

T.C.
ATILIM UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DIVISION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
M.A. THESIS

**BASIC INFLUENCES ON ARNOLD WESKER'S
EARLY DRAMA**

744733

ZEYNEP RANA SELİMOĞLU

Thesis Advisor

Dr. MARCIA VALE

144733

Ankara, 2004

(All rights reserved. This thesis cannot be circulated without the publisher's prior consent.)

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü'ne

Zeynep Rana SELİMOĞLU'na ait *ARNOLD WESKER'IN İLK OYUNLARINDAKİ TEMEL ETKİLER* adlı çalışma, jürimiz tarafından İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalında YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Başkan.....
Prof. Dr. Oya BATUM MENTEŞE

Üye.....
Dr. Marcia VALE (Danışman)

Üye.....
Prof. Dr. Ayşegül YÜKSEL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Dr. Marcia Vale for her guidance and support. I am most grateful to Prof. Dr. Oya Batum Menteş and Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Yüksel for their valuable advice and constant encouragement. I would also like to extend my thanks to my family for their psychological and financial support in all phases of this study. And, of course my endless gratitude to Mr. Wesker for his kind e-mail replies.



ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı Arnold Wesker'ın oyunlarında özellikle yer, karakter ve diyalogda bazı temel etkilerin görüldüğünü vurgulamaktır. Savaş sonrası dönemi oyun yazarlarından olan Wesker oyunlarında toplumda görülen değişiklikleri yansıtır. Wesker, döneminin yeni teknikleriyle ilgilenirken kendi kişisel yaşam deneyimlerinde de etkilenir. Bu tezde Arnold Wesker'ın ilk eserlerinde görülen temel etkiler oyunlarından dördünde – *Mutfak* ve *Wesker Üçlemesi*: “*Şehriyeli Tavuk Çorbası, Kökler ve Kudüs'ten Sözediyorum*” – incelenmektedir.

Bu tez, bir giriş, iki gelişme ve bir de sonuç bölümünden oluşmaktadır. Giriş bölümünde üç alt başlık yer almaktadır. Giriş bölümünün ilk iki kısmında Wesker'ın tiyatrosu için İngiltere'de 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında yer alan sosyal ve tarihsel edebi gelişmeler ve yenilenen naturalizm hakkında bilgi verilir. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonra sınıflar arası farklılıklar ortaya çıkar ve bu yüzden toplumdaki denge değişir. Toplumdaki bu değişimler edebiyatı da etkiler. Bu sebeple bu dönem yazarları toplumdaki hiyerarşik düzeni yeniden yapılandıran endüstri ve ekonomideki çalkalanmalarla başlayan orta sınıf ve işçi sınıfı arasındaki farklılıkları eserlerinde anlatırlar. Toplumun en üst düzeyindekilerin sağladığı iş imkanlarına bağlı kaldıklarından zor kalan kesim işçi sınıfı olmuştur. İngiliz Tiyatrosu'nda bu sorunlar dönemin oyun yazarları tarafından da incelenir ve Wesker da bu yazarlardan biridir.

Üçüncü kısımda ise Wesker'ın hayatıyla ilgili bilgi verilmektedir. Gelişme bölümlerinde yukarıda adı geçen oyunlar – birinci bölümde *Mutfak* ve ikinci bölümde *Wesker Üçlemesi* “*Şehriyeli Tavuk Çorbası, Kökler ve Kudüs'ten Sözediyorum*” – temel etkiler esas alınarak detaylı bir biçimde incelenmektedir. Tezin sonuç bölümünde giriş ve gelişme bölümlerinde tartışılan konular kısa özet olarak verilmektedir.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to prove that in Arnold Wesker's plays it is possible to see some basic influences in terms of setting, characters and dialogue. As a playwright of post-war British Drama, he reflects the changes in the society in his works. Although Wesker is clearly influenced by some of the new movements of his time, he is also strongly affected by his own personal experiences. In this thesis basic influences on Arnold Wesker's early drama are analysed in four of his plays – *The Kitchen* and *The Wesker Trilogy*: "*Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* and *I am Talking About Jerusalem*".

The thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters and a conclusion. The introduction includes three subtitles. In the first two parts of the Introduction, the social and historical developments that took place in England in the second half of the 20th century, and the refreshed naturalism is briefly studied for Wesker's Drama. After the Second World War, a clash between classes emerged, so the balance in the society changed. These changes in the society affected the literature as well. Therefore this was a period in which many writers voiced the clash between middle and working class values that had started with the industrial revolution. Economic fluctuations, which structured the new hierarchical order of the communities, influenced their works. Due to their dependence on the employment opportunities afforded by the ruling layer of society, it was the working class who suffered. In British Drama these problems were also examined by playwrights of this period, of whom Wesker was one.

In the third part, the life and career of Wesker is detailed. In the main chapters, the above mentioned plays – in the first chapter *The Kitchen* and in the second chapter *The Wesker Trilogy* – "*Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* and *I am Talking About Jerusalem*" – are analysed in detail by referring to the basic influences. The conclusion of this thesis gives a brief summary of the concepts discussed in the introduction and main parts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ÖZET.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. The Social and Historiactal Background for Wesker's Drama.....	1
II. The Employment of Naturalism in the Post-War Situation.....	2
III. Arnold Wesker's Autobiography and His Career as Dramatist.....	5
Chapter 1:	
<i>THE KITCHEN</i>	12
Chapter 2:	
<i>THE WESKER TRILOGY</i>	26
I. <i>Chicken Soup with Barley</i>	30
II. <i>Roots</i>	45
III. <i>I'm Talking About Jerusalem</i>	59
CONCLUSION.....	73
WORKS CITED.....	79

INTRODUCTION

It's possible to divide literature into that which attempts to understand life through a recreation of experiences, and that which attempts to understand life through the imagination..... Some declare they are not interested in a writer's life. Literature, they say, has nothing to do with autobiography. Others insist autobiography is the only ingredient that draws them to a writer's work. 'Now that' they say, 'feels as though it comes from the front line'. There is a third view that declares all writing is autobiography, if not of the physical events in the writer's life then of his or her emotional life¹.

These are the ideas of a playwright who lived his golden age in the 1950s. The 1950s were years that saw great changes in social and literary life in England, and Arnold Wesker was influenced not only by these changes but also by the personal experiences he went through in this period. It is possible to see the reflections of these three influences on his drama, especially his early drama.

The Social and Historical Background for Wesker's Drama

The twentieth century is one of the most vital and exciting periods in English drama, rivalling the Elizabethan theatre in thematic scope and stylistic ambition. It has produced a wide range of plays, both developing and cutting across traditional genres, as well as extending the subject-matter of the stage. The social changes resulting from two World Wars, the need for national reappraisal with the loss of Britain's imperial role, together with the effects of technological advances and increasing urbanization have had a continuing creative impact on the theatre. Stimulated by new ideologies, playwrights spoke with a public voice. Awareness of the theatre's potential for influencing audiences has raised questions about the function of drama, the nature of its reception and the relationship between form and content. Shaw, Lawrence, Synge and O' Casey introduced dialect and lower-class accents and helped the transition to the working class voice in the theatre.²

¹ Wesker, Arnold, "On Playwrighting", 1989. p. 6

² Innes, Christopher, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.1

In 1956 with a play of the post-war generation playwright, John Osborne – *Look Back in Anger*³ – a revolution started. This play was seen as the statement of a new generation, heralding a new spirit in drama, and in culture in general. Osborne was one of the members of the group which was called the “Angry Young Men”⁴. The group consisted of post-war generation playwrights and novelists who were protesting against their society. They expressed scorn and disaffection with the established, socio-political order of their country. This impatience and resentment was especially aroused by what they perceived as the hypocrisy and the mediocrity of the upper and middle classes. The “angry young men” were a new breed of intellectuals who were mostly of working class or lower class origin. Some had been educated in the post-war red-brick universities at the state’s expense, though a few were from Oxford. They shared an outspoken irreverence for the British class system and the elitist Oxford and Cambridge Universities. They showed an equally uninhibited disdain for the drabness of the post-war welfare state, and their writings frequently expressed raw anger and frustration as the post-war reforms failed to meet the angry and rebellious nature of the post-war generation.⁵

The Employment of Naturalism in the Post-War Situation

After World War II, the British stage was refreshed primarily by a new wave of naturalism. It is a movement that began in France in the 19th century and spread to other European countries. As a pure movement it did not last long, but certain of its ideas have shown up frequently in later dramas as well as in films and television. The “father” of naturalism is said to have been the French novelist Emile Zola (1849-1902) who formulated the concept of “scientific objectivity”, which suggest that the artist should present a picture of real world without making his own presence fact. The naturalists argued that what should be presented on the stage was a “slice of life”. Because the naturalists wanted the controlling hand of the artist to remain unseen, they argued against stage contrivances. Instead, the artist should function as

³ It was staged at Royal Court in 1956.

⁴ It was named by John Russell Taylor

⁵ Lacey, Stephen, **British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965**, Routledge, London, 1995. p. 99

an objective scientist; everything on stage – characters, language, properties, settings, costumes – should seem to have lifted directly from everyday life. Many of the naturalists believed that the most appropriate subject matter for drama was the lower class. The naturalists frequently focused on the sordid and seamy aspects of society in their day. They did so in order to call their audiences' attention to social problems and to instigate reforms. In short, the aim of naturalism is to persuade audiences that a scene is an actual place, or a performance. It attempts to present the world as it really is. It has become shorthand for a photographic approach to theatre, one which attempts to construct a plausible illusion of social reality in all its outward forms and acting. The writers in this movement sympathized with the disillusioned protagonist of the first important success in the new style, *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Among the other leading dramatists in this movement were John Arden, whose *Live Like Pigs* (1958) discussed the clash between disruptive freedom and ordered restriction and Arnold Wesker, whose *The Kitchen* (1959) used a kitchen as a microcosm of British society.

Up until the 1950's, most English theatre was concerned with middle-class dramas and society. In 1956 with the play – *Look Back in Anger* – of John Osborne a different type of drama was introduced as a contribution to naturalism. That was one of the first plays to use a working-class setting – in a bed-sitter – with working-class characters. The later term, “Kitchen Sink”, was used to define this type of drama. It became popular as a usually slightly insulting label for the newly current realistic working-class drama of the time; its aim was to provide a vivid picture of the working class in its most often unpleasant reality. It was usually set in a bed-sit or a flat and dealt with domestic issues which are mostly related to food and cooking. Conflicts took place between people who were poor and lived in cramped conditions. The genre used ordinary, everyday language in an attempt to provide the audience with an accurate picture of one part of the society.

New naturalism was used by the playwrights of the period. Arnold Wesker was one of them who chose naturalism to describe his mode of writing. He believes that by using naturalism, it is possible to present a “slice of life”.

Critics claim that as Wesker tries to reflect life, he is a realist. However, in an article in *The Transatlantic Review*, Wesker expressed his reaction against realism:

I have discovered that realistic art is a contradiction in terms. Art is the re-creation of experience not the copying of it. Some writers use naturalistic means to re-create experience, others non-naturalistic. I happen to use naturalistic; but all the statements I make are made theatrically. Reality is as misleading as truth; realistic art makes nonsense.

Wesker uses his own life experiences with some changes. These changes mainly concern about setting and characters. He tries to recreate the place that he lived and also he wants to use characters who are different from the ones that he had in the real life.

His preference about setting is generally suitable for the working class who live either in a small basement flat or a country cottage. He also emphasizes the importance of the kitchen in his plays. Sometimes characters spend their whole day in it or they deal with some kitchen issues like cooking, preparing tea. This recurrent setting can be seen in the plays that are examined in this thesis. Using the kitchen as a setting or dealing with domestic issues are the main features of kitchen-sink drama which became popular as the newly realistic working class drama. The label, kitchen-sink drama, was usually intended as an insult, but audiences enjoyed these plays. Since this type of drama reflects the unpleasant, monotonous and boring life of the working class with its every simple problem, critics claim that it is nonsense to go and watch the problems or difficulties of the class, which were well-known, on the stage. In Wesker's plays it is possible to see the features of this drama and why he chose to write in this fashion. There are plays which take place in a kitchen or ones in which two or three scenes that are set in or around the kitchen. Like other playwrights who write kitchen-sink drama, he wants to show the unpleasant reality of the working class. By reflecting their life on the stage, he attempts to gain the attention of the audience and to awaken them to the reality of the working class problems.

Arnold Wesker's Autobiography and His Career as Dramatist

More than any of his contemporaries among the new dramatists, Arnold Wesker tempts critics and audiences to discuss the subject matter of his plays as if it were real life, ignoring its form, its presentation, its purposeful internal relationships. Once this temptation is overcome, however, the total shape of each play takes on additional dimensions of irony, of reservation and qualification, of unexpected poetic vision, so that the direct and immediate appeal of the usually colourful, vigorous characters and incidents falls into place as only a part of what the dramatist has to offer.⁶

When we examine Wesker's works, we can easily see that much of the material in the plays has an origin in his own life. He was born in Stepney, London, on 24 May 1932, the son of Jewish emigré parents. His father, a tailor, was from Ukraine, and his mother was from Hungary. When Ronald Hayman asked him about his childhood, he answered:

It was always happy. I had a wonderful time as a youngster. My sister tells me I broke the bars of my cot. I like that image-right from babyhood I was breaking the bars.⁷

He attended the Jewish infant school in Hackney, various local schools and Upton House Central School, Hackney where besides the normal curriculum he was trained in bookkeeping, typing and shorthand. At Upton House Central School, where the dramatist Harold Pinter was also enrolled, Wesker was stubborn, so he had problems with his teachers there. At this time, he got much of his education outside the classroom, in the Habonim. It was a young Zionist organization in the Young Communist League, which he joined.

In 1948, he began to work in a great variety of jobs. He became a furniture-maker's apprentice and carpenter's mate and a year later a bookseller's assistant. In 1950, he did his National Service with the Royal Air Force. His literary ambitions surfaced in these years and he wrote a novel. It was an interesting one because it consisted of the letters that he wrote to his family and friends during his service. He

⁶ Leeming, Glenda, **Arnold Wesker**. Longman, London, 1972. p. 3

⁷ Hayman, Ronald, **Contemporary Playwrights: Arnold Wesker**. Heinemann, London, 1970. pp. 44-45

asked the people to whom he wrote to keep the letters and then he assembled them all at the end in chronological order and from those letters created the novel. He finished this novel in August 1951 and entitled *The Reed That Bent*. This novel has never been published, but later Wesker used it as the basis for his play *Chips with Everything*. Although this novel was not his first written work, it was his first major attempt. He had begun writing in childhood with a poem called "The Breeze". He also wrote hundreds of poems and many short stories and then this novel.

After national service, he had a variety of jobs including plumber's mate, farm labourer, seed sorter, and kitchen porter and for four years he was a pastry cook.

In 1956 he attended a short course at the London School of Film Technique, and he decided that he wanted to write and direct films. His first theatrical work, *The Kitchen*⁸, was written in response to a playwriting competition sponsored by a national Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, in 1956. In the same year the English Stage Company's famous production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* inspired him to write his second play, *Chicken Soup with Barley*. It was a meeting with the film director, Lindsay Anderson, that finally determined the direction Wesker was to take as an artist. When Anderson agreed to film one of Wesker's short stories, Wesker also asked him to read the script of *Chicken Soup with Barley*. Anderson was impressed as soon as he read it and recommended it to George Devine, artistic director of the English Stage Company⁹, and the play was mounted at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, prior to a week's run at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1958. After a second play, *Roots* had also transferred from the Belgrade to the Royal

⁸ *The Kitchen* was not staged until 1959.

⁹ The Royal Court Theatre which was built in 1888 has a long and interesting history. In the early years of the 20th century it presented productions under the great director Harley Granville-Barker. Then the theatre had a less successful period and became a cinema in 1932, before reopening as a theatre after the war in 1952. The English Stage Company was established with its policy of presenting new and experimental drama in 1955. In the same year George Devine became the company's artistic director. The Royal Court in Chelsea is a distance from London's theatre district but it was chosen as the company's home. The company's goal was to produce serious, contemporary, non-commercial works in order to stimulate new writing. The intent was not to be avant-garde, but to be a popular theatre producing new plays that would have been rejected by the commercial theatre.

