history and legend. Therefore, it existed as a popular and as a documented story that Reaney and Gervais used as a basis for their play. The documentary and historical aspects have been previously analyzed in the third chapter. This chapter will thus be devoted to the legendary and mythical aspects of the story.

Two features clearly related to the popular tradition, those of poltergeist and witchcraft occurrences, have been kept by the authors to confer the story the appearance of popular tale in order to create a proper "Canadian folktale". Underlying the story is a clear mythical pattern, that of a myth of deliverance.

In what sense *Baldoon* is a Canadian folktale and how its features function as a myth of deliverance will be the object of study of this chapter.

VI.1 *Baldoon*: A Canadian Folktale

Despite being a play and as such presenting all the features that characterize a piece of drama, *Baldoon* shows certain features that are typical of the classical folktale, thus being able to be considered a representative Canadian folktale. Undoubtedly, *Baldoon* deals with a Canadian story, meaning it belongs to a specific milieu. There is also present a traditional literary and oral form that gives mythical stature to the story told in the play. Thus this "Canadian folktale" poses a new approach to the classical genre which involves a revision of the traditional concept¹¹³.

From the many studies existing about the folktale, general characteristics of the genre have been extracted in order to see which features are found in *Baldoon* and which ones have been challenged or given a new approach. In general, folktales are placed in a highly imaginative time and place, and are filled with unrealistic and often supernatural creatures. The folktale is usually anonymous and considered purely fictional. Géza Róheim (1966), in his study on "Myth and Folktale", points out that in a folktale "the dramatis personae are mostly human and especially the hero is human,

¹¹³ The insertion of documentary elements in the play, the combination of features from different classical and popular genres and the revision of some of these features have led us to regard *Baldoon* as an example of classical folktale adapted to a Canadian setting, thus implying a revision of the traditional concept.

frequently with supernatural beings as his opponents" (25). Usually, he adds, "the actors are nameless [and] the scene is just anywhere" (25).

In her most recent study on fairy tales, Marina Warner (1996) points out some general features - some of them in common with folktales in general - such as the presence of fairies, their moral function, imagined antiquity, oral anonymity, remoteness of the traditional setting and happy ending. But most of all, she stresses shape-shifting as "one of the fairy tale's dominant and characteristic wonders" (xv).

Although some of these features are present in *Baldoon*, there is in this story and its enactment a clear departure from what is usually considered a classical folktale. On the one hand, the story of Baldoon is not set in an imaginative time and place. In fact, as previously seen, Baldoon is the name of a small village in Southwestern Ontario. It corresponds then to a place with a real geographical existence as the maps inserted in both the stage and the book prove. The story told in the play is also set in a specific time, i.e. those three years in the 1830s during which the mysterious happenings took place.

On the other hand, the Baldoon story cannot be considered anonymous since the oral tradition is not the only one existing. The older son of the troubled family, some years after the events took place, decided to put the story on paper. Also there are contemporary newspapers that reported the

events occurred at the time. The Baldoon story deals with actual events and actual characters, thus being impossible to regard it as fictional. The play seems to display a "real" story. Those are clear reasons why *Baldoon* could be considered rather a local legend than a folktale. In his study on the nature of fairy tales, Max Lüthi (1970) underlines some general features of the local legend in contrast to the former ones. With regards to the "reality factor", he points out that whereas "the fairy tale is fiction, the local legend, however miraculous its ties to the spirit world, is in some measure counted on as true, as straight, or as wondrous history worth retelling." (12) Lüthi also adds that whereas "the fairy tale removes the realistic elements, (...) the local legend forces us to view events realistically."

Regarding the origin and source of both fairy tales and local legends, Lüthi states that the local legend is usually confined to a small area, being its further migration unusual as well as being "bound up much more closely than the fairy tale with the personal milieu of the narrator and his hearer." (84)

However, elements such as the poltergeist occurrence or the appearance of witches that confer the story a supernatural connotation that Reaney and Gervais have exploited in order to create their own myth are also one major feature of the classical folktales. Nonetheless, the presence of supernatural occurrences is also a typical feature in local legends, where, according to Lüthi, "the uncanny destructive forces are at work in all directions," (87) and

especially in the American Gothic tales. In the latter, the gloomy European folklore and the fruitful material from the local legends are combined to present stories loaded with "little mysteries and guilty secrets from communal and family pasts", (Botting 1996, 115) such as those by Hawthorne.

There is, however, an element which is not usually found either in local legends or Gothic tales, but which is present in most folktales. It is that of exerting a moral function. In *Baldoon*, this is mainly carried out by the Chorus, as is observed in the final speech:

Confession is a story
that troubles us all
it is something in words
about the way we can fall.
Something that draws us
away from the mirror
to pull us from ourselves
or the truth that we fear.
The conflict in this
lies in the gosling that is sold
not in mysteries
or in the lies that are told
for the story of Baldoon
is made for us all to see
to focus on the other
who must be set free.

But one of the key features that allows to consider *Baldoon* a folktale is the way the characters have been depicted. From the ample variety of typical folktale characters, Reaney and Gervais have extracted some of the most popular ones in order to characterize the main protagonists of the story in a

suitable folktale style. However, in contrast to the conventional folktale, *Baldoon* characters are not portrayed as fixed and immobile in their spirits. That is, some of these characters undergo a spiritual change as the story develops. Thus, to the shape-shifting (mainly represented by the presence of bird puppets as symbols of the main characters' souls) is added a "soul-shifting" achieved, in the case of McTavish, through the journey to Troyer's house and back to Baldoon. The physical journey embodies the journey into his inner side, as will be seen.

The main characters of this story are McTavish, Dr. Troyer and Mrs. Pharlan. Secondary characters but also major in the development of the events, are Mrs. McTavish and Jane McTavish. If we try to apply a conventional analysis to the characters, soon we find that it is quite difficult to label them in a straightforward manner. Nonetheless, certain features have been magnified so as to identify them as clear stereotypical folktale characters. Let us analyze them in detail in order to discover those specific features and some others that may help us define them as characters in a Canadian folktale.

