CHAPTER II

*ROOTS*
The Roots of Wesker is an extension of the play The Chicken Soup with Barley. The play explores the theme of "self-discovery." Beatie Bryant, daughter of Norfolk farm labourers has fallen in love with 'Ronnie Kahn' from the chicken soup family. She returns from London to visit her family all of whom await the arrival of Ronnie. During the two week waiting period Beatie is full of Ronnie’s thoughts and words. To greet him, the family gathers for a huge Saturday afternoon tea. He doesn’t turn up. Instead, there comes a letter saying, he doesn’t think the relationship will work. The family turns on Beatie. In the process of defending herself she finds to her delight, that she’s using her own voice.

Act I begins with Beatie Bryant and Jenny Beales. It takes place in an isolated cottage in Norfolk, the house of Beales, where there is no water, electricity and no gas. It is September Jenny Beales is by the sink washing up. She is short, fat and friendly. A child cries for the sweets from the bedroom. Jenny goes to the cupboard to get the sweets and scares the child that if she is awake her father will be after her. The child disappears to her bedroom with the sweet. Jimmy Beales comes home. He is also short, chubby, hardly any hair left, with ruddy complexion. He is a garage mechanic. He seems to be in some sort of pain. He complaints of pain in the guts hardly he can stand up. Jenny arranges supper on the table but Jimmy is not in a position to eat. He picks up a pillow and lies down on the sofa holding the pillow to his stomach. Jenny informs about the pain to
her mother, who says that it is because of indigestion. Jimmy does not understand how indigestion causes pain in between the shoulders. Jimmy struggles a while on the sofa, and Jenny returns to washing. Jenny enquires Jimmy, whom he has seen that day. Jimmy replies that he saw Doctor Gallagher. As pain has eased Jimmy goes to the table. Jenny moves to serve him.

The couple hears the voice of a girl, that of Beatie Bryant, an ample, blonde, healthy woman of 22 years. She is the sister of Jenny. In a pleasing voice they wish to each other. Beatie enquires about the lovely smell she smells. It is the smell of the onions of the supper and bread of the harvest festival. Beatie asks Jimmy when he is coming to London again for a football match. Jimmy dismisses the match. Jenny enquires about Ronnie. Beatie informs that Ronnie will be coming down at the end of two weeks. Jimmy advises Beatie to marry Ronnie. Beatie plans to stay for two days at Beales and two weeks at home with her parents. Beatie makes herself at home and picks up a comic book and begins to read. At home she is like herself and does not seem to have been away and does the same lazy things and talks the same. Beatie berates her sister Jennie Beales for the family's lack of culture – not enough books, too much time spent on rock music and football pools.

Ronnie does not know about Beatie completely. He has known her for three years. In the three years Ronnie never visited their home. She
reads the comics brought by Ronnie for the sake of his nephews. Beatie begins to quote Ronnie. While quoting she imitates Ronnie both in manner and intonation. As the play progresses we see a picture of Ronnie through her. For Ronnie playing an instrument, painting, talking with friends is fun. He does not believe in the young women having fun by reading a comic book. After seeing her reading the comics he snatches them and reads them and remarks that "there's nothing wrong with comics." Ronnie stands up on a chair when he wants to preach, and just like Ronnie, Beatie stands up on a chair and says that "there is nothing wrong with comics only there is something wrong in reading the comics all the time."

Beatie had not thought to ask for unemployment benefit when she was out of the job. Ronnie reminded her. Beatie does not know how to talk. It's all alien to her. She is an English girl born and bred, cannot speak the language except to buy good and clothes. As soon as she returns home, Beatie becomes a disruption in her family's relatively comfortable routine by denouncing their way of life that she believes keeps them divided against themselves. She wants family members to straighten up their rooms patch up their differences, and open up their minds to each other - all before Ronnie Kahn comes to visit. On Ronnie's recommendations, she prevails upon them for a more substantial and honest exchange in their discussions. Ronnie had advised her to pick up a subject, talk and use the language. For him language is automatic just like walking. Language is
words, it is like a bridge. Ronnie had told her that if she knew the language
she could get through safely from one place to another. It took thousands of
years to build language. Ronnie suggested her to use the language.