Court and thence to a West End theatre in the course of 1959, Wesker was considered by one critic to be:

.... perhaps the most promising and mature of playwrights under thirty.¹⁰

After *Chicken Soup with Barley* and *Roots* Wesker wrote *I'm Talking About Jerusalem*, which he added to the two earlier plays in 1960. Thus, *The Wesker Trilogy* was formed and all three plays were presented together at the Royal Court Theatre in the summer of that year.

In 1962, after *The Trilogy* and *The Kitchen*, Wesker's next play was *Chips with Everything* which uses the divisions of the Royal Air Force between the officer-class and the ordinary ranks as a microcosm of class division in British society. In this way he used his military service experiences effectively.

During the rest of the 1960s, much of Wesker's energy was diverted into the task of directing Centre 42. Centre 42 was founded to break down the fragmentation that classified art as unsuitable for ordinary people. It was established in July 1961, and took its name from the number of a resolution passed by the annual TUC (Trades Union Congress) Conference in 1960, which affirmed the importance of the arts and asked the General Council to conduct a special examination and to make proposals to ensure a greater participation in the Trades Union movement in all cultural activities.¹¹ Wesker believes that a writer's life and his work should be regarded as a whole: this he states in a collection of lectures and articles, *Fears of Fragmentation* (1970), the title of which, like the beliefs, suggests a key theme that is consistently developed through the plays. Everyone should learn to understand the interactions and cross-influences in their lives, how things fit together. The disease of fragmentation cripples the characters in the plays by hiding from them the connexions that explain why they so often suffer and are helpless.

¹⁰ Kitchen, Laurence, "Playwrights to Watch", *The Times*, 21 September 1959. pp:194-96

¹¹ Coppieters, Frank. "Arnold Wesker's Centre Forty-Two: A Cultural Revolution Betrayed", *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 18, 1975. pp. 37-54

Wesker gave a lecture to the participants in a Student Drama Festival in Oxford in the spring of 1960. Later his lecture's text was distributed to the general secretaries of every trade union in the country. He indicted the Labour movement for "a neglect which I consider almost immoral" in ignoring the fact that socialism is "not merely an economic organization of society but a way of living based on the assumption that life is rich, rewarding and that human beings deserve it."¹² Then, in a pamphlet, he listed several practical projects and suggested that the unions should set up an independent inquiry into the state of the arts. Because of this effort, a resolution was placed before the TUC by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians in September 1960, which called upon the delegates to recognise

....the importance of the arts in the life of the community, especially now when many unions are securing a shorter working week and greater leisure for their members.....

and concluded with a request to the General Council:

.....to conduct a special examination and to make proposals to a future Congress to ensure a greater participation by the trade union movement in all activities.¹³

The resolution numbered forty-two on the agenda was passed unanimously. After the success of the resolution, Wesker was invited to join a group of writers who were similarly looking for new ways of creating new audiences for the theatre. The group included such writers as: Doris Lessing¹⁴, Shelagh Delaney¹⁵, Bernard Kops¹⁶ and Alun Owen. Wesker soon became the artistic director of the new organization.

¹² Wesker, Arnold, "O Mother Is It Worth It?" *Fears of Fragmentation*. Jonathan Cape, London. 1970.

¹³ Coppieters, "Arnold Wesker's....", pp. 37-54.

¹⁴ Doris Lessing is a world-renowned novelist, essayist, dramatist and poet with over thirty titles to her credit. She has won many awards, including the 2001 Prince of Asturias Prize in Literature, one of Spain's most important distinctions, and in the same year the David Cohen British Literature Prize. Her latest book, *The Sweetest Dream*, was published in the UK in September 2001, and is due to appear in the US in February 2002.

¹⁵ Delaney, Shelagh, 1939–, English playwright, b. Salford, Lancashire. Her first play, written when she was only 17, was *A Taste of Honey* (1958), about a young working-class girl who refuses to conform to her dreary surroundings. It was a critical and popular success and was made into a film.

The main work of the establishment was the organization of festivals. For five years, they continued them, but then they were faced with financial problems, so by the mid-sixties the festivals stopped. There were also some critics who claimed that although it was socialist in its aspiration and rhetoric it failed to take much of the left with it¹⁷. In December 1970, Wesker resigned from the artistic directorship of it.

In 1965 Wesker's career was beginning to lose its sheen. As Wesker became famous, he changed both artistically and in character. His next three plays; *The Four Seasons* (1965), *Their Very Own and Golden City* (1966), and *The Friends* (1970) received unfavourable notices. He began to write two-character plays in which he talked about love in such an artificial way that audiences were affected negatively. It didn't suit the audience's desires. In addition to these two-character plays, his other plays included too much morality. So audiences were no longer interested in his plays which now seemed boring. His position in the London theatre was further damaged in 1972 by the acrimony surrounding the withdrawal of *The Old Ones* from the scheduled program of the National Theatre and the row that led to the dramatist's filing a suit for breach of contract against the Royal Shakespeare Company over an abortive production of *The Journalists*¹⁸. John Dexter, who had directed Wesker's first five plays, put *The Old Ones* on at the Royal Court Theatre later in 1972, but *The Journalists* had to wait until 1981 for its first professional production in Germany. These problems arose because Wesker wanted to direct his own play – *The Friends* – but it resulted in a personality clash with the actor Victor Henry¹⁹. It caused a serious argument. *The Journalists* was abandoned because this time there was a problem between the cast and Arnold Wesker, so these problems were the reasons for a decline in Wesker's fame. Two earlier works had already had their

After her second play, *The Lion in Love* (1960), she turned to writing screenplays, including *Charlie Bubbles* (1968) and *Dance with a Stranger* (1985).

¹⁶ British dramatist and poet, 1926 Bernard Kops was born in the East End of London. He achieved recognition with his first play *The Hamlet of Stepney Green*. His autobiography *The World is a Wedding* was published throughout the world. It has recently been followed by the acclaimed second instalment of his autobiography, *Shalom Bomb*.

¹⁷ Lacey, *British Realist...* p. 62

¹⁸ Wilcher Robert. *Understanding Arnold Wesker*. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1991. p. 4

¹⁹ O'Mahony, John, "Piques and troughs", *The Guardian*, Saturday May 25, 2002.

premieres in Brussels and Stockholm and the story of Wesker's later career was to be one of growing reputation overseas and comparative neglect at home. *The Wedding Feast* (1974), *The Merchant* (1976), *Love Letters on Blue Paper* (1977), and most of his short one-woman plays of the 1980s were first performed variously in Sweden, France, Japan and the US. Subsequent productions in Britain, together with premieres of *One More Ride on the Merry-go-round* (1985) and *When God Wanted a Son* (1989), have mostly been in provincial repertory²⁰ theatres or in community²¹ or fringe theatres in the capital. Only *Love Letters on Blue Paper* in 1978 and *Caritas* in 1981 have been staged by the National Theatre Company. *Lady Othello*, completed in 1987, had not been scheduled for production when it was published in 1990. Wesker's most recently performed new play, *Beorhtel's Hill* (1989), is a community drama written to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Basildon²², in Essex, one of the New Towns built after the Second World War.

Wesker mainly deals with the themes of disillusion, self-discovery and utopian dreams. While examining these themes, it is possible to see the influences of the 20th century's latest theatrical terms and techniques, and also the influences of his own life.

²⁰ Properly, repertory is a style of a number of repertory companies which rehearsed and performed plays in a fortnight. Originally a British idea, these were professionals but due to time restraints and commercial restraints they played like amateurs. The largest repertory theatre company was and still is in Liverpool.

There was a form of touring repertory called fit-up which involved carting round the set for about five different plays. The plays were shown on consecutive nights.

Nowadays repertories perform just once or twice a year.

The term is used in the theatre to refer to any number of two or more plays which are rotated within a season, usually alternating with different plays every night for a period of time. Plays are rehearsed at all once or in rapid succession, and often feature the same actors or company in several plays.

²¹The UK usually uses the word 'amateur' instead of 'community', despite the fact that community is used as well. Since Amateur theatre is such a general term for that sort of theatre see there.

However in the UK a new form of community theatre is growing which is one with professional theatre links. Here there are no auditions as such, all the people who turn up can take part in the productions, at the discretion of the director or directors. Although paid professionals may take leading roles, amateurs do too. Because of the lack of clearing with the numbers in these productions, they tend to lean towards huge productions, which can be a problem.

The ideas of amateurs playing big parts has been used in UK television in such shows as *Soapstars* and *Operatunity*.

²² Beorhtel's Hill is one of the early names of Basildon

The following analyses of Wesker's plays; *The Kitchen* and *The Wesker Trilogy*: "*Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* and *I am Talking About Jerusalem*" aim to bring out the naturalistic and autobiographical approaches he has employed in writing his early drama in terms of setting, characters and dialogue. Because the influences of his own life are so important, those will be discussed at the beginning of each chapter.



THE KITCHEN²³

Before examining *The Kitchen*²⁴, it is interesting to consider Arnold Wesker's early life. Although he became a well-known playwright, his early employment consisted of a variety of jobs as a carpenter, plumber, bookshop assistant, farm worker and cook. In 1970, Ronald Hayman interviewed²⁵ Wesker, and this interview helps us to put the jobs that Wesker did into a sequence.

On leaving school, Wesker worked as an apprentice to a furniture maker. Wesker says: "I became redundant because he [the furniture maker] was working on his own and the competition became too great and he couldn't afford to keep me." Then, he worked with a carpenter for ten months or a year. After that, he began to work as a shop assistant first in a bookshop, Simmonds of Fleet Street, then Robert Copping's basement bookshop, and lastly Stonehams of Old Broad Street. His fourth job was as a plumber's mate, and then he moved to Norfolk, where he became a farm worker to help his girlfriend Olive. This time the reason that made him change his job was amusing: Olive wanted to marry a farmer, so they pretended to be brother and sister when they went to dances. Finally they succeeded, and the farmer dated Olive. Olive was pleased but Wesker was not, so he went to Norwich. He worked there as a kitchen porter, and after this kitchen experience, he went to London, where he met Dusty, who fell in love with him. In London he worked in a Hungarian restaurant as a cook, and thought that he could make a career in a restaurant. However, he decided to go to Paris, and Dusty went with him.

Wesker tried different restaurant jobs, but what he liked doing best was working as a cook. He said that he really enjoyed the whole period that he spent working in restaurant kitchens because this period as a kind of cleansing period after his girlfriend Olive's marriage. He worked in different restaurants; he learnt and examined the life in the kitchen. He found an opportunity to save money, so he

²³ Wesker, Arnold, *The Kitchen*. Penguin Books, England, Volume II, 1976.

²⁴ The play was written in 1956 and it was first staged on 13 September 1959 at the Royal Court Theatre.

²⁵ Hayman, Ronald. *Arnold Wesker*, Heinemann, London, 1970. p. 5

attended a six-month course at the London School of Film Techniques. Although Wesker was to deny it, these experiences were to help him in his future career. He said:

....I studied at the London School, which was useless, really.²⁶

The importance of cooking and food in his popular plays led to the plays being given the label "kitchen sink drama". In the 1960s kitchen sink drama evolved to become a form of straight-laced realism with a focus on working-class life, social problems and relationships. [An example of this style is Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*. John Osborne, a leader of the British 'angry young men' movement, produced the most influential play of this era: *Look Back in Anger*]. Wesker, Delaney, and Osborne portray working-class or lower-middle-class life with an emphasis on domestic realism. Their plays were written in part as a reaction against the drawing-room comedies and middle-class dramas of Coward and Rattigan, and also undermined the popularity of the verse drama of T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry.

Wesker's first theatrical work, *The Kitchen*, is very close to his own experience as a cook. He wrote it for the Observer Playwriting Competition in 1956. The shorter version of it was staged in 1959, but it was expanded into its longer form in 1961. In its longer form characters and their interrelationships were described in detail. In the same year the film version was released, with its realistic picture of a steamy, sweaty, noisy hotel basement.²⁷

Television became very popular in 1950s, so Wesker is mainly interested in television to reach the widest possible audience. His aim was to meet the needs of the working or lower class. In the 1950s, there was a new kind of audience, which Stephen Lacey described as:

...the new audience had a precise social identity, the working-class.²⁸

²⁶ Hayman, Arnold.... p. 7

²⁷ Leeming, Arnold... p. 7

²⁸ Lacey, *British Realist*... p. 106

As has been mentioned he attended a six-month film techniques course then, he wanted to write his first play for television. Therefore, the film version of *The Kitchen* is very important for him.

The play consists of two parts and an interlude placed between them. The setting is the kitchen of a restaurant called Tivoli in London's West End. Wesker chooses a kitchen for his play which seems a strange idea at first because so much must happen in this physically small place. Although it seems a restricted place, to Wesker it is a small version of the world. In the introduction to the play, which he wrote to give suggestions to the director, he says:

The world might have been a stage for Shakespeare but to me it is a kitchen, where people come and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, loves and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made.

p. 10

Everything happens within a single day, but the day is very crowded, what with illicit love among the workers, a knife fight, and other actions. However, it all has a purpose: it is to show what happens when people are cooped up, constantly frustrated and limited entirely to the dreariest, least stimulating practicalities.²⁹ In short, the day is a good example for real life. It reflects the hurry that people are in. The atmosphere is quite suitable for uncomfortable life conditions. According to Robert Wilcher³⁰, the setting of the play is foregrounded as a more significant theatrical device than either individual characterization or plot. The events of *The Kitchen* are contained within a single day, and are shaped by the cyclical routine of the preparation for the meal and the recovery from it; the stage directions inform us that one of the first tasks to be performed in the morning is the lighting of the ovens by the night porter, Magi, which creates a noise that "grows from a small to a loud ferocious roar" that will last till the end of the play. As the play unfolds, the noises of the ovens and quarrels become indistinguishable. Wesker's stage directions state:

²⁹ Taylor, John Russell. *Anger and After*. Methuen and Co. Ltd, London, 1970. p. 155

³⁰ Wilcher, *Understanding....* pp. 25-26

It is a noise that will stay with us to the end. As he lights each oven, the noise grows from a small to a loud ferocious roar. There will be this continuous battle between the dialogue and the noise of the ovens. The Producer must work out his own balance.

p.15

Glenda Leeming and Simon Trussler claim in their book, *The Plays of Arnold Wesker: An Assessment*, that the daily round in the kitchen allows wider political significance to be released and revealed.

.....simultaneously a dramatic metaphor for industrial capitalist society and a very specific and closely specified place...³¹

The noise, which is described as a ferocious roar, is the symbol of the noise of machines that belongs to industrialized society. So I think what Wesker wants to emphasize is that this small kitchen is a social microcosm. It is a small industrialized world. The working conditions are poor; everybody is under pressure because they have to prepare the meals quickly. On the contrary, they are not paid well. In a way, we can say they are slaves of Mr Marango and they serve the people who are rich. Again it is another feature of industrial society. People who are rich come to the restaurant, and the workers serve them. Everyday is a repetition of itself, so the workers never improve themselves. The same things repeat, so they are like the workers who work in front of machines in factories.

Wesker's ideas related to the industrialized capitalist western society are expressed through the conversation between Dimitri, Paul and Raymond that takes place at the very beginning of the play.

Dimitri knows quite well that his creativity is undermined by the mechanized, so-called civilized world. He makes a portable radio, and he enters the stage with this radio.

³¹ Leeming, Glenda, and Simon Trussler, *The Plays of Arnold Wesker: An Assessment*. Gollancz, London, 1971.

Raymond: You made it on your own? All those little wires and plugs? Tell me, what are you doing here? Why you waste your time with dishes in this place? You can't get a job in a factory?

Dimitri: A factory? You think I find happiness in a factory? What I make there? Uh? This little wire, you see it? This I would make, or that.....what you call it?

Paul: Knob.

Dimitri: Knob. That perhaps I could put in. All day I would fix knobs. I tell you, in a factory a man makes a little piece till he becomes a little piece you know what I mean?

p. 20

Dimitri is also against working in a factory because he is against this mechanized world.