Mr. McTavish is the main protagonist of the story. The first piece of information the audience gathers from him is purely allegorical. That is, a hawk puppet that symbolizes McTavish's soul is the first reference of him on stage. Also bird puppets are allegorically used for the other two main characters, Dr. Troyer and Mrs. Pharlan, the former's soul being a white lake-

gull and the latter's a black goose. The animal imagery has been wisely selected by the authors in their effort to transmit a specific image of each of the main characters. Thus, in choosing the hawk for the physical embodiment of McTavish's soul, the authors clearly intend to depict him rather as a villain than as a hero or a victim. In his work on symbols, Biedermann (1989, 222) points out that the hawk has been ascribed a symbolic negative meaning in the medieval bestiaries, being depicted as the image of the man solely concerned about his own benefit. This image is wisely conveyed through one of the first speeches the Chorus utters referring to the hawk:

CHORUS

The hawk in its flight
above the lake
dives into bulrushes
for its take,
not for sport,
not for gains
but for those demons
that run in his veins
What troubles him
troubles us all
It is something about
the way we fall
It is something that
he always knew
something that draws out
his evils too

Throughout the first act of the play, McTavish reveals his dark inner side both by means of his attitude and behaviour towards other characters. Both aspects are mostly displayed through his retelling of the strange events

occurred at his household and their possible cause. McTavish is depicted as a greedy person, excessively governed by an extreme materialism along with a short-sightedness accentuated by his personal faith. Both characteristics prevent him from being able to open his mind and seeing himself as guilty of the events happening to him and his family. From the very beginning, McTavish behaves as an excessively demanding and bad-mannered person. Thus, he "*begins to hammer upon [the door] (...) as if it were a shopdoor unexpectedly and annoyingly closed.*" (1976, 17) and demands from Troyer to be immediately assisted arguing that he "hae no slept for two months, witchfinder, I've walkit eighty leagues through swamp, fen, fell and wilds, open up." (1976, 17) McTavish also shows himself as a skeptical person since he insists on testing Dr. Troyer's ability to guess. When Dr Troyer asks him "Who is once knocking at the door of the interpreter's house?," McTavish suggests to his companion, Revd. McDorman: "Let's test him out, Mr. McDorman. Whoever bocht a ku without milking her first?," subsequently responding to Dr. Troyer: "If you're unco guid at dealing with sperrits ye'll ken our names without us telling ye." (19)

The first signs of his zealous materialism come out very soon in his conversation when asserting: "I've bonny siller in my sporrان. *Shaking his purse* For any help ye can give to a puir mon living in a sleepless hoose." (20) His attachment to the physical world is also shown through his concern with the

aspect of Dr. Troyer's house: "Aye, tis a bonny auld shed ye live in, Dr. Troyer, with the bare rafters above your heads. Have you niver thocht of plastering a ceiling over those shiverin' nakid beams?" (21)

Through these brief speeches, the authors successfully depict the type of character McTavish embodies. His most relevant personality features can be easily associated with classical folktale characters such as the popular Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, who is the embodiment of greed, arrogance, materialism, and skepticism before encountering himself through a journey into his most inner side. Such is also the case of McTavish. As soon as he is subjected to the first "test" Troyer puts him, changes start to be noticed in his behaviour. The test consists in having his feet washed before being given any kind of help. Although McTavish insists on having previously cleaned them, he finally accepts to do it and almost immediately some changes in his arrogant attitude start to happen, as is shown in his speech:

JOHN MCTAVISH

Yet I am here. I've lived a good lawful life, I hae siller to pay you - I *suddenly changing as the footwashing ritual affects him* noo, gin ye men that are scholars can tell us the intairpretation o' thae gaeins on, an'hoo they may be brocht till an end, we'll a'be more than thankfu' tae ye. For gin we canna get deleeverance, an'that richt early, we maun flee from thes evil hoose es I've built, or be carried oot o'it, deid o'the fear an' the weariness o'the flesh to bear it. Dr. Troyer, do your lassie and your good self ken ony help for me, John McTavish?

After the footwashing ritual, through which McTavish starts to allegorically clean his soul, another ritual, that of confession begins. Mary

Troyer, Dr. Troyer's clairvoyant granddaughter, questions McTavish about the events occurred at his household and by means of several flashbacks, McTavish tells about them. Despite Mary Troyer's insistence on him not to hide any facts, he keeps concealing some major ones. Nevertheless, as Mary Troyer keeps visualizing his situation and asking him questions, McTavish is forced to tell everything little by little. The confession causes McTavish's journey into his inner side through which he starts to undergo a spiritual "cleaning" and transformation. Such a transformation is clearly conveyed by the description of his aspect at the beginning of Act Two: *McTavish is more simply attired, down to undershirt & pants as a matter of fact* (56). However, at this stage, McTavish is not completely transformed yet since as he states, "it's hard to change..." (58).

Once Dr. Troyer allegorically shows him how his attitude towards life and faith is not the right one, McTavish starts to recognize his mistakes and tries to change. Throughout the long and revealing conversation in which Troyer intends to show McTavish how his church's attitude towards life is somehow wrong, their souls, those of McTavish and Troyer, are again allegorically depicted by means of the hawk and the white gull respectively. Troyer intends to explain McTavish how his particular religious faith has converted him into the person he is:

TAVERNERS

A bird- a great bird, flying about the tavern- get him out, he's breaking the - you're drunk, we're drunk too much too much - there's a hawk- (...)

JOHN MCTAVISH

Why that happened once in a tavern I was at with my first love but a bird flew in the window or was it a white moth and everyone tried to catch that white moth or was it a bird and *yawns, yawns* well, I did catch hold of it and ...

DR TROYER

What did you do with it, Jack McTavish?

JOHN MCTAVISH

I killed it. Ye can't have a silly birdie pockling up the ale barrels & whiskey jugs.

DR TROYER

Chust no way there is room for a white bird in a tavern and yet *The tam flies back to McTavish.*

JOHN MCTAVISH

Groaning I see now- the white bird was my soul. It was you, it was a piece of the Holy Ghost, it was even **you** and I exterminated forever. *Throwing tam back*

DR TROYER

And yet - the tavern was not such a bad place - it was warm and you laughed and sang and cursed - but curses are only prayers coming hindend first - haven't you often thought, Jack McTavish that this kirk you go to already - it would be much more fun to have the kirk and Sabbath worship on Saturday night and then let loose on Sunday morning with the drinking and the lovemaking and the cursing and the merry singing?