Go on, pick a subject. Talk use the language.
Do you know what language is? Well, I'd never
thought before – her 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 more bridges you know
about the more places you can see! [To Jimmy]
And do you know what happens when you can
see a place but you don’t know where the
bridges is? (190) p

Jenny asks Beatie about the strike in London. Beatie says that London is
lovely without any noise. The city looks human flowing with people.
Jimmy has been chosen for the territorial Jubilee in London. They will
demonstrate and parade with arms and defend the country by preventing
war. Beatie asserts that Jimmy is not interested in defending the country,
just wants to enjoy playing the role of soldiers. Beatie tries to explain. She
had asked Jimmy whether he ever heard of Chaucer, whether he knew the
M.P. of the constituency or did he know when the British Trade Union
Movement started and did he believe in the strike action. She had asked
Jimmy that without having any idea over all those things what is the use of
participation in the war. The words of Beatie offended Jimmy.
Jenny: Beati – you been away from us a long time now – you got a boy who’s educated and that and he’s taught you a lot may be. But don’t you come push in ideas across at us. We’re all right as we are. You can come when you like an welcome but don’t bring no discussion of politics in the house wi ‘you’ cos that’ll only cause trouble. I’m telling you. (194) p

Jenny uninterested in the narration, leaves the room. Beatie is upset. She does not know why Jenny is afraid of talking. She used to sit with Ronnie and his friends and listen to them talking about things. Earlier she never heard half of the words. Ronnie tells her to ask him. ‘Always ask, people love to tell you what they know, always ask and people will respect you’ (94). But she does not ask Ronnie as she is like her mother, very stubborn. She becomes mad when they begin to talk about things as she cannot understand the things. Casually they sit and talk, suddenly they turn to her to ask something, she does not say anything. To avoid him she sometimes goes to bed or leave the room just like Jimmy. Ronnie scolds her for not asking him about the things. Jenny points out that they two do not have common ideals. Beatie says that it is not true and they are in love.

Beatie came to work as a waitress in the Dell hotel and saw Ronnie working in the kitchen. She had fallen in love with him. She chased Ronnie for three months with compliments and presents. Finally she gave herself to him. Ronnie never revealed his love but he used to take care of her. She
did not know much about Ronnie, he was different from others. Most of the time he wrote something. She followed Ronnie when he went to London. Beatie came to know that he was more interested in politics and art. He tried to teach her. Ronnie was a socialist. He would say that they could not bring socialism in the country just by giving speeches, they had to pass it on to others. She pretended as she had no interest. He tried to teach but she could not understand the things, at the same time she wanted to show her willingness.

Beatie learned taking pastries from Ronnie. Now she wishes to teach Jenny. Beatie always got annoyed when Ronnie tried to teach her to cook. She is of the view that once they got married and have children, there will not be any need for her to show interest in many of the things. With the words of Beatie Jenny comes to the conclusion that Beatie will not be happy with Ronnie. Before the marriage Jenny has given birth to a child. Jimmy married and received her nicely. Jenny is a good man, never asked Jenny about her past. Jenny severely warns. Beatie not to question their marriage as it is over and no one knows about it. They got married they are living together. Jenny does not believe in love.

Beatie looks round the room. It is very untidy. As she loves cleaning Beatie begins to clean and make some order. Jenny rushes to the oven and brings out a loaf of bread. Beatie is very hungry and wants to eat the bread.
Ronnie warned that she ate more than she needed. Without any discussion
Ronnie declared that if she became fat, he would leave her.

They drag all the clothes from the cupboard and begin to fold them. Beatie enquires about Frankie and Pearl. Frankie is the brother and Pearl is the sister-in-law of Beatie. Pearl and Susan do not talk with their mother, Jenny asks Beatie to make peace between them. They hear a sound of drunk old man approaching. Stan Mann is the old man, Jenny assists him. Earlier Stan owned cars, cattle and fowl. Now he has lost everything for drink. Because of the strokes he is paralysed yet he does not stop drinking. Stan Mann enters. He is not all that drunk. The cold water has sobered him a little. He is old about seventy-five and despite his slight stoop one can see he is a very strong upright man. He probably looks like everyman's idea of a farmer—except that he wears no socks or boots and hobbles on a stick. Jenny forces him to wear shoes. Stan screws up his eyes and wishes Jenny. He could not recognize Beatie. Stan exclaims that she has become fat and asks her to come near to him. He looks her up and down and enquires whether she got married. He comes to know that she has been courting from three years. He advises Beatie to marry soon. Beatie cannot bear sick men as they smell. She says that Ronnie's father has been paralysed. His mother Sarah washes him, change him and feed him. Sometimes Ronnie assists her. She does not help them. Ronnie say, 'Christ, woman, I hope
you aren't around when I'm ill." Old age terrifies her. Beatie promises Jenny to bake pastries for her.