Wesker makes use of a large cast: approximately thirty characters from different nations. The characters that work in the kitchen know exactly what they do; each of them has a different mission; for example, one of them is responsible for fish, an other for chicken, so when the play starts they carry out their duties. Most of the characters are identified with the food that they deal with. Laurence Kitchin comments about the cast of the kitchen in the article entitled "Playwright to Watch".

The Kitchen, with a cast of thirty named characters, broke most of the rules of dramatic construction by assuming that human activity could be reproduced on the stage in full, with little basic plot.³²

In the play there a lot of characters, but some of them are major, and the events are mostly based on these major ones.

The play contains nearly thirty characters with very different backgrounds. They are from different nations, different religions and cultures. Characters like a new Irish worker Kevin, a Cypriot Dimitri, Jewish Paul and Italian Raymond as

³² Kitchin, "Playwright to.... pp. 194-96

pastry cooks, a German fried-fish cook Peter, another German Hans, Gaston from Cyprus, waitresses and the beleaguered owner Marango interact. Except for waitresses, there are two women – Bertha and Anne – who work in the kitchen. Bertha is Jewish and she is responsible for vegetarian meals and Irish Anne is responsible for dessert and coffee. When we examine them, it is clearly seen that they are hopeless, unhappy and from time to time they feel lonely and isolated in the place where they work. However, except for Peter, none of them can show their reactions. Peter is a 23 year-old cook who is responsible for fish. We can say that he is the protagonist of the play. He has been working in the Tivoli for three years, but he is a bit bored and tired. So like the other workers, he has already lost his desire to work. Whenever he finds an opportunity, he criticizes the place and his position in it. In the interlude, workers are given a break and Peter sings a song. Then, he asks the others to talk about their dreams.

Peter: Hey Paul, Raymondo, Dimitri, stop work a minute. You got time. Here, come here. We are all given a chance to dream. No one is going to laugh, we love each other, we protect each other-someone tell us a dream, just to us, no one else, the ovens are low, the customers gone, Marango is gone, it's all quiet. God has given us a chance now, we never have the opportunity, again, so dream- someone –who? Dimitri- you, you dream first.

p. 49

Peter believes that each of them has a dream, but they are not strong enough to talk about it. Only Paul gives a long speech, the rest of the workers dream of very simple things. Paul wants a real friend, but he thinks that his dream can't come true. That's why Paul and the other workers don't want to dream.

Peter has love affairs with the women in the kitchen. First, he has a relationship with Bertha, then with Monique who is a waitress. However, Monique is married, so they have an illegal relation. At the end of the play, Monique explains that she will not get divorced and she breaks away this relation.

In *The Kitchen* it is not only Peter who has difficulties in love. Paul also has been disappointed in love. Paul, who is responsible for pastry, is a divorced man, whose wife has betrayed him. Although he seems to be indifferent to his wife's betrayal, the dialogue between Raymond and Paul proves that Paul is still under the pressure of his unsuccessful marriage. Whenever he is reminded of this, he feels pain.

Raymond: Sometimes it's a good thing to miss a wife.

Paul: Yes.

Raymond: I'm sorry, I forgot.

Paul: Don't worry on my account, she was a fool. If she'd only been a bitch it wouldn't have mattered but she was a fool as well.

Raymond: It's not such a big hurt then?

Paul: For me? No! But she's going to have children one day and those kids are going to have a fool for a mother- that's what hurts.

p. 17

The irony is that, although Paul humiliates his wife, he still thinks about her future.

As has been seen, nearly all the characters have some problems in their private life and also in the kitchen. So we sometimes come across fights, arguments or unexpected reactions there. As soon as the play starts, the audience is informed about the fight between Peter and Gaston. This fight proves that the relationship between the workers is problematic, too.

Anne: Hey, Raymond, tell me, what happened to Peter in the end, you know last night?

.....

Max: He's a bloody German, a fool, that's what he is. He is always quarrelling, always.

.....

Paul: All we know is that they suddenly started shouting at each other. And you know, Peter always shouts more than the other and you can always hear Peter – well, so then it stopped, and then a few seconds later they were fighting, and I saw Gaston raise a boning knife, and Peter knock it out of his hand, and then....

pp. 17-18

The aggressive attitude of the workers, which results from the chaotic atmosphere of the kitchen, lessens the quality of service. Because they always have something which keeps them busy, they don't give enough importance to the quality of food. They just put the food on the plate, and then give it to the waiter or waitress to serve. Although they sometimes have complaints from the customers, they never take care.

Monique (to Chef): Chef, complaint, minestrone.

.....

Chef: Michael, the soup is sour.

.....

[While she (Monique) isn't looking, Michael tips the soup straight from one bowl into another, and hands the plate to her]

p. 40

The complaints of the customers spring from the quality of the food. Whenever the restaurant is crowded, the waitresses especially become depressed; they are helpless because the workers in the kitchen do not exert the necessary effort to help them. So the quality of service decreases. Like the customers, Kevin who is the new cook from Ireland is very displeased with this situation.

Kevin: To hell with the money an' all. I like me pay but not for this. It's too big here, man, it's high pressure all the time. An' the food! Look at the food! I never cooked so bad since I was in the army. An' no one is after caring much either!

p. 57

He is the newcomer in the kitchen and when the play starts he comes there with Hans, who introduces him to the other workers. As he has never been in this kitchen before, Kevin becomes depressed when the service starts.

There is a hierarchical order in the kitchen and Dimitri who is a Cypriot kitchen porter is very low in this hierarchy. He is also unhappy with his situation in the kitchen and he thinks that those fights or arguments are very logical because this kitchen is a horrible place.

Dimitri: Listen, you put a man in the plate-room all day he's got dishes to make clean, and stinking bins to take away, and floors to sweep, what else there is for him to do- he want to fight. He got to show he is a man some way. So-blame him!

p. 20

To the owner of the restaurant – Mr. Marango – everything runs very well, there is no problem. So when a problem occurs, he cannot understand the reason. He thinks that he provides the best conditions for his workers, but they are not satisfied. What is the problem then? Why are the workers unhappy, hopeless and in depression? To answer these questions it is best to start by examining the setting.

As has been mentioned before, Wesker's characters feel lonely and isolated in this life. However, Peter wants to create a positive atmosphere and starts playing games. He constructs a precarious triumphal archway from dustbins, saucepans and a broom and decorates it with dishcloths. Kevin mocks him for playing like a child.

Peter: This one says games, that one says dreams. You think it's a waste of time? You know what a game is? A dream? It's the time when you forget what you are and you make what you would be. When a man dreams-he grows, big, better.

p. 49

This passage provides an important gloss on the many games and rituals that Wesker's characters engage in throughout his work. It is often by playing games, particularly games that depend on cooperation among the participants, that individuals are able to transcend the selfishness and the loneliness that a competitive society encourages and imposes upon them, and to experience, if only for the

duration of the game, the sense of community that derives from the pursuit of a common goal.³³

However, at the end of the play, Peter cannot control himself. Although he tries to encourage the workers, at the end, as a speaker for them he shows his violent reaction. Peter attacks the pipes of the ovens, so the gas is disconnected and all the ovens stop. Not only the ovens stop, but the life in the kitchen also stops. It is because the ovens are the important veins of the kitchen. As Peter is fed up with the life in the kitchen, he cuts the pipes to find a solution to all the workers' problems there.

He is aware of the metaphorical status of this alienating environment:

Peter: ...This- this madhouse it's always here. When you go, when I go, when Dimitri go- this kitchen stays. It'll go on when we die, think about that.You and the kitchen. And the kitchen don't mean nothing to you and you don't mean to the kitchen nothing.

p. 48

Peter is sure that this kitchen in other words this unfair and hierarchical society will stay forever if nobody reacts against it. In this kitchen, everybody is aware of the importance of the problem but nobody does anything. Peter wants to stop this small world whose only function is to serve others. It is clear in the play that all the workers are against being slaves of this world, but Marango is the only person who is still confused. As a master, he is unaware of the workers' needs, so when Peter attacks the pipes at the end, he still asks questions and the play ends with his unnecessary questions.

³³ Wilcher, *Understanding....* p. 28.

Marango: *[turning to Frank and making a gentle appeal]*
 Why does everybody sabotage me, Frank? I give work, I pay well, yes? They eat what they want, don't they? I don't know what more to give a man. He works, he eats, I give him money. This is life, isn't it? I haven't made a mistake, have I? I live in the right world, don't I? *[to Peter]* And you've stopped this world. A shnip! A boy! You've stopped it. Well why? Maybe you can tell me something I don't know-just tell me. *[No answer]*...

p. 68

When Marango speaks, he always uses question tags which imply that he is not sure of himself. At the end of each sentence, he waits for acceptance.

Marango also claims that he pays his workers well. However, as a boss who thinks he gives everything to his workers gets easily frustrated when he learns that Peter has given meat to the beggar.

Marango: *[softly]* Sabotage. *[Pause]* It's sabotage you do to me. *[Sadly taking his right hand out of his pocket, and waving it round the kitchen.]* It's my fortune here and you give it away. *[He moves off muttering 'sabotages']*

p. 61

Marango's purpose in asking these questions is to receive positive replies from his workers. But Peter defeats him by refusing to answer the questions.

Marango:What more do you want? What is there more, tell me? *[He shakes Peter, but gets no reply, Peter again tries to leave. Again Marango cries out]* What is there more? *[Peter stops, turns in pain and sadness, shakes his head as if to say- 'if you don't know, I cannot explain'. And so he moves right off stage. Marango is left facing his staff, who stand around, almost accusingly, looking at him. And he asks again-]* What is there more? What is there more? What is there more?

p. 69

Since there are nearly thirty characters from different nations, cultures and religions, there are differences in their speech. Wesker's major concern is reflecting the disharmony in race in the post-war English society. He reveals this racial disharmony by keeping the accent of characters and their way of using language. Sometimes characters make vulgar noises like at the beginning of the play. Wesker's stage direction states:

*.....As Magi lights the last oven, Bertha enters to her station.
As she passes Max she says, 'Good morning, Max'. He burps.*

p. 15

Max is a butcher and is nearly fifty years old. He likes drinking and using slang. So burping is a kind of signal to reveal his character.

After the characters appear on the stage, in his stage directions Wesker gives information about them. For instance, after Dimitri takes his place on the stage Wesker introduces him in the directions, and we can understand where the character is from and how he speaks.

*Pause. Dimitri enters. A Cypriot kitchen porter, young,
good-looking and intelligent. He is carrying in his hand a
home-made portable radio. He is happy as he takes it to Paul.
He speaks with an accent.*

p. 19

There are two people from Germany, so they prefer talking in their own language. Hans comes to the kitchen first, and then Peter comes. When Peter enters the kitchen he says:

Peter: Auf geht's! Auf geht's!

Hans: Auf geht's, Pete! Was war denn los heut Morgen?

Peter: Ach die Weiber! Die Weiber!

p. 24

As soon as they meet, they start talking in German. Also, Hans talks in French with the Italian pastry cook Raymond.

Hans: Auf geht's, Nicholas! Come on Nicholas! Twelve chickens, please! Bonjour Raymond, comment ça va?

Raymond : Ça va, toujours au boulot, etcetera.

Hans : Vive le frigue !

p. 27

However, Max complains about these conversations and he warns them that they should all speak in English.

Max: [*suddenly and violently to Hans*] You're in England now, speak bloody English. [*Hans is nonplussed for the day*]. Everybody speaking in a different language, French, Italian, German [*to Hans*] You come here to learn English didn't you? Well speak it then!

p. 27

Max, the English worker, is intolerant towards the other characters who come from other nations. I think by using an English character like Max, Wesker wants to show the existence of racial problems in the kitchen. In fact, Wesker wants to emphasize the lack of national and racial harmony in 1950s England in general.

Wesker's use of so many different characters and their own languages makes the play strong. He achieves his aim and he really creates a small world in such a small kitchen.

In brief, the separate stories of so many characters are examples of people in the industrialized world. They are all like the parts of a machine that creates a vivid image of industrial man's world. They are unhappy, hopeless, and they feel themselves under pressure. The extreme example among them is the German cook, Peter. He is disappointed in love, and wreaks havoc in his kitchen, shutting down the ovens and bringing the play to its conclusion.

In *The Kitchen*, which is different from the other play with its crowded cast, Wesker reflects the real experience of a restaurant. His aim is to show the problems in the industrialized world. Therefore, a restaurant kitchen which is the symbol of unfair and hierarchical society is used as a setting.



THE WESKER TRILOGY

Chicken Soup with Barley, which together with *Roots* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* forms a trilogy, covering a 23- year period.

For Ronald Hayman³⁴ this trilogy contains the first serious political plays to be written in England. The trilogy covers many political event of the time. So before examining the plays, it would be useful to talk about their background.

“The Battle of Cable Street” of October 1936 that plays so important a part in Act I of *Chicken Soup with Barley* is a model of the world's political divisions. It was the time of Fascism. Sir Oswald Mosley, the son of a Baronet, had been a conservative member of parliament and a labour Minister. He had left the Labour Party over their failure to solve the issue of unemployment and he had formed his British Union of Fascists party under the influence of Mussolini and Hitler. These two dictators believed that Government must be all-powerful, which in fact meant that power was centralised in the hands of a dictator. The movement was nationalist and highly military.

Mosley felt that the country was a prey to communism that would destroy liberty and property. Fascists held that communism emanated from Russia where it had reigned for twenty years and that it was financed by rich Jewish business interests. It was felt that Jews controlled too much. Hitler's revenge against Jewry took the form of concentration camps, and the murder of millions of innocents. Mosley's anti-Semitism took the form of whipping up racist feeling, particularly in the East End of London. Jews from Eastern Europe had poured as exiles into this area at the turn of the century. They spoke Yiddish, they formed a community of their own, and they appeared to make money. The Jews were resented by the native East Ender and Mosley could harness this resentment. Some of the Jewish families had brought communist beliefs with them. Families who were communist and Jewish were threatened by Mosley's political demonstration on their doorsteps. In the Battle

³⁴ Hayman, Arnold... p. 22

of Cable Street, they fought back and the police had to ask Mosley to disband his men.

The Battle of Cable Street is important to the Kahn family in the trilogy and to Wesker not only for its own sake but also it is a small battle within two major battles, the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. As a half Jewish person, Wesker takes the term Jewishness into consideration. In his interview Hayman asks Wesker a question about his Jewishness and Wesker answers:

I only began to think specially about Jewishness when I was about fourteen when I joined Habonim (a Jewish youth group) and my Jewish consciousness was deepened and sharpened during that period which was about four or five years and then it lapsed entirely and it's only recently in the last possibly three years that I felt Jewish in a belonging way or a protective way. I think that what happens is that you are suddenly aware that you have inherited a shared consciousness of your community's suffering. I didn't experience much anti-semitism as a child. What I did discover I took fairly flippantly. I mean I had Socialist answers for why it existed. And we were a long way from what happened in Europe to the other Jews. But there does remain an inherited sense of a history of persecution. And it is that which I think gives one a sense of identity.³⁵

Wesker regarded himself as a specifically socialist Jewish playwright and he admitted that he begun to feel more "protective" about his Jewish origin.

The Spanish Civil War which broke out in 1936 killed over a million Spaniards and crippled the country. The Spanish Republican Government had tried to bring reforms to a country which was desperately backward, to attack the archaic civil service, the feudalism, and the supremacy of the Church. The Nationalists, led by General Franco, rebelled against this government, and his fight was backed by Church and Army. The Republican cause excited enormous sympathy abroad. When the International Brigaded was formed in Paris in the autumn of 1936, many Party members volunteered for the cause. The Left wing locked in struggle with the Right; Communism versus Capitalism. That the Nationalists' politics were basically Fascist

³⁵ Hayman, Arnold... pp. 4-5

can hardly be denied. They were supported by Hitler's Nazi Party and by Mussolini. The government which emerged victorious from the War and has ruled Spain ever since is based on a dictatorship by General Franco, which depends on suppression both of unions and of the liberty of the press: a rule of the military and the police.