JOHN MCTAVISH

No, no - that would never do - have fun first and repent afterwards.

DR TROYER

Nein, nein, have repentance first and then have your fun! Jack McTavish, I have never seen the church you make so much about and you are an elder of - as we walk on now under the stars and the rising old moon - what is your church for a church? Show it to me as we travel towards it or shall I with my visionary pow wow hat show it forth to you - for the first time to see and then - all!

JOHN MCTAVISH

Hide me, help me close my ears - help me to remember one of the songs you have taught me - I hear their hymns - my old church comes closer and closer to me and my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth with - dread!

After this conversation, McTavish begins to exhibit changes in his personality, thus showing a new vision of life and faith, and being able to tell

the truth and recognize himself as the main guilty of all that has been happening at his household. McTavish amazingly changes his mean attitude and stops worrying so much about money. Thus, he is seen "*dancing and rather shamefacedly throwing money right and left out of his pockets*" to which his astonished wife answers: "Jack! You never gave all your money away. I thought you might have had to pay him, but I see your money flowing like water out of your pockets to all the beggars and tramps and orphans and widows between here and Long Point. You've changed!."

But his great change comes with the final test he is subjected to by Dr Troyer: his confession to Mrs. Pharlan face to face and the recognition of all his errors, those for which he and his family has suffered three years of punishment in the manner of supernatural phenomena, i.e. poltergeist. Finally, McTavish tells in front of the community how he left Mrs. Pharlan's pregnant daughter to marry a rich widow and how she killed herself after having the baby. He also tells that Jane McTavish is his daughter, who has been used by Mrs Pharlan to cause all the problems to him and his wife. Confessing and accepting all responsibilities for his mistakes deliver McTavish and his family from all sufferings. A new McTavish is born after his spiritual journey, just as a new Scrooge emerged after his virtual journey through death.

As in most local legends, McTavish represents the middle man that, as Lüthi states, "is embedded in the society of his village, not only that of the

living, but also that of the dead [and who] (...) is also rooted in the countryside or town in which he lives." (141) This middle man has to face all uncanny and destructive forces attacking him, that is, "the wild people in the forest and the water sprites and poltergeists [that] inhabit the general surroundings." (141)

In a different level from that of McTavish is Dr. Troyer, the main reason for McTavish's spiritual change. This character emerges as a spiritual guide figure. However, his popular image is that of a simple clairvoyant and witchfinder. That is why the Presbyterian community considers him an evil figure. Folk literature is replete with images of wizards such as Merlin, the Wizard of Oz, or Gandalf. In the folklore, these figures are usually related to special powers through which they obtain everything their proteges need. The image that the audience gets from Dr. Troyer is that of someone surrounded by mystery, and also that of a colonial man from the time, but characterized in a way that distinguishes him from the rest of the population in the area. In the *didascalia*, the authors describe him as "a very wizard-looking man, tall but roly-poly, bald, but with long white hair and a huge straw hat; knee breeches, the look of another century and speaks the language of the Pennsylvania Dutch Dunkards among whom he was raised before the American revolution drove him up to Long Point. He is a gentle, a figure of fun, and then all of a sudden - majestic." Some of these features could

definitely describe any wizard from the popular folktales Reaney and Gervais have taken as reference for sketching Dr. Troyer.

Dr. Troyer's mystery and eccentricity are magnified by his behaviour and mainly by many of the strange objects displayed in his household. The first of these mysterious objects is a witch trap, for catching witches from the area. Both a real witch trap and Dr. Troyer's original rifle are part of a museum in Simcoe, Ontario, according to author Marty Gervais. Also other objects related to the art of prediction are the hat Troyer's granddaughter uses for her clairvoyance activities, the moonstone, and a divining rod.

Dr. Troyer is a superstitious person absolutely scared of witches. He believes witches will possess his house if there is not a horseshoe over the door (11). He also has a powwow bag in which he keeps an amulet, that is, a piece of paper with the words INRI written on it, a name he invokes "in order to fill the horseshoe with good luck and nail her up." (14)

Besides his popular image as a wizard and a witchfinder, Dr. Troyer stands out as a spiritual guide to McTavish and to the community in general. In this sense, the role of Dr. Troyer is the embodiment of the priest or Capuchin that in local legends helps "in conjuring spirits" and who is also "a member of the village community, [and] everyone knows the source of his helping powers: the salvation of the Christian church, the grace of God." (Lüthi

19, 141) His amulet, as already said, is the word INRI and he acts as a Christ-like figure by asking John McTavish to wash his feet before entering his house just like Jesus Christ washed the apostles' feet in order to purify their souls. Dr. Troyer emerges as a god-like figure provided with a gift to redeem others' sins or at least to help them repent. That is, as he sees himself, he is "some kind of reflection for them that tells it all, some kind of glass, ..." (7) And also in a Christ-like manner, he uses white magic rituals in order to clean McTavish's soul. He utilizes a common ritual for helping people possessed by demonic forces, that of drawing a circle with chalk and keeping them within. Dr. Troyer also makes McTavish drink the water in which his feet were washed while telling him: "All your life you've lived on the surface like a water bug, a shallow, greasy oily life, now-" (53), thus causing him to vomit a black feather. After all these witchcraft rituals, John McTavish is able to recognize his errors and starts confessing:

JOHN MCTAVISH

Yes, my house is built on lands the Indians warned me about. The hidden ones lived there, they said, where I wanted to pitch my wigwam; but I went ahead. They moved to the grove in the southeast field. I cut it down. I'll do what I please, said I. (...)

Mrs. Pharlan. It's true, among other things I used her ill for, I had no right to cut down the trees in the field. Her father and mine had an agreement, but might is right. (...)

