PREFACE

Arnold Wesker (1932) the author of more than a dozen full-length plays, a few television plays, short stories, poems, may be regarded as a fine example of the working class dramatists. Born in the East End in 1932 to a Jewish-Hungarian father and a Russian mother he had shown no indication of literary interests. His father was a tailor and after dropping out from school, he worked as a plumber and a kitchen porter. It was when he was doing a short course at the London School of Film Technique, he wrote his first play *Chicken Soup with Barley*. The success of this play in 1958 turned him into a prominent English playwright in Great Britain. His other plays *Roots* and *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* appearing in 1959 and 1960 respectively, forming the trilogy conferred the celebrity status on him. Since then his works have never left the public view and it is said that one of his plays has been staged somewhere in the world just about everyday since the early 1970s. Wesker's four plays (The trilogy + *Four Seasons*) are regarded as *Look Back in Anger*'s successor mainly because they are inspired by Osborne's model and articulated the disgust felt by many young playwrights of the time. His works enjoyed success soon after John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and the audience saw a close association between Osborn's play and Wesker's plays. Once the relationships was established Wesker's name was linked with the Angry Young Men such as Colin Wilson, Kingsley Amis and John Braine, the
novelists who were dissatisfied with the society and its class structure. The postwar playwrights Shelagh Delaney, Bernard Kops, John Arden and Arnold Wesker felt crushed by the British class system. More than others Wesker, a working class pastry cook without college education was more indignant about injustices in the society. Unlike Osborne and other Angry Young Men who attacked the society, Wesker expressed his concern about humanity and humanness. He attempted to establish an aesthetic environment for ordinary people particularly working classes. His chief spokes person on stage is Ronnie.

The working class context of Wesker’s plays had wide appeal and provided a fresh, new perspective for London’s audiences. His success was also due to his advocacy of an open society Britons wanted to create in the post war era. It may be noted that Wesker was not trying to be novel but was doing what he could do best. His plays are autobiographical drawing as they do heavily on his experiences in a Jewish family, with a communist mother and socialist friends. He wrote stories about his wife, his working class neighbourhood in East End London and his trade union aunts who fought the good fight for political causes. Since his plays seemed solidly centered on his working class home life critics tagged Wesker with other “Kitchen-Sink Dramatists”, an expression borrowed from an Art movement in the 1950s centered in North England and known for its realistic depiction of domestic, working class scenes. He wrote about
Jewish working class families because these were the people he knew. He wrote about them to call attention to the injustices done to them rather than to give an insider's perspective.

Wesker belongs to a family with a long tradition of communal and political activism with an emphasis on self-discipline, fellowship and social responsibility – all socialist as well as Jewish values. He is proud of his Jewish origins and he sees his work as rooted in socialist causes. As a socialist and a jew he subscribes to equality and justice, education and trading, the family and social responsibilities and more importantly the golden rule of Judaism, "Love thy neighbour as thy self". Being Jewish he mistrusts totalitarian governments and group tyranny.

The thirty years of Wesker's career as a playwright establishes the fact that "East End" and his Jewish upbringing provided material for his plays. His families' history of persecution, his experiences in the bomb shelters and his membership in the Zionist movement are at the back of his creativity. To quote Wesker, "Like most writers I have been impressed to ask myself what it is that informs my work. On reflection it seems to have been a Jewish temperament. Acknowledging a Jewish temperament is not the same thing as being preoccupied with Judaism." It may therefore be appropriate to describe Wesker as a secular Jew – one who lives by Jewish principles and values and remains at home in the Jewish community.
The thesis is divided into five chapters, four of which discuss the trilogy and *Four Seasons* followed by conclusion. In each of the chapters there is a discussion of the theme and technique with comments on characterization and dialogues.