In 1939, the Republicans were beaten. Hitler's power grew and in the two years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 he annexed Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland in turn. England could preserve her uneasy neutrality in the Spanish Civil War, but she was forced into war with Germany. The Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939 shocked all Communist sympathizers. In 1941 Hitler attacked Russia, Japan attacked on Pearl Harbour, and the entry of America into the war, the whole world was under arms in the same year.

The end of the war held two promises for the British Left. They had fought alongside the Russians to a victory over Fascism. Franco's Spain had prospered on neutrality during the war, but Hitler and Mussolini were dead. Internationally the left was respectable. In the General Election of July 1945, the Labour Government, including Liberals, numbered 412, the Conservative opposition 213. At home, peace brought Labour Government, with its assurance of nationalization, social security and fair shares.

Neither promise was kept. The Labour Government "sang the Red Flag"³⁶ in parliament and then started building atom bombs; but the Soviet Union became the enemy. Social reform was slow and incomplete. The Labour Party failed to obtain a working majority at the next election, and 1951 saw the first of a series of Conservative Governments. Faith in Russia lived longer, but after the death of Stalin in 1953 it became clear to the left that he had been as ruthless a dictator as his wartime opponent.

³⁶ On coming to power, the Labour Party sang the British Socialist Party's traditional hymn, but continued to pour Money into the production of nuclear weapons. Since the enemy against whom such defence was considered necessary was the leading socialist country, the U.S.S.R., the irony of the situation is obvious.

By 1959, the pre-war heroic tradition of communism was dead.³⁷

Wesker's trilogy documents the experiences of a Jewish East End family, the Kahns, between the years 1936 and 1959. We see the gradual disillusionment of the Kahn family. From the political confrontation between Mosley's Fascists and the East Enders in 1936 to Harry (the father) becoming an invalid, Ronnie Kahn (the son) taking work in a kitchen and through to a disillusionment with the working classes of the 1950s. The trilogy is an explanation of the social and political origins of what Wesker called "a general malaise".

It consists of three plays that are based on the life of the Kahn family. In the second play of *The Wesker Trilogy – Roots* – the Bryants, a second family, appears in Norfolk.

The first play of the trilogy, *Chicken Soup with Barley* is the main one because it covers everything that has happened to the Kahn family between the years 1936 and 1959 in the East End. Then, the second play *Roots* takes us to 1958 and Norfolk. It gives us information about Ronnie's life in London and his girlfriend who comes from Norfolk. And the last play *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* takes place between the years 1946 and 1959. It involves Ada and Dave (the daughter and the son-in law of the Kahn family) in Norfolk, who want to move to London.

³⁷ The Wesker Trilogy With Introduction and Notes by A. H. M. Best and Mark Cohen. 10th ed. Longman, 1984.

I. *Chicken Soup with Barley*³⁸

*Chicken Soup with Barley*³⁹ is the first play of the trilogy. Wesker explains the reason why he wrote this play in his autobiography called *As Much As I Dare*. He said:

My memory of how and why I wrote the play is clear. I had quarrelled with my mother over politics, raging at her continuing adherence to communism. We quarrelled constantly. I'm ashamed to remember how I rarely missed an opportunity to make a sarcastic observation about the misdemeanours of the Soviet Union or its satellites. "There!" she'd say. "He's attacking me again. Always criticising me." "No!" I'd say. "I'm criticising the Soviet Union not you." "You're criticising the Soviet Union because you want to upset me, to get at me. Don't I know you by now?" Sometimes even she would see how absurd our exchanges were and we'd both end up laughing. It was not easy to handle a mother who never seriously believed the Americans had landed on the moon; the films and photos had been faked, she asserted, to divert the attention of the proletariat away from their exploitation. "What, you think they're not capable of such a thing? They're capable! And of much worse." It went on, in varying degrees of absurdity and acrimony until she died.⁴⁰

pp. 494-495

Another reason was his didactic purpose. He suggested in his essay of 1958 called "Let Battle Commence"⁴¹:

I want to teach.....it is the bus driver, the housewife, the miner and the Teddy Boy to whom I should like to address myself.

Also, in the "note to actors and producers" printed with the trilogy he takes a stance of protest at the absence of a more vital and fulfilling life for the underprivileged classes. He shows his disapproval:

³⁸ Wesker, Arnold, *The Wesker Trilogy*, Longman, England 10.edi, 1984.

³⁹ The play was written in 1957 and it was first staged on 7th June 1960 at the Royal Court Theatre

⁴⁰ Wesker, Arnold. *As Much As I Dare*. Century, London 1994.

⁴¹ Wesker, Arnold, "Let Battle Commence", *Endore*, Vol V No 5 November-December 1958.

My people are not caricatures. They are real (through fiction), and if they are portrayed as caricatures the point of all these plays will be lost. The picture I have drawn is a harsh one, yet my tone is not one of disgust - nor should it be in the presentation of the plays. I am not at one with these people: it is only that I am annoyed, with them and myself.

p. vi

The play consists of three acts and each act has two scenes. In every act a new period of the family starts. Wesker's intention is to reveal the changing orientations of his characters towards Communism over a twenty-year period. Act I is set in 1936, Act II in 1946 and Act III ends in 1956.

One of the influences that affects Wesker's plays is his own life. As they are seen in *The Kitchen*, it is possible to see these influences in *The Wesker Trilogy*.

Wesker has frankly acknowledged in one of his articles called "Introduction: The Wesker Trilogy" that many of the characters and situations in his plays are taken directly from his life. It is the same in *Chicken Soup with Barley*. When he finished writing it, first his mother and her friend Mrs Harris had a chance to read it. They were at home when Wesker had just finished it, so he read his play to them. Wesker claimed that when he finished reading, his mother smiled and she said:

It's very good, no, really, I mean it, it's a big work, a lot of work, but who's going to be interested in any of it, silly boy? It's about us, it's between us. It won't mean anything to anyone else....⁴²

His mother thinks that it is a really good work, but she is a bit worried because it could be strange for the reader. The play is closely based on the Weskers life and it is expressed differently from the traditional kind of play. So his mother believes that it will be meaningless for a person outside their family, but I think Wesker achieves his goal by creating a real atmosphere.

Wesker creates this real atmosphere by using the same places as those where they lived. The Wesker family lived on Fashion Street, in the East of London, in an

⁴² Wesker, Arnold, "Introduction: The Wesker Trilogy", Blaendigeddi 9 July 2000. p. 3

attic flat of two rooms where the kitchen was on the landing. When Wesker talked about the setting with John Dexter⁴³, Dexter suggested to him that they should change the room into a basement setting. Wesker wondered whether this could create a real atmosphere. As his family had lived in an attic flat, he thought his stage family should also live in an attic and therefore Wesker was not sure about using basement as a setting. However, after Wesker recalled that the row of tenement houses in Fashion Street did have basement flats, he decided that it would be acceptable for the Kahns to live in a basement. According to Dexter, living in a basement would permit the stage-managers to run backwards and forwards again and again, only their legs showing, giving the impression that crowds were running to the barricades to join their comrades assembling against Mosley and his Black Shirts. That was the kind of inspired idea Dexter offered a writer. Although Dexter considers the scene as a theatrical device, by creating such an active environment, Wesker is entirely concerned about whether this place is naturalistically correct for his characters. They are members of the working class, so the basement is quite suitable for them. In the beginning of Act I, there is an explanation of the place where the Kahns live:

The basement of the Kahn's house in the East End of London. The room is warm and lived in. A fire is burning. One door, at the back and left of the room, leads to a bedroom. A window, left, looks up to the street. To the right is another door which leads to a kitchen, which is seen. At rear of stage are the stairs leading up into the street.

p. 3

Their basement is alive with purposeful activity. The house and the streets outside echo with the sounds of people who have a sure sense of communal identity and of the contribution that they are making to the steady march of history.

Until the beginning of Act II they live in the same place, but in 1946 the working class is becoming more respectable, so the Kahns change their place; they

⁴³ Dexter directed *Chicken Soup* at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, on 7th July 1958.

move to an L.C.C.⁴⁴ block of flats in Hackney. The stage direction for this new setting says:

The scene is now changed. The Kahns have moved to an L.C.C. block of flats in Hackney – the 1930 kind, with railings. The working class a little more respectable now, they have not long since voted in a Labour Government. The part of the flat we can see is: the front room, from which lead off three rooms, the passage to the front door- and a door leading from the passage to the kitchen (off); and part of the balcony with its iron railings.

p. 28

This setting remains until the end of the play, but now Sarah and Harry are frequently alone. As their previous house was in Fashion Street, it was very close to the area where all the marches and meetings were started. Therefore, Sarah and Harry used to meet with their friends in their own flat before or after every meeting and also Sarah enjoyed the ritual of offering them tea. There was a constant coming and going of people, something which does not happen any more. So we can say moving to this new place has good and bad sides. It is good because it is more respectable living in an apartment rather than in a basement. On the other hand, it is bad because Sarah and Harry's friends are busy with their own businesses now, and they don't visit them frequently; therefore, with the changing of place their habits have changed; they are nearly alone.

These two settings where the play takes place and the issues that Sarah and Harry deal with remind us of Kitchen-Sink drama. Kitchen-Sink drama's aim is to reveal the working class in its unpleasant reality; here these two places are good examples for this. It also deals with domestic issues. One of these issues is preparing tea. When the play starts, Sarah talks in the kitchen; her voice is coming from the kitchen because she is preparing tea. The stage direction helps to understand that she is in the kitchen.

⁴⁴ London Country Council created cheap housing. Former administrative authority for London; it incorporated parts of Kent, Surrey, and Middlesex in the metropolis. 1964-86 Relations between the LCC and the government of the day were frequently discordant, in part because more often than not the two were in the hands of opposing parties.

Sarah: *(from the kitchen):* You took.....

p. 3

In the following parts when Sarah and Harry's friends visit them sandwich services are added to tea services.

Monty: I'd love another cup of tea.

Harry: *(jumps up and goes to kitchen):* I'll make it. I'll make it.

Sarah: He's so sweet when anybody else is around. I'll make some sandwiches.

p. 11

In every situation it is possible to see drinking or offering tea scenes. For instance, in the last scene of the play, while Ronnie and Sarah are discussing, Sarah offers him to drink.

They sit in silence for some seconds.

Sarah: Drink your tea, darling.

Ronnie closes his eyes and talks.

p.66

Harry doesn't want to take part in demonstrations and actions; all he wants to do is to sit at home and drinking tea. So he escapes from the crowd and goes to his mother's house. With these images, Wesker wants to show the repetitive, monotonous life of the class.

We have ten characters - the Kahn family, their relatives and friends. Sarah Kahn is the mother of the family, Harry Kahn is her husband, Ronnie and Ada Kahn are their children. At the beginning of the play Wesker's stage directions give information about Sarah and Harry Kahn. In the following parts of the play, we are informed about Ada and Ronnie as well. However, their age, condition and status change in every act. In Act I, Wesker describes Sarah and Harry:

Sarah Kahn is a small, fiery woman, aged- thirty-seven, Jewish and of European origin. Her movements indicate great energy vitality. She is a very warm person. Harry Kahn is thirty-five and also a European Jew. He is dark, slight, rather pleasant looking, and the antithesis of Sarah. He is amiable but weak.

p. 3

Their children Ada and Ronnie are very young when the play starts- Ada is 14 years old and Ronnie is 5 years old.

Among the family members, the strongest one is Sarah. Wesker uses Sarah effectively as a central figure. She is strong and militant, but Harry is an apathetic weakling who shies away from the dangers of street fighting to take refuge in his mother's flat. Each of Sarah's speeches criticizes Harry's situation.

Sarah: *(to herself)* Nothing he knows! You didn't ask him? He didn't say? He knows about the demonstration, doesn't he?

Harry: I don't know whether he knows or he doesn't know. I didn't discuss it with him. I took the kids, that's all. Hey, Sarah-you should read Upton Sinclair's book about the meat-canning industry- it's an eye-opener.

Sarah: Books! Nothing else interests him, only books. Did you see anything outside? What's happening.?

p. 3

Sarah fights in the left-wing battle, she brings up her children, and she struggles against Harry's weakness and withdrawal. She is constant and loyal as a party member, as a mother and as a wife. Unlike Sarah, Harry is his mother's son. He shows his weakness everywhere. For instance, although Sarah gave him a red flag with a hammer and sickle to wave – during the demonstration –, Harry goes to his mother's home and instead of waving the flag, he drinks his tea. Of course Sarah learns about it.

Sarah: You think I'm a fool, don't you?
(Harry shifts uncomfortably doesn't answer. Sarah watches him.) Think I can't see, that I don't know what's going on.
(Pause) Look at him! The man of the house! Nothing

matters to him (*Pause*) Well, Harry, why don't you look at me? I'm your wife, aren't I? A man is supposed to discuss things with his wife.

p. 25

The similarities between the Wesker family and the Kahn family are noticeable. The Kahns have a Jewish origin and they are members of the working class. They are not educated but they are intellectual. So in those aspects the Kahns and the Weskers look like each other. Also the mother and the father in the play have the same characteristics with Wesker's own father and mother. Like Sarah, his mother Leah is an important name in their house. She is more determined and more practical in her ideas. Joe – his father – is a bit passive. The Kahns are a family of four with their daughter Ada and son Ronnie. While creating Ada, Wesker was influenced by his own sister Della. And lastly, Ronnie is a good model of Wesker himself.

The play begins with the anti-fascist demonstration in 1936 in London's East End. At this time, it is easy for the Kahn family and their friends to see what there is to fight for and what to fight against. They are all strong Communist party members, and all of them are hopeful, so they fight for their future. Especially Sarah's 14-year old daughter Ada is very enthusiastic.

Dave: You think she'll stay away? Your precocious daughter is born fighter, Sarah.

p. 11

In the second act of the play, Ronnie can also be seen as a socialist. He wants to write a book in which he can reveal the secret world of capitalists'.

Ronnie:Capitalist exploiters! The bastards- if you'll excuse the expression. I'll write a book about them! I'll expose them in their true light. What a novel, Aunt- set in a clothing factory, the sweat shops, the-

p. 42

He believes that he is one of the sons of the working class, one of its own artists.

While all the characters in the play show their reactions, Harry is the one who does not want to do anything. He looks as if he tried every way, but could not find a solution. The family members, especially Sarah, think that the family does not matter for him. But, unfortunately one day during an argument Harry has his first stroke. This first stroke has made him age prematurely. Later, he has another stroke and this time he cannot walk and talk properly, so he does not work; Sarah looks after him at home. These strokes can be a signal that Harry is in a dilemma. He believes that this fight against capitalism has no ending, so he does not want to get involved in this fight. On the other hand, his family accuses him of not respecting their reaction against capitalism. Although he wants his family to understand his feelings, unfortunately he cannot express himself. He thinks that in the end their hopes will die, so he does not want to see them upset. But, he does not say anything, he just listens to them, and finally these strokes defeat him. I think in fact Harry is quite a sensitive person although his family never understands him.

In Act II Ada marries Dave who is one of their neighbours. After the first scene in Act I, he goes to the Spanish Civil War. She is totally against industrial society, so when Dave comes back, they go to Norfolk to live.

Ada: When Dave comes back we shall leave London and live in the country. That'll be our socialism. Remember this: The family should be a unit, and your work and your life should be part of one existence, not something hacked about by a bus queue and office hours. A man should see, know, and love his job. Don't you want to feel your life? Savour it gently? In the country we shall be somewhere where the air doesn't smell of bricks and the kids can grow up without seeing grandparents who are continually shouting at each other.

p. 33

According to Ada, the industrial society is a rotten society. Progress damages society. As a reaction to Harry's unemployment in such an environment, she says:

Ada: He ought to be ashamed of himself. The industry's booming with work and he's out of a job.

p. 33

Ada is very ironic about her father and she thinks that Harry is the biggest procrastinator. She is both fed up with this industrial world and her father's relaxed behaviour towards industrialism. By using Ada as a rebel, I think Wesker wants to make a judgement on the society. Nearly everybody accepts the rules of this new world. Like Peter in *The Kitchen*, Ada shows her reaction. When her husband comes, they will leave the city and live in the countryside, far away from the products of the industrial world.