I think I know who Jane is. She is related to Mrs Pharlan and was a wee bairn a long time ago before ever she can remember in the long low house. But someone made out an affidavit to the session of the kirk that Mrs Pharlan was a lewd woman and sold liquor to the Indians and the constables took the bairn away but I knew when Jane came to my place - it

must be her, and still I wudna tell Mrs Pharlan, though she suspects. And the loss grieved her sair.

Besides helping McTavish face and repent from his mistakes, Dr. Troyer intends to be a community spiritual guide as he tries to awaken the Presbyterian community in Baldoon and make them aware of their erroneous, materialistic vision of life. He tries to convince McTavish of how repressive his religion is. Thus, he comments that there should be repentance first and then fun, and not the other way round, as it is.

In complete opposition to Dr. Troyer stands the Presbyterian community's spiritual guide Reverend McGillicuddy. His guidance is mostly based on the consideration of the human race as sinners. Thus, through his sermons he intends to impose terror and fear of God on the faithful:

REVD MCGILLICUDDY

Almighty and everlasting God! We acknowledge and confess, before Thy Holy Majesty, that we are poor miserable sinners, conceived and born in sin prone to do evil, unable of ourselves to do any good and that by continued transgression of Thy Holy Commandments we have incurred Thy righteous sentence of condemnation and death.

Reverend McGillicuddy starts preparing his community and entices them to look for a scapegoat as he knows McTavish has sought for Dr. Troyer's help. Since Dr. Troyer is considered a representative of evil, the reverend selects extracts from the Bible in order to show his people how this type of "sinners" must be strongly punished and condemned:

REVD MCGILLICUDDY

(...) A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that it is a wizard, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them." This from the twentieth chapter of Leviticus. "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, spirits or a wizard, or a necromancer. (...) For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord and because of this abomination the Lord Thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord Thy God." The eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, "Unclean, unclean."
(70)

The community starts to feel nervous as one of the faithful informs:

"That witchfinder's coming up along the river with McTavish - you should see him, he's got horns under his big floppy floppy floppy straw hat." The terror world in which they have been living begins to emerge in the form of moral obtuseness and hysteria, similar to the one felt in *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. Thus, just as Mrs Pharlan is accepted back in the church after repenting publicly and confessing her sins, McTavish is accused of pretensions to witchcraft by having asked for help to Dr Troyer, to whom Reverend McGillicuddy considers the devil himself. Nonetheless, as Dr. Troyer's intention is to make the community open their eyes and see clearly by themselves, he starts to revise McGillicuddy's bible extracts he selected in order to put his community against him and McTavish and shows himself as a Christ-like figure:

DR TROYER

I am here to purify, not to desecrate. Powers have been given to me to do so. Ach, Jesus Christ himself was called a sorcerer when he raised Lazarus and cast out evil spirits. (84)

He tries to help people by letting them put on his visionary hat so as to see what they want to know in relation to their lives. Thus, Mrs Pharlan, Jane McTavish and the rest of the community no longer see Dr. Troyer as a sorcerer but as a Christ-like figure, able to bring peace to their community by putting and end to the McTavish and Pharlan feud.

The third main character in this story is, as previously said, Mrs. Pharlan. She is presented as the main enemy of McTavish and as such is depicted as a sinister person surrounded by mystery and darkness. Her first appearance on stage is "*with a large bundle of black wool*" (34) and exactly by the time a small black dog disappears while Jane and Mrs. McTavish are looking for it. Her words clearly hint at a mysterious personality. When Mrs. McTavish tells her about their trouble at home after being proposed by Mrs. Pharlan to spin black wool for her, she answers: "...no trouble will befall your house while you're engaged on my business." (35) And so it happens. No problems emerge while she and Jane are doing their work for her. This is then the first feature that clearly identifies Mrs. Pharlan as a woman with special powers, i.e. as a witch.

Witches are, as popularly known, typical folktale characters. Amongst the most popular ones are Snow White's, Hanzel and Gretel's, etc. They pervade many local legends and have always been considered evil creatures too clever and powerful to be defeated or captured by anyone who did not practice magic. Though Mrs. Pharlan is depicted as a common old woman, she is presented at times in a similar fashion to the popular witch in *Snow White*. When approaching Jane McTavish she uses the former's tricks to persuade her to do what she wants in order to obtain the material she requires for her witchcraft rituals, i.e. hair and nail clippings. The way she convinces Jane is by arguing she can comb her hair and clip her nails while they are waiting for her foster mother who does not seem to care about Jane's aspect too much. Here is how the conversation between both develops:

MRS PHARLAN

Jane, I've brought a scissors and a comb with me. *Weighing the big ball of black yarn* There's a pound missing.

JANE MCTAVISH

Where can it be? What a pretty comb and scissors!

MRS PHARLAN

While we're waiting for your foster mother to come back from fishing I'd like to comb your hair for you.

JANE MCTAVISH

Try, Mrs. Pharlan. My hair's hard to comb - I've a cowlick.

MRS PHARLAN

Ah, but who has tried to part your hair as if you didn't have a cowlick then?

JANE MCTAVISH

My foster mother. Why'd you bring the scissors?

MRS PHARLAN

Because the nails on your right hand have grown so long. Who cuts your nails for you?

JANE MCTAVISH

Mrs. McTavish used to, but then she said I was old enough to do them all myself and I cannot do my right hand, my left hand will never do it less than clumsily and raggedly. There - my headache's gone.

MRS PHARLAN

And now the half moons on your right hand will soon be pared and clipped.

This is the first clear sign the audience gets from Mrs. Pharlan characterized as an old witch since it is popularly known that a lock of hair or a nail clipping can provide a witch with an excellent charm.

When publicly confronted with Rvd. McGillicuddy and all the Presbyterian community in Baldoon, we get to know of other acts done by Mrs. Pharlan totally related to acts of witchcraft. Mr. McDougald states: "Your first offence, Jennie Pharlan, was that you were caught setting a hen on the Sabbath. After that the offences come thicker and faster; dealings with the Indian necromancer, drunkenness, keeping a house of ill fame and in the old country, before you came out here, you and your mother were accused of bewitching cattle." (73) From McDougald's words soon we see how Mrs. Pharlan's morale is judged since she is accused not only of witchcraft but also of prostitution and drunkenness, two vices associated to people possessed by demonic powers. As Mrs. Pharlan needs to be accepted back in her church to recover her granddaughter Jane, who was taken by the church as a punishment to Mrs. Pharlan for her suspicious behaviour, she acknowledges her "sins" and is publicly humiliated in front of the community. Thus, Mrs.

