PREFACE

In celebrating basic human concerns and dominant impulses of 'living', Angus Wilson (Sir Angus Frank Johnstone Wilson) (1913-90) belongs to the genre of modern novelists. He is also one of the post-war novelists who has made significant contribution to the great tradition of English fiction. Surprisingly, however, he has failed to generate much critical interest, notwithstanding the award of the Nobel Prize to him in 1989. This is in sharp contrast to the critical acclaim accorded to his contemporaries.

Critical studies on Wilson have been limited so far. Some of the works available on him are: Angus Wilson (1969) by K.W. Gransden, The Novel of Compassion (1971) by James Gindin, Free Spirit: Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novels of George Eliot, Henry James, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Angus Wilson (1980) by C.B. Cox, and Critical Essays on Angus Wilson (1985) ed. by J.L. Halio which is a collection of essays by different writers. But all these works are rather limited in perspective for they concentrate only on some aspects of Wilson's novels. To our knowledge, no single work encompassing all his themes or preoccupations exist till date.

The aim of the proposed work, then, is a comprehensive study of the thematic implications of Wilson's novels. An attempt has been made to see if he has transcended the middle class ethos of morality and politics to present an abiding affirmation of life and things. Effort has also been made to find out his preponderant motifs.

The main interest in what is called good fiction centres round its characters for it is through them that the themes are revealed. So it becomes imperative to study first the characters and their development for a clear picture of the theme which is also dependent upon atmosphere, setting, tone, nuances, gestures, associations etc.
to carry it forward. While delineating the theme, the style has not been discussed, that being beyond the purview of the proposed work.

It has also become necessary to briefly outline the story of each novel at the beginning as it helps trace the development of the characters and thence, of the theme.

The present work has been divided into seven chapters. Chapter I, the Introduction, is devoted to a rapid survey of Angus Wilson's life and works. The subsequent chapters have been framed on the basis of thematic affinities. This division into chapters is only for convenience, and not absolute — it just offers a stand point to view each novel in its relations to the others. Chapter VII is a summing-up of the preceding chapters. No thematic repetition but only close affinities marked by significant variations which suggest a pattern of thought have been noted. There are, undoubtedly similarities of situations, behaviour and motifs which may have been unconscious attempts on the part of the author. These have been duly noted.

The short stories and plays have not been dealt with separately. They have been taken into consideration only so far as they show some closeness to a particular novel.

Notes and references have been placed at the end of each chapter.

The proposed study is divided as under:

**Chapter I**  
Introduction : Angus Wilson: The Man and His works.

**Chapter II**  
Emanation of Evil or Conflict between Public and Private Life  
Chapter III  Tragedy of rootlessness, alienation thereof (The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot, 1958 and Late Call, 1964).

Chapter IV  Family Politics and Neuroses (No Laughing Matter, 1967).

Chapter V  Limitation of the world of Magic (As If By Magic, 1973).

Chapter VI  Redemption through Art, Also, a Study of Cross Purposes (art and chaos) (Setting the World on Fire, 1980).

Chapter VII  The Summing-up.

For the purpose of this study, the edition of Wilson's works published by Secker and Warburg, have been used.

The figures within brackets at the end of a quotation indicate the page number of the text under consideration.