As can be seen, in the first two acts of the play, the characters are very enthusiastic about their fight, but their anti-fascist action ends in 1956 with the Hungarian Uprising. The Hungarian Uprising began on 23 October 1956 when the working class took on and defeated the police and installed a new government, lasting 18 days before being crushed by Soviet tanks on November 4. 20,000 Hungarians and 3,500 Russians died in the fighting. Nagy was put on trial and executed, and replaced by Janos Kadar. From the initial uprising on October 23, the revolution lasted only 18 days. In the Revolution, many Hungarians rose against their Government in an attempt to liberalize the totalitarian regime. With the arrival of Soviet tanks in Budapest the uprising was suppressed, but some of the revolutionaries escaped to the West.⁴⁵

Monty – Sarah and Harry's friend – is the first person who adapts himself to this event. One day he visits Sarah, and they talk about the old days. It is November, 1955. Dave and Ada live in Norfolk, Harry is very ill and Ronnie is in Paris. He is working as a cook. When Monty learns this, he is shocked.

⁴⁵ The Wesker Trilogy With Introduction and Notes by A. H. M. Best and Mark Cohen. 10th ed. Longman, 1984.

Monty: And Ronnie? Ronnie had such ambitions; what's he doing?

Sarah: My Ronnie? He's in Paris.

Monty: There, I told you he'd go for.

Sarah: As a cook.

Monty: (*not so enthusiastically*) A cook? Ronnie?

p. 52

Sarah asks Monty if he is still a member of the party, but he is no longer a member. He is aware of reality, it is an industrial society, and they can no longer resist it. He is married now, and lives in Manchester where he has a little shop, but he claims he is not a capitalist. While he is aware of what is going on, Sarah is still a member, and she lives by her old beliefs. When Sarah goes to make some tea, Monty talks about her to his wife.

Monty:She's a fine woman is Sarah. She's a fighter. All that worry and she's still going strong. But she has one fault. For her the world is black and white. If you're not white so you must be black. She can't see shades in character- know what I mean? She can't see people in the round. 'They' are all the same bunch. The authorities, the governments, the police, the Post Office- even the shopkeepers. She's never trusted any of them, always fighting them. It was all so simple. The only thing that mattered was to be happy and eat. Anything that made you unhappy or stopped you from eating was the fault of capitalism.

p. 55

According to Monty, Sarah never reads political economy, her socialism is happiness so she joined the party.

At the end of the play, everything has changed. Sarah and Harry move to another part of London, but this time their house is not as full as before. Most of their friends' ideas changed, like those of Monty Blatt. Some of them have their own shop

to run, some of them work in factories; in short they are no longer party members. Sarah is the only person who is so stubborn that she does not see the reality.

In Act III- scene III, Ronnie visits his family. When he comes, he is furious at his mother. According to Ronnie, for years their mother hasn't told the truth of the real world. All Ronnie's dreams are broken now.

Ronnie:Do you know, I couldn't want to come home and accuse you.

Sarah: Accuse me?

Ronnie: You didn't tell me there were no doubts.

Sarah: What doubts? What are you talking about?

Ronnie: Everything has broken up around you and you don't see it.

p. 65

Like Monty Blatt, Ronnie talks about Sarah, but both of them claim that she devotes herself to socialism, so she can't see the reality, but lives in her own world.

Ronnie: You know that I'm right. You've never been right about anything. You wanted everybody to be happy but you wanted them to be happy your way. It was strawberries and cream for everyone- whether they liked it or not. And now look what's happened. The family you always wanted has disintegrated, and the great ideal you always cherished has exploded in front of your eyes. But you won't face it. You just refuse to face it. I don't know how you do it but you do- you just do. (*Louder*) You're a pathological case, mother- do you know that? You're still a *communist*!

pp. 67-68

Ronnie's speech explains his thoughts about his mother. He wants to find the reason why his mother still insists on communism. Then, he wonders about the comrades. None of them comes to visit her now.

Ronnie: What has happened to all the comrades, Sarah? I even blush when I use that word. Comrade! Why do I blush? Who do I feel ashamed to use words like democracy and freedom and brotherhood? They don't have meaning any more. I have nothing to write about any more. Remember all that writing I did? I was going to be a great socialist writer. I can't make sense of a word a simple word. You look at me as if I'm talking in a foreign language. Didn't it hurt you to read about the murder of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the Soviet Union?

p. 65

All Sarah can say about it is, that she is hurt by what has happened, but she doesn't abandon communism. However, the focus shifts from public politics to her private need for political involvement - which Sarah equates with a need to fight the kind of apathy she associates with Harry. Later, she tells Ronnie how Harry's weakness could even have resulted in Ada's death. When Ada had diphtheria, while Sarah was pregnant with Ronnie, it was a neighbour who saved Ada's life by giving her 'chicken soup with barley'.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Harry was seen spending his relief money at Bloom's, eating salt-beef sandwiches.

Sarah talks a lot, but is unable to change Ronnie's mind; so the play ends with Sarah's last sentences as a warning.

Sarah: (*shouting after him*) You'll die, you'll die- if you don't care you'll die. (*He pauses at door*) Ronnie, if you don't care you'll die. (*He turns slowly to face her*)

p. 70

It is hard for Sarah to accept that something has already ended. She still wants to live in the way that she has lived before. So she disapproves of Ronnie's behaviours and when he leaves home with his suitcase, she shouts behind him "you'll die, you'll die..". It is a dramatic ending and it shows that spiritually something dies. Nothing will be the same any more.

⁴⁶ The neighbour's life saving gift gives the title to the play.

In this play, in the first act, everybody has a hope, they are very enthusiastic, but as the play develops, they begin to lose their hope and become anxious about their future. For instance, in his adolescence Ronnie is highly idealistic, he thinks he will be a socialist writer, but later when he watches his father, he is scared of his future.

Ronnie:Your weakness frightens me, Harry-did you ever think about that? I watch you and I see myself and I'm terrified.

p. 49

In the play, there is a disintegration of political ideology parallel with the disintegration of the family. In the end, they are very disillusioned, and the worst thing is that they don't know what to do.

The nature of dialogue of the play is important to Wesker. *Chicken Soup* opens with anti-fascist demonstrations in the East End of London in 1936. Sarah and Harry are preparing themselves to take part. These are the first lines in the play.

Sarah: (*from the kitchen*) You took the children to Lottie's?

Harry: (*Taking up book to read*) I took them.

Sarah: They didn't mind.

Harry: No, they didn't mind.

Sarah: Is Hymie coming?

Harry: I don't know.

Sarah: (*to herself*) Nothing he knows! (*to Harry*) You didn't ask him? He didn't say? He knows about the demonstration, doesn't he?

p. 3

According to Wesker, while examining the dialogue, we must take into consideration characterization, information, meaning, rhythm and sound. In this dialogue between Sarah and Harry, Wesker is suggesting Jewish rhythms. Considering characters, both the father and the mother care about their children, but the father less than mother. In their relationship, she is usually chastising, he is protesting and evading, and they are always on the edge of a quarrel.

In an article Wesker explains that the dialogue could have been quite different:⁴⁷

Instead of;
"You took the children to Lottie's?"
 It could have been:
"Harry, did you do as I told you, did you take the children to Lottie's?"

The dialogue he chose reflects the true nature of the characters.

Instead of;
"I took them."
 It could have been
"Of course I took them, what do you take me for?"

To Wesker, the words should be selected carefully and economically. He adds that dialogue, like form, is dictated by the material. He advises beginning with the material. Material means not an idea but an experience for him.

I don't begin with an idea for a play and then invent characters and plot and situation. I begin with experience, an experience of reality which has made an impression on me.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Wesker, "Thoughts on the...." p. 5

⁴⁸ Wesker, "Thoughts on the...." p. 6

Chicken Soup with Barley is the first play of *The Wesker Trilogy* and I think it is the most important one. We are introduced to the main characters of the *The Wesker Trilogy* here and we have a general idea about the events. For instance, in the last play Ada and Dave will live in Norfolk, about which Ada always talks in *Chicken Soup with Barley*. In short, *Chicken Soup with Barley* prepares us for what follows.

Chicken Soup with Barley covers a large period of time and handles a number of changing, developing characters.



II. *Roots*⁴⁹

After Wesker wrote *Chicken Soup with Barley*, Tony Richardson, assistant director to George Devine, invited Wesker to a dinner to talk about if he was planning another play. Wesker says:

I was about a Norfolk farm labourer's daughter who returns home after living in London with her Jewish boy-friend. Autobiography again. In a letter dated 30 May to Dusty, my Norfolk wife-to-be, on her 22nd birthday, I had given more thought to it: In the Norfolk play ... I'm spoken about all the time but I never appear. In the play I fail to turn up - ever, and after some terrible misery and 'there I told you so' from the family you turn round and say 'So what! I do not need him now! I'm better than I thought I was and I do not need him now!' And the triumph of the play is not my triumph but yours. The intellectual has betrayed but the ordinary girl has found her own voice, her own language. Funny that, the triumph of 'Chicken Soup' is also not my triumph but my mother's. I wonder why...⁵⁰

*Roots*⁵¹ is again based on Wesker's experiences. This time the story is about Wesker and his girlfriend Dusty. Wesker went to Norwich and there worked as a kitchen porter for about eighteen months and then he came to London and met Dusty there. Wesker says: "Dusty fell in love with me there and I told her she was a fool and that she could expect nothing from me. I'd been turned down by all my girlfriends actually."⁵² He was confused because every girl that he had fallen in love rejected him. However, Dusty found her attractive. Although Wesker tried every way to change her mind, Dusty never left him. Then, Wesker left his position and worked as a trainee pastry cook in the Hungarian Restaurant in Lower Regent Street. He also left Dusty on the understanding that there shouldn't be anything more between them but she said she wanted to go to London and look for work. Therefore, she came to London and worked at the National as a waitress and their relationship continued.

In London Ronnie and Beatie meet in a restaurant and they live together. Then, Beatie returns to her town – Norfolk – and waits for Ronnie.

⁴⁹ The Wesker Trilogy, 10th ed, 1984.

⁵⁰ Wesker, Arnold, "Introduction: The Wesker Trilogy", Blaendigeddi 9 July 2000

⁵¹ The play was written in 1958 and it was first staged on 28th June 1960 at the Royal Court Theatre.

⁵² Hayman, Arnold...pp.6-7

Beatie:Do you think when the really talented people in the country get to work they get to work for us? Hell if they do! Do you think they don't know we 'ont make the effort? The writers don't write thinking' we can understand, nor the painters don't paint expecting us to be interested-that they don't, nor don't the composers give out music thinking we can appreciate it.....

p. 140

This speech is taken from a farm labourer's daughter – Beatie – in the last act. As the daughter of a person who is a member of the working class, she criticises the way of painters and authors in that they don't take the people who are illiterate into consideration. She believes that none of these talented writers thinks or writes in the way that those kinds of people – like Beatie and her family – understand. As has been mentioned in *Chicken Soup with Barley*, Wesker's aim is to teach everyone, whoever they may be. He wants to write his plays not only for the class of people who acknowledge plays to be a legitimate form of expression, but for those to whom the phrase 'form of expression' may mean nothing whatsoever.⁵³ So Wesker wants to be heard and read by everybody and he writes accordingly.

In this play Wesker's didactic purpose has been attributed to the off-stage character Ronnie. In a way Wesker recreates himself with Ronnie. He said to Hayman in his interview:

Roots was written after Dusty and I were married, so the fabrication of them not marrying could be seen as an attack on me but it doesn't bear with the truth. I was just using myself.⁵⁴

In *Roots*, the setting is no more London, and the characters are not educated and intellectual: they have no ability to express themselves. The play is set in the Norfolk cottage of a family of farm labourers-the Bryants. However, there are some flashbacks the life of Beatie and Ronnie in London. Other characters are their

⁵³ Wesker, "Let Battle...." p. 96.

⁵⁴ Hayman, Arnold..... p. 2

neighbours and a farm manager - Mr Healey. And, although Ronnie's many ideas are expressed, he never appears in the play. Beatie mouths his views on culture, the arts, education and politics which the family never understands.

The argument about culture goes all the way through *Roots*. Beatie goes away from her family and when she works in the kitchen of a restaurant in London she meets Ronnie, and she falls in love immediately. Then, they begin to live together, but little Beatie is not aware of culture, art and politics; in short: life. So as a teacher Ronnie starts teaching her. Most of the time she does not understand, so they start arguing, but Ronnie suggests talking.

Beatie:..... "What can you talk of?" he'd ask. "Go on, pick a subject. Talk. Use the language. Do you know what language is?" Well, I'd never thought before- hev you? -it's automatic to you isn't it, like walking? "Well, language is words," he'd say, as though he were telling me a secret. "It's bridges, so that you can get safely from one place to another. And the more bridges you know about the more places you can see!"

p. 78

Ronnie's image of words as bridges is the key to a positive view of language, which offers a solution to the problem between them. Language is the most important medium in communication. Every problem can be solved by the help of it. To Wesker, "bridge" is another important thing for people. Ronnie as a mouthpiece of Wesker, gives importance to bridges. So with Ronnie and the bridge image, Wesker wants to emphasize the importance of communication. All the words are like bridges, so the more "bridges" you have, the more you can communicate. As in *The Kitchen*, Wesker's aim is to reveal the lack of communication in 1950s society.

In *Understanding Arnold Wesker*, Robert Wilcher says:

Wesker is preoccupied with the familiar mid-century theme of language and communication.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Wilcher, *Understanding*..... pp.41-42

For Ronnie and Beatie this preoccupation is important. There is a lack of communication among the family members and Beatie. They are from the same origin but different views and thoughts have enlarged Beatie's mind, therefore, she begins to criticise her family. For instance, her mother Mrs Bryant is always interrupting her while she is talking. Mrs Bryant's subjects are always about drunken neighbours, dead relatives, so these make Beatie feel annoyed.

Beatie: Mother, I'm talking to you. Blust woman it's not often we get together and really talk, it's nearly always me listening to you telling who's dead. Just listen a second.

p. 104

Beatie comes from a non-intellectual, uneducated family, so talking has always been a problem at home. They cannot discuss, they cannot have an idea about things. When Beatie returns home, she tries to talk like Ronnie by mimicking him, but nobody wants to listen to her.

Beatie:..... "Talk" he say, "and look and listen and think and question".

p. 105

Especially when she comes to her sister's house, Beatie criticises her brother-in-law because of the thoughts on war. She asks:

Beatie: What you goin' to war to defend then?

Jimmy: (*he is annoyed now*) Beatie – you bin away from us a long time now – you got a boy who's educated an' that and he's taught you a lot maybe. But don't you come pushin' ideas across at us- we're all right as we are. You can come when you like an' welcome but doesn't bring no discussion of politics in the house wi' you 'cos that'll only cause trouble. I'm telling you. (*he goes off*)

p. 82

Even the word 'politics' frightens them. They live in a closed world, and they just want to accept their truths. Beatie is different from them; she thinks that talking will emancipate her into a richer experience of life.

Ronnie loves discussing everything, so he encourages her to ask questions but, like her mother, she is often too stubborn to speak out, and she is aware of it.

Beatie: He was interested in all the things I never ever thought about. About politics and art and all that, and he tried to teach me. He's a socialist and he used to say you couldn't bring socialism to a country by making speeches, but perhaps you could pass it on to someone who was near you. So I pretended I was interested- but I didn't understand much. All the time he's trying to teach me but I can't take it Jenny.

p. 84

Although Beatie wants to learn something, the things that Ronnie wants to teach her are sometimes too much for her. So she has difficulties while learning. Sometimes she pretends to be learned, or to have understood, but this time she cannot adapt the things that she learned to her life. As a result, she behaves as if she does not want to learn anything. In this case, she is like her mother because her mother also refuses to learn the things that she cannot understand easily.

Ronnie is aware of the difficulty of dealing with a character like Beatie because she is uneducated.