Pharlan recognizes to have used witchcraft in order to take revenge on McTavish's bad actions towards her and her family.

Besides John McTavish, also opposing Mrs. Pharlan is Mrs. McTavish, Jane's stepmother. Although she is not characterized as a stereotypical folktale stepmother, there are some features that clearly show the existence of a tense relationship between her and her stepdaughter, Jane McTavish, as this extract shows:

MRS MCTAVISH

Does the combing bother you, Jane? You've such a little frown.

JANE MCTAVISH

Mrs McTavish, the way you part my hair gives a headache.

MRS MCTAVISH

Oh now, Jane, orphans cannot be choosers, this is the way my mother combed my hair when I was your age. (...) (34)

Though she had not been told, Mrs. McTavish knew Jane was Mrs. Pharlan's granddaughter and her husband's daughter. Thus, from the very moment she was handed the girl out, she said to her husband: "John McTavish why should she come to this house. Take her to the long, low log house where the old witch lives - that's where she belongs." (100) That could somehow explain the difficult relationship that developed between them, rather a servant - patron relationship than a mother - daughter one.

Stepmothers in folktales and, especially in fairy tales have always been provided with a wicked personality. In her extensive study on fairy tales,

Marina Warner (1994, 223) states how the wicked stepmother "has become the stock figure of fairy tales." Nevertheless, Mrs. McTavish, though somewhat hostile towards Jane, has been quite realistically depicted.

The triangle of female figures in the play becomes complete with Jane McTavish. Her role could be traced back to the many orphan children that populate Victorian novels such as *Oliver Twist*.

The orphan figure is almost a symbol in Reaney's literature, which is present in his early poems as well as in many of his plays. These orphans are part of the literary tradition that depict them as children subjected to a hard life in which they must try everything in order to survive, thus developing in most cases a feeling of hate and distrust towards people that intend to abuse them¹¹⁴.

Although she is leading a good life with the McTavish family, Jane has gone through many difficulties in her short life, as she herself tells:

JANE MCTAVISH

First I was small and I lived with the Macphersons - in a muddy, sleepy little town on the other river. They made me wait on them at table and I

¹¹⁴ An example of the presence of this type of characters in Reaney's work is his early poem titled "The English Orphan's Monologue" from which we include an extract. Here we can observe how this orphan has developed hate for her owners to the extent of wanting to hurt them.

Oh, I hate these older people her
Who starch my arms and legs
Saddles, steel corsets and whiffletrees.
But not my heart.
With this heart, a fiery comb,
I'll comb your locks, Mrs.,
I'll comb Harry out of them!
And with this heart a flamey saw
I'll prune you, Mr.,
Of your nicest choicest limb.

always had to nurse the baby till it died and then they hurled me away from that place and I lived with the minister's family for a while. Then I lived at the brickmaker's and I made bricks till his daughter fell into the kiln and burned herself. Then there were four other places, in the country, in the town, closer and closer to here until hear here hear (...) (42)

From her speech, we can guess how Jane seems to have caused major problems in the households where she has been working, as she seems to be causing them in McTavish's house. Thus, she acknowledges it and apologizes to her father:

JANE MCTAVISH

Father, father - it has been so bad that that has been what has mended it. You have been both good to me after your fashion, but I will trouble your house no more, but return to this poor woman's house. (102)

Jane is clearly the cause and also the link Mrs. Pharlan required to cause McTavish's sufferings and therefore, take revenge on him. Jane's role is thus the mirror of the typical orphan girl/boy, who is used and exists merely to serve the interests of others, from which we have hundreds of instances in both fiction and reality.

VI.1.1 *Baldoon*: A Myth of Deliverance

Among the common types of myth analyzed by Frye is the myth of deliverance. This myth, in Frye's words (1982, 49) "speaks of something that history gives us little encouragement to believe in." One of the key examples

that the critic gives of such a myth is the *Book of Exodus* in which Israel is delivered from Egypt and offered a Promised Land, a New Jerusalem.

Underlying the story of Baldoon is present a myth of deliverance which embodies two levels. One is a specific level related to McTavish's quest in search of deliverance from his and his family's sufferings. Such a quest is developed through the common form of the metaphorical journey. The other level is more general and is related to the whole Presbyterian community that goes through their deliverance from their religion's repressive ties with the help of Dr. Troyer.

In order to search for help John McTavish embarks on a physical journey from Baldoon to Long Point. All through the journey in the middle of the night, McTavish seems to descend into hell since he has to face demonic forces represented by the witches that encounter him on his way to Dr. Troyer's house. Nonetheless, McDorman, McTavish's company in his journey, refers to Long Point as Zion, i.e. Jerusalem. Long Point is thus considered a Promised Land where all problems will come to an end since McTavish will metaphorically wash his sins off and therefore, a new order, as opposed to the chaos in which McTavish and his family have been living, can be achieved. Washing his sins off involves McTavish's inner journey, which starts from the very moment the physical journey through the perils of the night, begins.

His real journey to the underworld then takes place once Troyer and his granddaughter lead him to discover all his dark side through the journey into the self. Throughout this journey, full of ups and downs, McTavish accomplishes the goal of his quest. Such a goal is that of searching for a solution to the strange occurrences at his household, occurrences that, in his view, are absolutely due to external causes. However, his quest clearly involves more than that. It involves a journey throughout his life and an encounter with his most inner side.

It is by means of this metaphorical journey that the myth of deliverance is displayed since both, the physical and the psychological journeys, mean McTavish's deliverance from his own subjugation.

But, as it has been already said, the Presbyterian community in their encounter with Dr. Troyer also achieves the deliverance. Their experience with Dr. Troyer's special powers enables them to see him as a Christ-like figure, and as such, as a redeemer and a deliverer from their religious repressive ties.

Baldoon is, as we have seen, a play in which many popular and literary genres such as the folktale, the local legend and the Gothic tale, have been inserted. This peculiar way of mixing features from all these genres allows us to consider *Baldoon*, in spite of having analyzed it as a Canadian folktale, a

non-traditional folktale. Nonetheless, the main interest of Reaney and Gervais is to create a proper Ontario mythology and consequently, they have chosen the best way to do it. They have taken a local legend and have given a mythological stature to it by using typical features from the classical folktale and from the American Gothic tale.

It is worth mentioning that American Gothic literature, as it was the case with Romantic literature in general, was a way to vindicate a national identity. In this sense, Reaney intends to recover this trend for the Canadian literature of the time that very much valued the use of indigenous themes as a way to fight for a Canadian identity. Thus *Baldoon* is a clear mirror of Reaney's tastes in literature revised and taken into a Canadian setting with the aim of creating a proper Canadian mythology.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the dissertation, the use of documentary and mythical aspects in both *The Donnellys* and *Balloon* has been analyzed. Although both elements have been separately studied for the sake of clarity, it is well known that the juxtaposition of documentary and myth is one of the hallmarks of Reaney's theatre. Both elements, as used by Reaney, imply a tension that pervades the two plays. The presence of such a tension does not involve a

dichotomy or opposition of the two aspects, but rather a partnership. Thus, we may define Reaney's *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* as the type of theatre that attempts to bring to the stage the documented experience of pioneers in Southwestern Ontario, Canada, providing them with a mythological background. These two plays present, then, a particular vision of the first pioneers in Canada and, particularly, in the region of Southwestern Ontario.

Reaney's particular manner of combining documentary and myth makes it possible to exercise an assessment of his theatre - and, particularly these two plays - as representative of post-modern and post-colonial trends in drama, and, as an example of the so-called "New World myth" within the dramatic genre.

In both *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*, the documentary element becomes fundamental in the creation of Reaney's myth. In previous chapters we have seen how the documentary technique is used by the playwright with two main different goals. On the one hand, the documentary technique is used with the purpose of documenting and exploring a specific era in Canadian history. And on the other hand, it is used for revising the traditional concepts of history, myth, religion, literary genre, and theatre.

In using historical and legal documents in order to offer bits of the Canadian heritage, there is in Reaney an interest in teaching the Canadian

people about their culture. Such didacticism is due to his engagement with education that has its basis on a major concern for the cultural past and future of Canada. Therefore, as Vautier (1998) comments with regards to certain Canadian post-modern novels, Reaney's drama is marked by a strong motivation to didacticism about the historical past and also by a concern with the passing on of the authentic heritage of their people. Thus, Reaney makes use of such documents so as to provide a solid knowledge of particulars of nineteenth-century Ontario; that is, of a specific place in a specific time. This interest in documenting an event, a place, a time and a people manifests on the part of Reaney, as Vautier (1998) points out with regard to other authors, a wish to answer and to problematize the questions posed by Frye of 'who' and 'where'. This is even implicit in the titles of the two plays, *The Donnelly's*, i.e. the name of a family living in Lucan, Ontario, and *Baldoon*, the name of a little village in Ontario. This sense of place, ever present not only in these two Reaney's plays but also in all his literary production, clearly shows the regionalist impulse that defines his drama.¹¹⁵ This regionalist impulse, present in Reaney's work, materializes, precisely through the juxtaposition of "documentary and myth" which is, in Bowering's view, one of the best definitions of the regionalist's art.

¹¹⁵ This is also the label that has defined Canadian literature and Canada herself, as Hutcheon (1988, 4) points out when asserting that "Canada can in some ways be defined as a country whose articulation of its *national* identity has sprung from *regionalist* impulses: the ex-centric forces of Quebec, the Maritimes, the west. Its history is one of defining itself against centres."

The second goal in using the documentary element is, as previously pointed out, the revision of traditional concepts such as history, myth, religion, literary genre and theatre. By using the documentary element, Reaney attempts to deconstruct and revise existing myths and traditional concepts, and creates new ones. In *The Donnellys*, Reaney intends to deconstruct the received history/story about the family. In order to do this, the playwright uses techniques such as the insertion of historical and legal documents, the fragmentation of time, the multiplicity of viewpoints, the play within the play technique, etc.

Historical and legal documents are inserted in order to show how a different reading of the same documents may give place to a different history/story. In fact, Reaney is able to prove how different interpretations of the same documents may lead to the creation of utterly different stories, as is shown through the contrast of the two versions of the Donnelly murder.

In order to deconstruct the traditional concept of history, Reaney parodies its excessive reliance upon dates by overusing them. Also, time is presented in a fragmented way, thus breaking the traditional linear historical chronology.

The audience, when reading or watching the play, is offered more than one point of view about the same event with the aim of leaving to us the task of evaluating and interpreting all that we have been told.

One of the most popularized versions of the Donnelly family history, that of Thomas P. Kelley, becomes absolutely parodied and destabilized by using the play within the play technique and having the main character, Mr. Donnelly, correcting mistakes committed by the author of the famous book. This is also done with the aim of subverting the received myth of the Donnellys and of deconstructing the theatricality of history, thus posing in turn the question of veracity of both history and theatre.

All these techniques are used in order to question the veracity and reliability of received models of "true" and "trustworthy" information such as newspapers and historical accounts. In this sense, Reaney joins the post-modernist trend characterized, in Hutcheon's view, by "a distrust of 'meta-' or 'master' narratives, that is, of the received wisdom or the grand narrative systems that once made sense of things for us" (Hutcheon 1988, 15).

Besides showing distrust towards the received history/story, Reaney plays with fiction, history, and myth by showing how the boundaries between these categories are almost impossible to establish. A good example of such a

play is the insertion of a fictional fact such as the visit of Mrs. Donnelly to the Governor General in a historical manner by providing it with a date.

This is one of the characteristics of Canadian post-modern fiction and that can be perfectly applied to Reaney's drama, especially to *The Donnellys*, i.e. the existence of an intentional blurring of the boundaries of fiction, history, and myth. The insertion of historical documents adds to this blurring of the boundaries thus making it impossible to distinguish fiction from history and 'reality'. This is, as we have seen, a feature that is present in Reaney's *The Donnellys*.