Beatie:... "It's all going up in flames", he say, "but I'm going to make bloody sure I save someone from the fire."

p. 105

But, unfortunately when Beatie is away he thinks and he decides they are not suited to each other because they haven't established any communication. In the last act, while all the family members are waiting for Ronnie, a postman comes and brings a letter from Ronnie. In this letter he explains he won't come because their relationship won't work any more. When Beatie takes his letter, she keeps quiet for a moment but

then she becomes conscious and explains the reason why she cannot talk, express herself. The only reason is roots.

Beatie: I'm like you. Stubborn, empty, wi' no tools for livin'.
I got no roots in nothing. I come from a family o' farm
labourers yet I ent got no roots....

.....

Beatie:Roots! The things that make you proud of yourself-
roots!

pp.137-138

As a farm labourer's daughter, she knows that she could not become educated; she could not get sufficient information about the world.

Beatie: (*turning on her mother violently*) Mother! I could kill
you when you do that. No wonder I don't know
anything about anything. I never heard nothing but
dance music because you always turned off the
classics. I never knewed anything about the news
because you always switched off after the headlines. I
never read any good books 'cos there was never any in
the house.

pp. 117-118

This speech shows a parallelism with Ronnie's speech in *Chicken Soup with Barley*. As soon as Ronnie comes home he begins to talk to his mother and he accuses her of not teaching anything about the real world, Beatie also accuses her mother of not being informed about life. She was born as a village girl, and she could not find a chance to improve herself. When she meets Ronnie, she thinks she is lucky finding such a man. Ronnie enlarges her horizons, but after she gets the letter her dreams fade. She realises that she is a farm labourer's daughter and Ronnie is unsuccessful in his aim. But, after she gives her last speech, she notices that she could say something, so in a way although she couldn't realize, she gained something from Ronnie.

Another point that Wesker is dealing with is the clash between classes and the problems of the workers. For instance, the workers in the farm are paid very little. They are rarely promoted, but when someone takes promotion, it is obvious that some of the other workers will be dismissed. Everything is in the hands of farm managers. Beatie's father is in the group of weak workers. Because of stomach problems he begins to come home early, and the manager Mr Healey learns of it. They do not like the workers who are ill or too old, so they want to get rid of such workers. In the last act, while the family is waiting for Ronnie, Mr Bryant comes home very sad.

Mrs Bryant: He's upset! I can see it! I can tell it in his voice
come on Bryants, what's the matter.

Mr Bryant: There ent much up wi' me, what you on about
woman? (*Makes to go*) Now leave me be, you
want me changed look.

p. 126

They all wonder what happened to him, but he wants to go out to change his clothes.

Mrs Bryant: It's something series or he wouldn't be so happy
lookin'!

Mr Bryant: I bin put on casual labour.

.....

Mrs Bryant: Your guts I suppose.

Mr Bryant: I tell him it's no odds, that there's no pain. That
don't matters Jack, he says, I aren't hevin' you
break up completely on me. You go on casual, he
say, and if you gets better you can come on to the
pigs again.

p. 126

Beatie especially is shocked because she cannot understand anything, but the rest understand the situation easily because they are used to it. That is the way it goes on in this village. Because of his sickness, Mr Bryant is dismissed. There is no space for the workers who are weak, ill or disabled on the farm. It is the survival of the fittest:

if you are strong, you can do everything; but if you are weak, you should obey the rules of the strong ones. However, Beatie has been far away from her village for a long time, so although everybody else understands everything from the speeches of Mr and Mrs Bryant, Beatie needs an explanation.

As the son of a socialist father and mother, Ronnie has learned how to defend himself against the authorities. He also wants Beatie to know how to handle official things.

Beatie: There was a time when he handled all official things for me you know. Once I was in between jobs and I didn't think to ask for my unemployment benefit. He told me to. But when I asked they told me I was short on stamps and so I wasn't entitled to benefit.

p. 78

Ronnie has tried to get her to be aware of her social rights. In other words, we can say that Ronnie has taught Beatie to resist people who want to abuse her illiteracy. In this way, despite her weak background, she can step strongly.

As a character, Beatie is sensual, optimistic and childlike. She has all the frankness and candour of the Bryants, but she contrasts with the rest of her family in willingness to enlarge her experience of life. Yet, her energies are impulsive, uncoordinated, and needing direction. It is possible to say that personal experiences shape someone's life in that although Beatie and her family's background are the same, she differs from them. Ronnie is a kind chance for her as he is ready to direct her energy and enlarge her experience of life.

In this play, Beatie as a directed person and Ronnie as a director, have important roles. Beatie is spokesman for all the girls who have suffered in the same way. I mean as a labourer's daughter, she could not improve herself. Wesker makes her argue in generalised terms about the inarticulacy of all working class girls, whether they live in the country or the town.

Beatie: It makes no difference country or town. All the town girls I ever worked with were just like me. It makes no difference country or town- that's squit. Do you know when I used to work at the holiday camp and I sat down with the other girls to write a letter we used to sit and discuss what we wrote about. An' we all agreed, all on us, that we started: "Just a few lines to let you know", and then we get on to the weather and then we get stuck.....Thousands of things happening at this holiday camp and we couldn't find words for them. All of us the same.

pp. 118-119

Ronnie has had difficult moments while teaching Beatie. They sometimes have quarrels. But, according to Hayman,⁵⁶ it is a good way to give the cultural difference between two people. When Beatie reads comics, Ronnie has asked her to read books instead; but Beatie puts them under *The Guardian* newspaper and keeps reading.

Beatie:I used to read the comics he bought for his nephews and he used to get riled.

.....

"Christ, woman, what can they give you that you can be so absorbed?" So you know what I used to do? I used to get a copy of the Manchester Guardian and sit with that wide open- and a comic behind!

pp. 76-77

Ronnie hasn't been totally against comics, or entertainment, but Beatie always wants to read them, so he warns her.

Beatie: "There's nothing wrong with comics only there's something wrong with comics all the time. There's nothing wrong with football, only there's something wrong with only football. There's nothing wrong with rock 'n' rolling, only God preserve me from the girl that can do nothing else!.....

pp. 77-78

⁵⁶ Hayman, Arnold..... p. 35

Ronnie has accepted that she can read them of course, but there should be a balance. For instance, she can read comics, but at the same time she should give a chance to the other kinds of books as well.

As soon as Beatie returns home, she wants to apply the things that she has learnt to her family. Although none of them wants to listen to her, she always talks.

Beatie: On my God! (*Suddenly*) I'll show you. (*Goes off to front room to collect pick-up and a record*) Now sit you down gal and I'll show you. Don't start ironing or reading or nothing, just sit there and be prepared to learn something. (*Appears with pick-up and switches on*). You aren't too old, just you sit and listen. That's the trouble you see, we ent ever prepared to learn anything, we close our minds the minute anything unfamiliar appear.

p. 119

In this speech, Beatie tries to teach her mother in the way Ronnie taught her. She wants to play Bizet's '*L'Arlésienne*' Suite, but it is too strange for her mother to listen. In short, the cultural life of her family is measured against what she has learnt from Ronnie: Mendelssohn and Bizet versus pop songs, books versus comics, art versus entertainment, and discussion versus chatter.

Beatie continues her efforts to change the way that her relatives behave until the last act. After Mrs Bryant read aloud announcing Ronnie's decision not to marry Beatie, Beatie could no longer keep the interest of the crowd waiting for Ronnie, and then she starts crying. The Bryants do not even try to help her and Mrs Bryant reads the letter.

Mrs Bryant: "My dear Beatie. It wouldn't really work would it? My ideas about handing on a new kind of life are quite useless and romantic if I'm really honest. If I were a healthy human being it might have been all right but most of us intellectuals are pretty sick and neurotic – as you have often observed – and we couldn't build a world even if we were given the reins of government – not yet any-rate. I don't blame you for being stubborn, I don't blame you for ignoring every suggestion I ever made – I only blame

myself for encouraging you to believe we could make a go of it and now two weeks of your not being here has given me the cowardly chance to think about it and decide and I ...”

p. 134

This letter tells everything about Ronnie and Beatie's relationship. After reading it, Mrs Bryant says nothing to make Beatie feel better, but instead asks many questions that annoy Beatie. Especially when Mr Bryant asks what they will do next, Mrs Bryant's answer causes Beatie's reaction.

Beatie: My God, Mother, I hate you- the only thing I ever wanted and I weren't able to keep him, I didn't know how. I hate you, I hate....

Mrs Bryant slaps Beatie's face. Everyone is a little shocked at this harsh treatment.

p. 136

Mrs Bryant can't stand Beatie's words and slaps her. Then, she gives a speech which is a kind of defence. This speech has a similarity with Sarah's speech in the last act of *Chicken Soup with Barley*.

Mrs Bryant: I had enough. All this time she've bin home she've bin tellin' me I didn't do this and I didn't do that and I hev'n't understood half what she've said and I've had enough. She talk about bein' part o' the family but she've never lived at home since she've left school look. Then she go away from here and fill her head wi' high-class squit and then it turn out she don't understand any on it herself.

pp. 136-137

Mrs Bryant's this speech has parallelism with Ronnie's speech in the last act of *Chicken Soup with Barley*. Ronnie criticizes his mother's stubbornness about the defeat of socialism. Here Mrs. Bryant criticizes Beatie because she tries to live a kind of life that she isn't used to. Beatie wants to speak and explain the life in the city as soon as she returns. However, Mrs Bryant claims that even Beatie herself cannot understand anything that she is saying, so nobody in the house can understand. By

giving this explanation, Mrs Bryant wants to say that Ronnie is clever enough not to be interested in Beatie anymore. She also believes that Beatie can just parrot someone else's ideas. But, Beatie's last speech gives hope; she talks and this time she is no longer parroting Ronnie's opinions. She has made this speech without any help.

Beatie: Listen to me someone. (*As though a vision were revealed to her*) God in heaven, Ronnie! It does work, it's happening to me, I can feel it's happened, I'm beginning on my own two feet- I'm beginning.

p. 141

So, by contrast with *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots* finishes with hope. The shock of the letter leads to her self-discovery.

Wesker's choice of setting and language helps him to achieve his aim. He wants to show the differences between the different types of working class people - those who have some education and those who are uneducated. It is possible to say that by choosing such an environment, again Wesker applies one of the features of kitchen-sink drama to his play. The type of people who Wesker writes about live monotonously in Norfolk. There is nothing unusual in their lives, everyday is a repetition of itself. Therefore, it is a good place to show the monotony of the working class. Also, here the characters are dealing with domestic issues like washing up, cooking. When the play starts, we see Jenny in her kitchen while she is washing up.

Jenny Beales is by the sink washing up....

p.73

In the following chapters we can see Mrs. Bryant peeling some potatoes. Wesker's stage direction helps us to see the characters while dealing with these domestic issues.

*She returns to the kitchen and thence the larder, from which
She emerges with some potatoes. These she starts peeling.*

p. 95

Although Beatie is from a backward farming family, in Wesker's mind this girl shouldn't be in a hopeless situation in the end and she should discover herself. Instead of Beatie who is from Norfolk, he could have chosen a girl from any backward rural community, but he chose Norfolk because he has enough knowledge about it. It means Wesker's character will be semi-illiterate and unaware of the developments in the world. By choosing rural life, Wesker wants to use its silence and slowness. In act one Wesker gives a stage direction with the description of the place.

.....Throughout the play there is no sign of intense living from any of the characters- Beatie's bursts are the exception. They continue in a routine rural manner. The day comes, one sleeps at night, there is always the winter, the spring, the autumn, and the summer- little amazes them. They talk in fits and starts mainly as a sort of gossip, and they talk quickly too, enacting as though for an audience what they say. Their sense of humour is keen and dry. They show no affection for each other though this does not mean they would not be upset were one of them to die. The silences are important- as important as the way they speak, if we are to know them.

pp. 80-81

As it is seen from the direction, this place fulfils Wesker's requirement. In such an environment, Beatie looks to them as if she is an alien. In some houses, there is even a lack of electricity, so they are backward in technology, too. One day one of Beatie's relatives wins a hundred pound from the Labour Tote. Beatie is shocked; she asks if they will buy a television because the money is sufficient, but Jenny's answer explains everything:

Jenny: TV? Blust no. You know she hev'nt got electricity in that house. No, she say she's gonna get some clothes for the kids.

p. 90

Language is also used effectively. In his "Introduction to the Printed Text of *Roots*", Bernard Levin writes:

Mr Wesker's ear is extraordinarily acute, enabling him to record the speech of his people with immense conviction.

It is the language spoken by Norfolk natives. To create a real rural life atmosphere it is a very important detail. The most remarkable speeches are those by Mr and Mrs Bryant; they use the Norfolk dialect effectively. Only Beatie's speeches look normal when she is mimicking and parroting Ronnie's speeches.

Mrs Bryant:I haven't bin responsible for you since you left home- you bin on your own.....

.....

Mr Bryant: Shut you up gal, I'll go when I'm ready, I don't want you pushin' me.

The second play of *The Wesker Trilogy – Roots* – is different from the first and the third play in that it ends with hope. This time Wesker is interested in the life of rural people. As they live in the countryside, they are not aware of the developments in technology and industry. Wesker's purpose is to show this unawareness of rural people. He takes Beatie as an example for all people who live in Norfolk. She is uneducated, illiterate but at the same time willing to learn. However, she does not adapt herself to this developed city life and has some difficulties. These difficulties are the difficulties of all people in underdeveloped rural England. Ronnie as a teacher uses so much effort for Beatie to teach and find solutions for her problems. During the play Beatie repeats all his words and sentences, but in the end, she manages to make her own sentences. This means that there is still hope for all of them who live in Norfolk. The result is; the roots are not important, the necessary thing is building bridges.

III. *I'm Talking About Jerusalem*⁵⁷

There's little to say about the third play in *The Trilogy* except that while writing this story of my sister's and brother-in-law's rural experiment. I was very conscious of wanting it to be different from the first two. It was, but no more than *Roots* was different from *Chicken Soup with Barley*.⁵⁸

*I'm Talking About Jerusalem*⁵⁹ is the last play of the trilogy and it is about Dave and Ada's 10-year life experience in Norfolk. Wesker was influenced by his sister and brother-in-law, Della and Ralph, while creating his characters Dave and Ada. Della and Ralph want to live in Norfolk as an escape from city life. Wesker writes about the reasons of this escape in his autobiography titled *As Much As I Dare*.

I don't know at what stage in their marriage Della and Ralph decided to leave London in search of the rural dream. Perhaps it wasn't a rural dream they were in search of, more a wish to be quit of city life. Motives are mixed, the drive is multi-powered. Longings merge with discontent: books merge with conversations; other people's lives become role models; dreams jumble out of everywhere. Gradually a path shapes called 'the future'. Nothing precise.⁶⁰

Della and Ralph are fed up with the burden of city life, so they want to escape. Dave and Ada's aim is the same as theirs, but in addition they want to create their own utopic world there.

The play spans ten years of the Simmonds family. It opens with Ada and Dave Simmonds' arrival in Norfolk in 1946 and ends with their packing to return to London in 1959 on a day that symbolically links the collapse of their personal experiment with the failure of socialist politics at a national level as they hear news on the radio of the Conservative party's election for a third successive term of government. Therefore, there are similarities between *Chicken Soup with Barley* and

⁵⁷ The Wesker Trilogy, 10th ed., 1984.

⁵⁸ Wesker, Introduction: The Wesker Trilogy.

⁵⁹ Wesker started writing play in December 1958 and it was first staged on 27th July 1960 at the Royal Court Theatre.

⁶⁰ Wesker, *As Much....* p. 309

this last play in that both of them cover a long period of life and also they end with the failure of the characters in the end. Also as *I am Talking About Jerusalem* is the last play of the trilogy, it includes the elements of the first two plays and it gives the latest news about everything. Especially in the last act and the last scene of the play, a conversation about Beatie gives information about her and also in the same scene we learn that Harry is no longer alive.

Like the other two plays, it consists of three acts and except for the first act, each act has two scenes. The setting in each act is the same. Wesker's stage direction describes the setting:

Norfolk. A house in the middle of fields. We see the large kitchen of the house, the garden, and the end part of an old barn.

p. 145

Another similarities among other first two plays of *The Trilogy* that, Wesker's choice of setting which creates again the working class environment with its poor facilities and the domestic issues that the characters are dealing with. When the play starts the width of the kitchen is emphasized in the stage direction. Also they give break to drink or eat something during the removal.