The traditional concept of history becomes destabilized, thus being presented, like fiction, as a construct in which, the historical 'fact' is a constructed version of the event. And this is what Reaney, by means of his metadrama, attempts to show, i.e. how it is left to us, to the audience, the construction of our own history/story out of the documents, the traces of the past that become available to us.

In this sense, Reaney's metadrama is a clear example of a post-colonial work: it develops multiple self-reflexive discourses through elements such as role playing, plays within plays and other metatheatrical devices, and at the same time, puts the received models of theatre into question with the aim of illustrating how theatre is the means to perform histories/identities endlessly.

But not only the traditional concept of history becomes destabilized by using historical documents. Also the traditional concept of myth is put to revision. In being able to deconstruct an existing myth, that of the Black Donnellys, Reaney proves how the concept of myth is not fixed and immutable. The myth does not present itself as an authoritative, factual account anymore, but rather as "flexible, time-bound, and appropriate to its setting" (Vautier 23) that, like history, can never be finished or final, but varies with natural law or ordinary experience. An example of the new type of myth is shown in the way Reaney, by using the same documents that helped create a myth, gets to demythologize in order to remythologize, as Bessai (1983) has also suggested. This new type of myth thus combines tradition and newness, structure and lack of centre. Therefore, deconstructing the traditional concept of myth does not mean an absence of it since the need to establish new myths of the past, though paradoxical, is absolutely present (Vautier 1998). And this is what Reaney makes in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*, creating new myths of the past in order to establish a new Canadian pioneer myth.

The Canadian pioneer myth that Reaney intends to create in both plays is one that attempts to destabilize the typical image of the New World as the paradise for the colonizers. In both plays, images of how beliefs, customs, traditions, etc. from the Old World transferred to the New World are the cause of trouble in the new communities, are shown with the aim of deconstructing

that idealistic image of progress, joy, and happiness in the new land. That is, as Bessai (1983) points out, the immigrant's hope and faith that in the New World only the best and not the worst comes with him becomes absolutely dismantled in Reaney's plays.

The pioneer myth Reaney intends to make is one that portrays the type of world in which immigrants had to develop at the time. That is to say, a world "preoccupied by taxes, pricing policies, land values and mortgages, banking powers, salesmen, trainmen, commercial competition, increasing industrialization, newspapers, toll gates, road-building, legal obligations, political and religious machinations" (Parker 1991, 85-86). It is mainly by means of the documentation inserted in the plays, that Reaney achieves to create such a myth in which the histories of Biddulph Township and Baldoon become the ultimate representatives of the ancestral Canadian pioneer inheritance.

Reaney's pioneer myth, though marked by the traditional markers of myth¹¹⁶, is a New World type of myth since the playwright does not intend to present his myth as a fixed and unchangeable entity. Rather, by engaging the audience's imagination in the process of creating our own hi-stories, Reaney intends to demonstrate how history and myth are not complete or conclusive but are to be continually realized and reinvented. This is his message when he

¹¹⁶ The traditional markers of myth are, according to Vautier (1998, 54), "cyclical structure, naming as a creative and magical act, and the poet as the voice of the gods."

asserts that "maybe if we get used to seeing our society as being based on story, we'll wake up and realize that we can get a better story" ("Afterword", 222). Also when in *The Donnellys*, Showman Kelly shows his canvas for historical information and the canvas presentations happen to be "a big wallpaper sample book, with nothing drawn on its pages" (79).

The documentary element is also instrumentally used by Reaney in order to explore and revise religious issues with the aim of proving how religion is also a construct. The whole Catholic liturgy and the confirmation rite of passage are brought into the first play of *The Donnellys* with the aim of establishing a parallelism between church and society, which ultimately intends to show how religion is also a world made of words, likely to be reinterpreted. This play, as Bessai (1983, 202) suggests, may be viewed "as a kind of catechism for which the 'correct' answers are heretically challenged from every perspective and on every level by a new dogma according to James Reaney."

Sacred images such as Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ are ironically deconstructed by being placed in a supposedly illegal bar, thus making a complete mockery of the Catholic moral. Images of the Donnellys' funeral are also shown in a parallel way to images of the Donnellys' murder trial, thus stressing the criticism towards the religious institution in that it is ironically

portrayed as a fundamental piece in the development and evolution of the Biddulph community.

Two different religions, i.e. Presbyterianism and a supposedly leftwing offshoot of the Puritan movement, and their different ways of facing life are opposed in *Baldoon*. Completely different interpretations of the same biblical texts are offered thus showing how the sacred book is likely to be reinvented and that, therefore, it is a construct. The status of religious faith becomes even more destabilized when this is put at the same level as the belief in magical rituals. Both beliefs, religious and pagan, become together in the character of Dr. Troyer. Reaney's clear intention is to show how it is hard to draw the borderline between both, and how their origins are not that far from each other, thus destabilizing the traditional concept mainly by means of parody.

Documentary, in Reaney's view, implies everything local, thus showing a clear interest in what Dragland (1983, 230) has called "the ground under his feet". We have seen how, in this sense, Reaney follows the trends of the Canadian theatre of the late sixties and early seventies, mainly characterized by a proclivity for using indigenous themes and experimenting with new theatrical forms.

Although Reaney's ideas about the theatrical space seem to be more traditional since he considers the ideal theatre a similar one to the Shakespearean Globe Theatre, soon we find that his concept of the ideal

theatre goes beyond the conventional image. His ideal theatre involves the community in a wide sense. The community, i.e. the place they live in, their customs, their culture, their history, etc. becomes a fundamental element in Reaney's theatre, as we have seen.

As Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) state, going deeper into a historical issue by means of the theatre implies the use of local material that materializes in the insertion of all elements related to the indigenous story which is told and performed. Therefore, elements such as religious rituals, songs, dances, language accents, etc. characteristic of the communities portrayed, are shown in the plays with the main goal of identifying the places where these stories took place. This, that is the identification of places where indigenous stories happen, is, as Bessai stated (1983, 196), a major starting point in a post-colonial theatre eager to establish its own dramatic territory.