Sarah: Make the tea.

Ronnie: (*springing up*). Where's the kettle.

.....

Ronnie: (*holding up a jar*). Bottled Chicken Soup. It looks like – er – hum – yes, well, I hope it tastes different.

Ada: We've only one primus so you'll have to wait until the water's boiled. Get out a table-cloth Ronnie.

pp. 151-152

While helping Ada and Dave, Sarah and Ronnie criticize them for moving to a little town far from London. Sarah especially emphasizes the condition of their home near frequently.

Sarah: Tell me Ada, how are you going to get to the village?
Not even a road here there isn't. Just fields - a house in
the middle of nowhere.

pp. 147-148

And she cannot understand the reason why they have left London and moved to Norfolk, but Ada and Dave keep their silence and they don't explain.

Sarah: I don't understand it, I just don't see why you have to
come out here. Is London so bad? Millions of people
live there!

pp. 149-150

Sarah claims that conditions are primitive here in Norfolk, so Ada and Dave have to spend so much effort just to get electricity and water. To her, it seems as if they want to go back to the Middle Ages.

Sarah: A primus stove!⁶¹ What's the point? All this heavy work.
No roads, no electricity, no running water, no proper
lavatory. It's the Middle Ages. Tell me why you want
to go back to the Middle Ages?

p. 150

To achieve their goals, Dave and Ada should accept every condition in Norfolk, so they give no explanation to Sarah's questions. Also, it is known that Ada has been a socialist since she was a child, so living in a village, away from the industrial society has been her dream. In the last act of *Chicken Soup with Barley*, we are informed by Sarah that Ada and Dave live in Norfolk. Their attempt is to build a socialistic life for themselves on William Morris⁶² lines in which the workman is a craftsman and his own master, the family the prime and all-important unit of life.

⁶¹ "A primus stove" is one of the signs of primitiveness. It was mostly used in the early 20th century, but in Wesker's time they were not much used. It is a kind of stove which burns paraffin gas that was vaporised from the liquid fuel in tubes forming the burner head – in other words they had used no electricity in their house.

⁶² William Morris (1834-1896), friend of the Pre-Raphaelites, a strong advocate of the value and integrity of craftsmanship.

They devote themselves to arts and crafts, in order to be their own master away from the domination of the industrialist and the machine. Especially it is Dave's experiences in the factories after his military service that have been very influential in their choice of this village to live in.

Dave: I know the city Sarah. Believe me sweetheart! Since being demobbed I've worked in a factory turning out doors and window frames and I've seen men hating themselves while they were doing it. Morning after morning they've come in with a cold hatred in their eyes, brutalized! All their life they're going to drain their energy into something that will give them nothing in return why do you think these two (*the R.M*) decides to set up on their own? Eh! I'll tell you-

p. 155

Dave's these ideas about the factories have similarities to the ideas of Dimitri in *The Kitchen*. He is a creative man, he likes inventing. When he makes a portable radio, his friends who work in the kitchen suggest him working in a factory, but Dimitri thinks like Dave; he believes the blunt effect of working in a factory. In short, working in a factory is waste of time.

Like Ronnie and Sarah the removal men also cannot understand why they want to live there.

I. Removal Man: What made you move here, mate? Not being nose-y or anything, but you can't say it's everybody's choice of a new home.

p. 152

Another sign of the primitiveness is "the tilly lamp". It runs from pressurised paraffin and has a mantle to produce a very bright light⁶³. In act two when Dave's wartime friend Libby Dobson comes, he is also surprised by the condition of the

⁶³ Because Della and Ralph had this kind of lamp in their house, Wesker knows all about it. He writes about his experiences with this lamp in his autobiography.

...The tilly-lamp ritual: pumping vapour into a spun asbestos mantle...
...The tilly lamp filled the house with lingering smells of paraffin and methylated spirits.... (Wesker, *As Much...*p.311)

house. For instance, when Ada warns him about the danger of lamp, he thinks that they want to go back to middle ages like Sarah.

Dobson: Tilly lamps - the lot. You two have really taken your backward march seriously, eh? Dead serious - cor!

p. 171

Dobson becomes shocked when he comes across these primitive things and he looks at them with questioning eyes. Then, Ada and Dave talk about their plans, such as creating their own working place and most importantly their own socialist life. Dave doesn't want to work under anyone's pressure, he wants to be free, but Dobson thinks that their plans are all just dreams, and he suggests that they go home to London.

Dobson: Then go home. Be good children and go home, because you'll never make the beautiful, rustic estate.

p. 173

However, Ada and Dave do not listen to Dobson's suggestion. They explain their reasons to Dobson one by one.

Ada: In London you waste your time solving the wrong problems.

Dave: Leaving early to catch the bus! Is that livin'?

Ada: But God forbid we should ever imagine that we're changing that world by living here.

p. 173

Unfortunately these reasons seem to Dobson to be nonsensical and illogical. According to him, if they prefer living in the countryside to living in a city, they should have some strongly reasonable and logical explanations.

Dobson: That's just it! They are simple phrases. Simple inane and irresponsible! Individual level! Have you ever taken your ideas to their logical conclusion? Well, have you? Hasn't a worker in a factory ever looked at you as though you were mad- a little potty, you

know? Would you have the world do without cars, planes, electricity, houses, roads? Because that's the logical conclusion!

pp. 173-174

Dobson is totally against them. To him, Dave and Ada are daydreaming because they cannot possibly create a new world without electricity, roads and houses. These are very basic needs and nobody escapes them. So if we need electricity, roads and houses, people should work. Otherwise, everything goes wrong.

Dobson:If no man should be tied to turning out screws all his life, then that's what it means. No screws – no transport! No labourers – no roads! No humdrum jobs, then no anything! There you are, solve it! Go on. Think about it. Recognise the world so's everyone's doing a job he enjoys, so everyone's 'expressing' himself. Go on. Universal happiness? Get it!

p.174

If there were no factory, no labourer and no humdrum jobs, life would continue of course, but Dobson's seems to be saying that we need jobs and work for life to go on. So Dobson finds an anti-thesis for Dave and Ada's ideas. They are working for an ideal world, and Dobson suggests ironically that they should reorganize it according to their wishes, in this way everybody can do whatever they want. But of course Dobson is sure that they cannot manage it. However, as a stubborn couple, Dave and Ada don't want to listen to Dobson's words, they want to continue in the way that they have chosen. Dobson had also tried to create his own work before, but unfortunately he wasn't successful, so he warns them not to make a mistake that will upset them later.

Dobson:listen to me and go home – I've tried it and failed. Socialism? I didn't sell out that easily....You want Jerusalem? Order it with an iron head – no questions, no speeches for and against- bang! It's there! You don't understand it? You don't want it?

Tough luck, comrade – your children will (*To Ada*)
no peace? You're right, Mrs Simmonds. I'm dirtied up.
Listen to me, Dave, and go home before you're dirtied
up.

pp. 174-175

Despite these warnings from their relatives, friends and even people who don't know them, Dave and Ada are so willing to create their own Jerusalem⁶⁴, but from the very beginning misfortune follows them.

⁶⁴ Wesker especially emphasizes Jerusalem because of its spiritualism and holiness. Jerusalem is the symbol of the peace, justice and unity of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the description given in the Book of Revelation, Jerusalem symbolizes the new order of creation which will replace the existing world at the end of time.

.....and I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.....(Revelation 21 : 1-6) (Chevalier, Jean and Gheerbrant, Alain, **The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols**, Penguin Books, London, 1996, pp. 553-554.)

Wesker's English audience would be familiar with William Blake's poem "And did those feet" (Abrams, M.H., Ed., **The Norton Anthology of English Literature**, W.W. Norton&Company, NewYork&London, 1993. Sixth Edition, Volume 2, p. 70)

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

There is an ancient belief, still current in parts of England that Jesus came to England with Joseph of Arimathea. Blake adapts the legend to his own conception of a spiritual Israel, in which the significance of biblical events is as relevant to England as to Palestine. (Abrams, **The Norton...**p.70) Then, this poem was set to music and it

Before coming to the village, Dave has arranged a job for himself; working as a carpenter for a colonel who is a gentleman farmer. On the first day of moving, the colonel visits them and he gently warns Dave to start working as soon as possible. He lets Dave settle in just for one day.

Dave: Well I hoped you wouldn't mind giving us a few days to settle in and get our bearings.

Colonel: Yes, well, there's no need to come in tomorrow, I think that'll be all right, yes, that'll be all right. But my foreman is waiting to start some fencing – want to get a few more sows in. He's been waiting a long time for a carpenter. No, no need to come in tomorrow – early start the next day'll do, do perfectly.

p. 160

Misfortunes occur from the start of the play. Dave plans to create his own life but at first he must work for the Colonel and save money. The Colonel's attitude makes them a bit disappointed, and in the following acts the taking of the linoleum⁶⁵ causes Dave to be accused of stealing lino from the Colonel's barn. He has taken this lino because the Colonel said he didn't need it, but without telling him, Dave brings it home. One night the Colonel comes and he says he has to sack him. The Colonel's reason is that this event is not a good example for other workers. The Colonel thinks that if he doesn't do anything, the others might behave like Dave then. But, according to Dave that is not the main reason.

Dave: Never get the right sort of master-servant relationship?

Colonel: Yes, if you like. But you didn't like, did you? You spoke to me as if I were a – a –

Dave: An equal.

became a popular song, which was sung in churches and schools. Blake's main aim is to show how the industrial revolution was reshaping both the countryside and English life. He wants to create a city like Jerusalem that is the city of light and also a place where all evil was shed away. In that case, Wesker and Blake's aims interact. Dave and Ada escaped London as industrialism spread everywhere. Their aim is to build their Jerusalem in Norfolk.

⁶⁵ a cheap floor covering of the period.

Colonel: I don't like it, Simmonds. I'm not a slave driver, but I believe each person has his place.

p. 179

Before Dave saves enough money, the Colonel sacks him because of his rebellious attitude. He could be a future problem and a bad example for the rest, so the best way is to get rid of him.

After the Colonel leaves their house, Ada starts talking, but unfortunately she talks in a biting way. Although they have had many difficulties, she has never talked before like that since they moved to Norfolk.

Ada:Thank God the house is still ours anyway. By Christ, Dave – your ideals have got some pretty big leaks in places haven't they.

p. 180

After the Colonel and Ada's words, Wesker's stage direction explains Dave's mood.

Dave is deeply hurt by this and Ada realizes she has struck deeply. Perhaps this is the first time she has ever hurt him so deeply. They wander round the room in silence now, clearing up the table.

p. 180

The episode of the Colonel's lino costs him more than his job. It shows him that Norfolk is not his spiritual home but a foreign country; his principles are compromised, but he hasn't given up yet.

The episode makes Dave start his workshop earlier than intended. He builds his furniture-maker's workshop in their barn. He tries to earn a living making furniture by hand. He has an apprentice called Sammy. One day Ada goes to London to visit her family. Harry has had his second stroke so she wants to be with them. So, Sammy finds an opportunity to talk to Dave about his position in the workshop. Sammy feels he can't improve himself, everyday he does the same thing, and

therefore he wants to work in a factory. Here again the influence of the industrial society is seen.

Sammy: I want to leave soon.

Dave: That was a very short word. Leave!

Sammy: I aren't satisfied Dave.

Dave: Satisfied?

Sammy: Well I don't seem to be getting anywhere then.

Dave: But you're learning something boy, you're learnin' to do something with your hands.

Sammy: But nothing a factory can't do just as well as what we do.

Dave: (*shocked*) Have you ever seen inside a factory? You want to stand by a machine all day? By a planer or a sander or a saw bench.

p. 183

Then, Ada returns, and while coming home, she learns that one of the customers wants to cancel the order for a chair. Sammy and Dave have worked a lot to complete this chair, but then the customer doesn't want it. Therefore, these things – first Sammy's leaving and then the cancellation – make Dave unhappy and desperate. For a while, he continues alone but at the beginning of the last act with the help of a stage direction we learn that he no longer works in his barn, because it is empty.

Autumn 1956. Three years have passed. The wall in front of the barn is lowered. No one works there now.

p. 191

Then, their aunts Esther and Cissie come for a short visit, but from the beginning they are also against them moving to this village. They believe that this village experience has changed Ada and Dave a lot. Esther and Cissie want to know

why they no longer want to discuss their problems with them. While they are talking about Dave and Ada, they realize that their dreams and aims haven't come true and that makes Dave aggressive.

Esther:I can remember him saying when he first moved to here that he wanted to make furniture with his own hands. Now he's buying machinery, he'll be like a factory only not big enough to make their turnover. So where's the ideals gone all of a sudden?

p. 193

Another reason for Dave's aggressive attitude is that he feels guilty about using machines. After closing down his workshop, he has a small place in the village but instead of using his hands, he chooses to use machines. The aunts are very sorry that they can no longer discuss anything with Dave; to them Dave is full of anger now.

Esther: Hated, Cissie. Look at our nephew-in-law, hatred in every spit.

Dave: Well, what have you left me for God's sake? You want an angel in me? Ten years I spent here trying to carve out a satisfactory life for my wife and kids and on every side we've had opposition. From the cynics, the locals, the family. Everyone was choking with their experience of life and wanted to hand it on. Who came forward with a word of encouragement? Who said we maybe had a little gut? Who offered one tiny word of praise?

p. 200

Dave feels very upset because nobody has encouraged them to live here and try to establish their own life. Unfortunately in the end he loses his self-confidence. When we compare their behaviour at the beginning and at the end, the differences can be seen. At first, Dave and Ada were very determined that international socialism was an illusion and that he and Ada must live their politics at an individual level. It means their experiences – it can be good or bad – are just for themselves, they don't address society as a whole. They were very enthusiastic at the very beginning just like Sarah. Harry and their friend in *Chicken Soup with Barley*. Because of industrialism, their hopes diminished. Dave and Ada wanted to create their own world, in other words

their Jerusalem, but this dream ended with a disappointment. Dave became an employer; he was powerless to fight for his apprentice's soul against the lure of money and the factory. Dave as a craftsman – a furniture maker – was not free from commercialism; he was the victim of a rich capitalist customer, whose bad taste he had to satisfy.

In short, Dave and Ada have been beaten. So, as in the first act, the last scene of the play opens with a moving scene. While they are packing their things, on the radio they hear of the failure of the socialist party.

Announcer: Captain Davies, Conservative 20,419 J.R. Dalton, Labour, 10,526. L. Shaftesburg, Liberal, 4,291. Conservative majority 9,903. The Liberal candidate forfeits his deposit. These latest results bring the Conservative majority up to 93 and will ensure the return to power in the House of Commons of the Conservative Party for a third time in succession since the end of the war. Mr Gaitskell⁶⁶ went to Transport House⁶⁷ this morning to confer with other Labour leaders.

p. 202

Wesker symbolically associates Dave and Ada's situation with current politics.

Ronnie:And a whole generation of us laid down our arms and retreated into ourselves, a whole generation! But you two. I don't understand what happened to you two. I used to watch you and boast about you. Well, thank God, I thought, it works! But look at us now, now it's all of us.

p. 208

Unfortunately, except for their three children, they have gained nothing from this experience in Norfolk; it ends with a failure and disappointment. However, Wesker wants to emphasize that this failure isn't important; the important thing is being

⁶⁶ Mr Gaitskell: Hugh Gaitskell (1906-1963), the leader of the Labour Party and hence of the Parliamentary Opposition from 1955 until his premature death. In the election of October 8, 1959, the Conservative Party won 365 seats. Labour 258, Liberal 6, and Communists none.

⁶⁷ Transport House: In Smith Square, Westminster: headquarters of the Labour Party.

aware of your wishes and continuing according to them. So as experienced people, Ada and Dave will step strongly in their future life.

When we examine the nature of dialogue in *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* we can notice some similarities with *Chicken Soup with Barley*. As intellectuals, Dave, Ada and Ronnie speak in a style similar to that in *Chicken Soup With Barley*. Ronnie's clever answers are noticeable. People from Norfolk on the other hand, are easily identified by their way of using English. First, in the beginning the removal men's speeches are examples.

1st R.M. : I'd've clipped him round the ear if he'd've called me lunatic.

p. 147

Then, we notice Sammy talking with a Norfolk accent.

Sammy: Hey pack it in ole son. Mister what's-his-name'll be here soon to have a look at this here squatting chair of his.

p. 183

In some parts Dave speaks like a person from Norfolk and Sammy warns him.

Dave:What say you bor?

Sammy: Well listen to you then! What say you bor! A proper Norfolk article you're talking like.

The last play of *The Wesker Trilogy* – *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* – can be compared with the first two plays in the following ways. For instance, when the endings of *Chicken Soup with Barley* and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* are examined, both seem to be hopeless. However, *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* isn't so hopeless. Wesker emphasizes that people shouldn't give up after a single defeat. They should continue to make an effort. So these bad experiences can be a key for the future. But in *Chicken Soup With Barley*, unfortunately there is no hope, and Wesker finishes it with a kind of warning. He warns people that they should give importance to certain things if they want to survive. For example, Sarah warns

Ronnie in the end of the play to come back to London and continue to his old socialist life.

Sarah: You've got to care, you've got to come or you'll die

p.70

The similarity between *Roots* and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* is the setting. They both take place in Norfolk, so there is another chance to examine the life in Norfolk. but this time from an intellectual perspective.

Wesker's main aim is to show a determined family's efforts. They couldn't achieve their goals but this doesn't mean they didn't achieve anything. However, although there are two main characters whose aim is to build their own Jerusalem, as a title Wesker uses "*I'm Talking About Jerusalem*" in other words he prefers "I" instead of "We". I think there are two reasons for that. The first is, as a writer Wesker wants to put his own ideas, and thoughts into the play and through the characters Ada and Dave. The second one is that building a Jerusalem in Norfolk is Dave and Ada's own dream. They just think from the point of view of the individual. I mean they don't want to take the rest of the society into consideration. So when they fail, they don't accuse anybody. All that they wanted was to have a peaceful, lovely environment with their children away from the destructiveness of industrial society, but unfortunately they failed in Norfolk. So they have just talked about Jerusalem, they couldn't create it there.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is concerned with the basic influences that affect Arnold Wesker's early drama. These influences are analysed in four of his plays – *The Kitchen* and *The Wesker Trilogy*, in terms of setting, character and dialogue.

The 1950s and 60s are the years when Wesker was at the top his career. In *The Kitchen* and *The Wesker Trilogy* he writes about the class clashes which occurred in England after the Second World War. He is against the industrial world and believes that industrialism brings problems. Since he comes from a working class and Jewish origin, he is aware of the problems that the working class and minorities have. Therefore, in order to help or awaken the working class, Wesker reflects his own life experiences in his drama with minor changes. In nearly all his plays, it is possible to meet characters from his own life, even Wesker himself. In this way, he strengthens the subject matter with the techniques of the post-war period. Wesker explains that his mode of writing is closer to naturalism as it presents a "slice of life". Also, it is possible to see in his plays the features of kitchen-sink drama which is a post-war contribution to naturalism on the stage. These influences – the influence of the society, his own life and new dramatic techniques – can be seen in his four above-mentioned plays.

The Kitchen is the first play of this thesis which is examined to find the basic influences in terms of setting, character and dialogue. Wesker reflects the real experience of a restaurant kitchen with characters, based on those he worked with. Before starting to write plays, he worked as a porter or as a chef in several restaurant kitchens. As has been explained, a kitchen is the setting of the play: it is the kitchen of a restaurant called Tivoli. It is the smallest but the busiest part of the restaurant. Because of the ovens, it is quite hot and there is always a lot of noise. These ovens are the symbols of industrial world. They can be associated with the machines in factories. The play is different with its huge cast of people working in the kitchen. There are nearly thirty characters, from different nations, cultures and countries. None of them is happy to work there. As soon as the play starts, they begin arguing

with each other. The play also begins with the discussion of a fight that occurred the night before. These workers are examples of the hopeless and unhappy people of the industrialised world. Because they are always under pressure, they feel hopeless; there is always a chaotic atmosphere in the kitchen. In the interlude of the play, the workers (especially Peter) want to play a game. Peter believes that when people play a game or dream something, they grow. In this kitchen, dreaming or playing games are the only ways to escape from the unpleasant reality. However, this pleasant mode that springs from dreaming does not last long. At the end of the play nobody can stop Peter from attacking the pipes of the ovens: he destroys all the pipes. It is not just a reaction against the restaurant owner, Marango, it is a reaction to the whole selfish industrial world. Wesker harmonizes the setting with the characters very well and also he uses the characters' native languages. They are from many different countries and it is possible to hear many languages. However, there are sometimes problems related to the language. Max, the English worker, complains when the other characters talk in their own languages. So by using an English character like Max who can't stand hearing other languages in England, Wesker wants to show the lack of racial harmony in 1950s England in general.

In the first play of *The Wesker Trilogy – Chicken Soup with Barley* – the similarities between the Wesker family and the Kahn family are noticeable. The Kahns have a Jewish origin and they are members of the working class. They are not educated but they have acquired knowledge on certain subjects. So in those aspects the Kahns and the Weskers resemble each other. Also the mother and the father in the play have the same characteristics as Wesker's own father and mother. Like Sarah, his mother Leah is an important figure in their house. She is more determined and more practical in her ideas, but Joe – his father – is passive. The Kahns are a family of four with their daughter Ada and son Ronnie. While creating Ada, Wesker was influenced by his own sister Della. And lastly, Ronnie is a good model of Wesker himself. Also the place where they lived is similar. The Kahn family lives in Fashion Street – the same street where the Weskers lived. However, with the advice of the director, John Dexter, Wesker turns this place into a more naturalistic one. In

their real life, the Weskers lived in an attic room of a house in Fashion Street, but to show the coming and going of people easily, Dexter suggests using the basement part of the house. Wesker says: "By setting it in a basement we helped to convey some sort of submerged society"⁶⁸ In addition to the setting the language that the Kahns use has similarities with the language of the Weskers. As they have a Jewish origin, they have a special accent, which Wesker suggests through the rhythm of the words. Characters use short sentences to express themselves instead of long, complicated sentences.

By contrast in the second play of *The Wesker Trilogy – Roots* – a new family is introduced to the reader. This time except for Beatie – daughter of the new family – there is no similarity to the Wesker family. Although Ronnie's name is mentioned, he never appears on the stage. With the help of Beatie, we can grasp Ronnie's ideas, or in other words, Wesker's own ideas. In fact, Beatie could be his wife Dusty who he met while working in London. In this play, like Wesker Ronnie met his friend in London and they fell in love with each other. Like the Kahn family, Beatie's family, the Bryants, come from the lower-working class, but they are not as knowledgeable as the Kahns are. When Beatie goes to London and meets Ronnie, her point of view to life has changed. When she returns, she has problems with her family. Although the Kahns live in London – in a city - the Bryants live in Norfolk – in the countryside – so they are unaware of the opportunities of city life like, technology. When Beatie starts talking about all the other members of the family get confused because they cannot understand anything that she is saying. However, as Beatie learned from Ronnie, she believes in the value of talking. There is unfortunately a big problem caused by not talking: it is lack of communication. Ronnie is a good speaker, and he believes that in order to solve problems people should talk. The question of communication is examined in this play as it is the biggest problem of the industrial world. Wesker's contemporaries were also interested in this issue. For instance, John Osborne's character Jimmy Porter is a good example. The lack of communication between Jimmy and his wife Alison causes the separation of the couple. As the

⁶⁸ Wesker, *As Much...* p. 503

Bryants are from Norfolk, and they are neither educated nor experienced, they aren't aware of their social rights either. Since they have no idea about their rights, they accept everything and they are deceived easily. Therefore, to make her strong, Ronnie tries to teach Beatie as much as he can and he emphasizes the importance of using language effectively. And of course, as is seen in *Chicken Soup with Barley*, the influences of industrialism are obvious in *Roots*. If you are from the working class, if you are a worker, it means you are totally lost because everything is in the hands of employers. If the workers are old or ill, they have no chance to work, so earning money is very difficult. People in Norfolk want to try their chance by buying lottery tickets. One of them is Beatie's relative, and she wins a hundred pounds from the Labour Tote. Beatie suggests that she should buy a television, but unfortunately she hasn't got electricity in her house. So it is an ironic situation. Beatie is used to technology while she is living away from her family, but in her town most of the houses haven't got electricity. As in *Chicken Soup with Barley*, Wesker uses the language effectively. His characters are from Norfolk, so all of them use the Norfolk dialect. As he has studied this accent, he uses it like a person from Norfolk

Wesker has also studied Norfolk itself as a region, so he knows this area as well as he knows London. So Norfolk is used as a setting a second time in the third play of *The Trilogy – I'm Talking About Jerusalem* –. As his sister and brother-in-law lived in this country, he had a chance to visit and observe it. In addition, he transferred the experiences of his sister and brother-in-law into this play – his sister Della becomes Ada and Dave his brother-in-law Ralph. After getting married, Della and Ralph decided to live in Norfolk. Their aim was to escape from London and build their own dream life in Norfolk. At first life in Norfolk was very good, but as the days passed, they realised that this new life wasn't a success, so they returned to London. Like Della and Ralph in this play Ada and Dave leave London and start a new life in Norfolk. They want to escape the products of the industrial world. They are totally against machines and factories, and also they don't want to waste their time with the problems of city life such as leaving home early and trying to catch a bus for work. Also Dave wants to create his own workshop by following the thoughts

of William Morris in arts and crafts. He doesn't want to use machines to produce anything; he believes in the importance of hand-made products. In short, to be happy. Ada and Dave prefer the primitive countryside life to city life and they want to build their own Jerusalem there, but unfortunately things don't go as they want. Therefore, like Della and Ralph, they return to London, but they realise that this was their own individual choice, so nobody else was responsible for their failure in Norfolk. Here again, as in *Roots*, the setting is Norfolk but the characters have come from London. As in the first two plays, Wesker uses language effectively, and Ada and Dave speak like intellectuals. However, sometimes Wesker uses characters from Norfolk, and they use their own dialect while talking. Near the end of the play, it is realised that Dave also begins to talk in this dialect. Like in his other three plays, in *I'm Talking about Jerusalem*, Wesker's stage direction which describes a huge kitchen and also domestic issues exemplify the kitchen-sink drama.

The world "personal" has something common in these plays. Wesker uses his personal experiences in these four plays. However, these personal experiences are not different from the people's of the period. There can be conflict in that why one comes and watches these plays although the final scenes of the plays are obvious or the plays itself is the life of audience. Wesker's success is having a goal while writing each of them. *The Kitchen* is based on his life in the restaurant kitchens. Here the emphasis is on the relationship between the worker and the boss which is like slave-master relationship. Wesker warns the workers against this kind of relationship and he believes that unless they react, their rights are in the hands of their master. Although it is the problem the workers in the kitchen, Wesker takes Peter personally and he wants to send his messages through him.

It is also the same for *The Trilogy*. In the first play of *The Trilogy*, the working classes' loss of sense of purpose is conveyed through the Kahns. The Kahns which is an example from the society has similarities Wesker's own family. It is possible to see the features of kitchen-sink drama in terms of setting. The basement is very suitable to reveal the boring and monotonous life of the working class. Also in the second play, setting suits the character. Here the important character is Beatie

whose personal improvement is really outstanding. We can say that the play is based on Beatie. Wesker wants to reveal the importance of individual influences' important. Beatie has difficulties although she is willing to improve herself. In the last play, the personal experience of the couple is important. The title also emphasizes the word "personal". Ada and Dave escape from industrialised world and they want to build their own Jerusalem in Norfolk.

In short, the words "personal" and "personal relationships" are really important. The characters in the plays are important in their lives of social relationships and social responsibilities. Wesker gives mission to each of them to teach to live for others.

As is stated, Wesker's aim is to reflect the problems that common people faced in post-war England. These problems involve the hierarchical structure of British society, class discrimination and insecurity of the working class. While writing his plays, Wesker's aim is to appeal not only to the class of people who acknowledge plays to be a legitimate form of expression, but also to the bus driver, the housewife, the miner and the Teddy Boy⁶⁹. Since he comes from the working class and a Jewish origin, he can easily see the problems from the working class's point of view. Therefore, he uses his personal experiences, which are closer to the ones that the audience of the period have, in his plays to make the audience find themselves in them. In these plays it is also possible to see the post-war concept of naturalism in the drama. Because Wesker tries to reveal life as it is with its every single detail, he applies the naturalistic and autobiographical approaches. Finally, by employing these approaches Wesker achieves his aim and his early drama is considered successful.

⁶⁹ Wesker, Arnold, "Let Battle Commence", *Endore*, Vol V No 5 November-December 1958.

WORKS CITED

Primary Sources

- Wesker, Arnold, "Introduction: The Wesker Trilogy", Blaendigeddi 9 July 2000.
- Wesker, Arnold, "Thoughts on the Nature of Theatre Dialogue", 1995.
- Wesker, Arnold. **As Much As I Dare**. Century, London 1994.
- Wesker, Arnold, **The Wesker Trilogy**, Longman, England 10.edi, 1984.
- Wesker, Arnold "The Nature of Development", May 1979.
- Wesker, Arnold, **The Kitchen**. Penguin Books, England, Volume II, 1976.
- Wesker, Arnold, **"O Mother Is It Worth It?" Fears of Fragmentation**. Jonathan Cape, London, 1970.
- Wesker, Arnold, "Let Battle Commence", *Endore*, Vol V No 5 November-December 1958.
- Three e-mails from Wesker himself: wesker@compuserve.com

Secondary Sources

- Abrams, M.H., Ed., **The Norton Anthology of English Literature**, W.W. Norton&Company, New York&London, 1993. Sixth Edition, Volume 2.
- Barned, Philip, **A Companion to Post-War British Theatre**, Croom Helm, Kent. 1986.
- Bock, Hedwig and Wertheim, Albert Ed., **Essays on Contemporary British Drama**, Max Hueber Verlag, Munich, 1981.
- Chevalier, Jean and Gheerbrant, Alain, **The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols**, Penguin Books, London, 1996.
- Coppieters, Frank. "Arnold Wesker's Centre Forty-Two: A Cultural Revolution Betrayed", *Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 18, 1975.
- Davison, Peter, **Contemporary Drama and The Popular Dramatic Tradition in England**, Barnes&Noble Books, Totowa, New Jersey, 1982.

Hayman, Ronald. **Arnold Wesker**, Heinemann, London, 1970.

Hayman, Ronald, **Contemporary Playwrights: Arnold Wesker**. Heinemann, London, 1970.

Hodgson, Terry, **Modern Drama, from Ibsen to Fugard**, B. T. Batsford, London, 1992.

Innes, Christopher, **Modern British Drama 1890-1990**, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Kitchin, Laurence, "Playwrights to Watch", *The Times*, 21 September 1959.

Lacey, Stephen, **British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965**, Routledge, London, 1995.

Leeming, Glenda, **Arnold Wesker**. Longman, London, 1972.

Leeming, Glenda, and Simon Trussler, **The Plays of Arnold Wesker: An Assessment**. Gollancz, London, 1971.

O'Mahony, John, "Piques and troughs", *The Guardian*, Saturday May 25, 2002.

Rusinko, Susan, **British Drama 1950 to the Present**. Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1989.

Shaughnessy, Robert, **Three Socialist Plays**, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1992.

Taylor, John Russell. **Anger and After**. Methuen and Co. Ltd, London, 1970.

Wandor, Michelene, **Drama Today: A critical Guide to British Drama 1970-1990**, Longman, New York, 1993.

Wilcher Robert. **Understanding Arnold Wesker**. University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1991.

Wilson E. & Goldfarb A. **Living Theatre: An Introduction to Theatre History**. McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New York, 1983.

Zeifman, Hersh and Zimmerman Cynthia, Ed. **Contemporary British Drama, 1970-90**, Macmillan, London, 1993.

Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia, "Drama and Dramatic Arts", 2004.
<http://encarta.msn.com>