Such elements of identification as religious rituals, popular songs and dances, language accents, etc. are used in post-colonial theatre with different aims. Ritual tends to be used, according to Gilbert and Tompkins (1996), as a way to recuperate tradition, to show hybridisation, or to establish setting/context, or as a performative model for various sections of the action/dialogue. In Reaney's plays I see the use of ritual more as a way to recuperate tradition/history and mainly as a device to establish setting/context since hybridisation implies a completely different culture from

the imperial one. With that goal in mind, a Presbyterian Sabbath church meeting is completely re-enacted in *Baldoon*.

The use of song and music in post-colonial drama is fundamentally aimed at recuperating indigenous song and music, and mixing new and old forms into specific types. The former seems to be the main goal in Reaney's plays where typical songs from the Irish and Scottish communities in England are recuperated as well as those developed in the New World. Typical Irish songs from the Old World and new lyrics from the New World are displayed throughout the Donnelly plays. Likewise, a whole range of folk songs and ballads of Scotland is offered in *Baldoon* with the aim of attempting to show a closer portrait of the Scottish community. All these songs are accompanied by their typical dances.

Dance, also used in post-colonial drama as "an act of cultural retrieval" and as "a locus of struggle in producing and representing individual and cultural identity" (Gilbert and Tompkins 240-2) pervades Reaney's plays. It is used in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* as a way to let Canadians know about their traditions and cultural heritage, and it is also a way to approach the actor in a different manner by showing him/her at different levels.

Language is, as Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) point out, along with the previous elements, one of the main pillars in post-colonial theatre. Local

languages, regional variants, shifting registers, and indigenous accents become essential in a theatre whose playwrights have concentrated on speaking in voices different from those of the "Empire". Thus, the Scottish and Dutch accents in *Baldoon* and a version of Irish dialect in *The Donnellys* pervading both plays, show an attempt to portray an essential part of Canadian heritage, different from the imperial one.

Finally, the traditional concept of literary genre is also put to revision in *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*. Although the term "history play" has been chosen in order to label a group of Reaney's plays in terms of their historical themes, settings, factual events, people and places, both plays show how in Reaney's theatre, all literature forms are present and combined. Both plays, and especially *The Donnellys*, are what Dragland (1978) has called a "metamorphic" kind of theatre in which there is a combination of traditional forms into new ones.

The Donnellys and *Baldoon* are an authentic collage of forms, styles, techniques, genres, etc. Film techniques, prose, poetry, songs, dances, puppet theatre, mime theatre, detective fiction, trial scenes, ritual performances, melodrama, etc. form such a collage. Such an amalgam of literary genres and styles makes almost impossible to straightforwardly group these plays under a specific label. This is a clear characteristic of post-modern writing, which, as Hutcheon (1988, 5) points out with regards to Canadian contemporary fiction,

is filled with examples of a postmodern challenge to the boundaries of specifically 'high art' genres. This challenge is clearly characterized by the insertion of popular cultural forms such as comic books and movies, detective stories and sports tales, among others.

The combination of many 'high' and 'low' art genres within his plays and his intentional blurring of the boundaries between history and legend are some of the ways by which Reaney puts the traditional concept of literary genre to revision. Despite being historical events occurred in Southwestern Ontario, there is a legend surrounding both the Donnelly family and the Baldoon mysterious happenings. This legendary aspect is presented as so valid a piece of information as the historical one. In this sense, Reaney's plays are a clear example of the historical plays by modern playwrights that often refer more directly to the legend than the fact.

In *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* literary genres such as melodrama and gothic romance get mixed with more popular genres such as the detective story or the local stories. That is, aspects such as gossip, hearsay and local-interest stories become an important element in the plays. Both traditional 'high' and 'low' arts are indistinctly used thus showing a clear challenge to the traditional literary scheme where popular genres such as local stories, folk songs, etc. would be at the lowest level.

Despite using indigenous popular genres, Reaney chooses two traditional genres for shaping both stories, those of the tragedy and the folktale. Using such a traditional framework is one of the ways these local stories reach a mythological stature: the Donnellys by being portrayed as tragic heroes in the history of pioneer Canada, and Baldoon by being converted into part of the Canadian mythology as a folktale. However, *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* cannot be considered "pure" tragedy and folktale respectively since many other literary and popular genres have been inserted within these general frameworks. Clearly, the traditional concepts of both tragedy and folktale have been challenged in order to create both a genuine Canadian tragedy and folktale, characterized by a combination of "new" and "traditional" features. This is, in a sense, an example of the so-called "canonical counter-discourse"¹¹⁷. Although *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* are not a 'counter' text of any specific canonical text, they insert multiple references to canonical texts such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (the play within the play) and *Romeo and Juliet*, classical folktales such as *Snowwhite* and *The Ugly Duckling*, and biblical myths such as Job. These references are inserted with the aim of showing how Canadian local stories are also good myth materials.

Definitely, the documentary element has proved to be fundamental in the mythical shaping of *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon*. The juxtaposition of both

¹¹⁷ "Canonical counter-discourse" is defined by Gilbert and Tompkins (1996, 16) as "a process whereby the post-colonial writer unveils and dismantles the basic assumptions of a specific canonical text by developing a 'counter' text that preserves many of the identifying signifiers of the original while altering, often allegorically, its structures of power."

documentary and mythical aspects and the subsequent blurring of their borderlines have provided the way to deconstruct traditional "givens" (including that of the myth) in order to reconstruct them by making the audience aware of their ability to be re-creators of their own hi-stories.

Many of the features that define a theatre as post-colonial are present in these two Reaney's plays. As a matter of fact, *The Donnellys* and *Baldoon* can be considered, in my view, post-colonial plays within a specific Canadian socio-historical context. This context mainly embodies a specific historical period, that of the post-Centennial era¹¹⁸, and a specific social group, that of the Irish and Scottish communities. It is basically this part of Canadian heritage that is recuperated by Reaney so as to make his special contribution to the creation of a genuinely Canadian mythology.

¹¹⁸ The 1967 Centennial celebrations meant a revival of Canadian theatre that was to be revealed subsequently in an interest in looking for indigenous themes and theatre forms. Reaney's plays are a good example of the new tendencies.

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