In Act two scene one we find a discussion between Stan and Mrs.Bryant. Beatie comes home after the two days stay with Jenny. It is a cottage on a main road between large villages. It is neat and ordinary inside and we can see large kitchen, where most of the living is done. Mrs.Bryant is a short, stout woman of fifty. She spends most of the day on her own and consequently when she has a chance to speak to anybody she says as much as she can and as fast as she can. The only people she sees are the tradesmen, her husband, the family. She speaks very loudly all the time so that her friendliest tone sounds aggressive and she manages to dramatize the smallest piece of gossip into something significant. At the moment she is at the door leading to the garden., looking for a cat. She calls the cat and returns to the kitchen and starts peeling potatoes. Stann Mann appears round the back door. He has a handkerchief to his nose and is blowing rigorously Mrs.Bryant looks up, but continues her peeling. Stan finds it strange to have cold in summer, Mrs.Bryant suggests him to sit down and take rest. Mrs.Bryant asks Stan whether he has seen Beatie. Before coming home Beatie always stays with Jenny at the week-end. But Stan came early to look at the vicarage as it is coming up for sale. For time pass he visits the places. Stan asserts that youngsters are lifeless ruffians. They do not have eyes to look around. Winter goes and spring comes. They do not see
buds, smell the cool breeze and see the girls. If they see the girls the young
do not know what to do with them. In his youth Stan used to participate in
the public demonstrations. Mrs.Bryant suggests Stan to go home, have hot
milk and go to bed. She pulls the coat round the old man and pushes him
off. He goes off mumbling. She returns to peeling and turns on the radio.
Beatie appears round the garden and peers into the kitchen. Mrs.Bryant
jumps on seeing Beatie. Beatie announces the arrival of Ronnie at the week
end and wants to introduce all her family members to him. Beatie requests
her mother to patch up her argument with Pearl and Susan. Beatie shows
her dress to her mother. It is chosen by Ronnie Mrs.Bryant appreciates the
taste of Ronnie.

Beatie: Yearp. Now listen Mother. I don’t want any on
you to let me down. When Ronnie come I want
him to see we’re proper

She has tried hard for 3 years to keep hold on him. So she wants her
family members to behave properly in front of Ronnie. She does not want
to reveal her family conditions.

Beatie: Father too. I don’t want Ronnie to think I come
from a small-minded family. ‘I can’t bear mean
people’ he say. ‘I don’t care about their
education, I don’t care about their past as long
as their minds are large and inquisitive, as long
as they’re generous.
Beatie sounds like a preacher. She has something to say and does not care for others and will say what she wants to say. Wasps are flying around. Beatie asks her mother to take them away as she does not like nasty things Mrs. Bryant and Beatie move stealthily around the room hunting wasps.

Beatie tells her dream to her mother. She dreamt that she had died and heaven was at the bottom of the pond which was full of film stars and soldiers. There are two rooms. In one room they were playing and she cannot remember what is going on the other. She cannot remember God.

Beatie appears from the front room with two framed paintings. She sets them and admires them. They are primitive designs in bold masses. She has started painting five months ago. Ronnie encouraged her to carry on, and asked her to paint. ‘Paint! The world is full of people who don’t do the things they want so you paint and give us all hope!’ Mrs Bryant looks at them for a second and continues to do her work. She asks Beatie to bake the pastries. Beatie collects eggs, flour, sugar and marg. Mrs. Bryant continues to peel potatoes and Beatie proceeds to separate the eggs and starts whipping with sugar. Ronnie advises Beatie to whip the eggs till they are light yellow. Beatie starts singing a song. It is a coal mining song.

Beatie: Listen mother, let me see if I can explain something to you. Ronnie always says that’s the point of knowing people. ‘It’s no good
having friends who scratch each other’s back,’
he say. ‘The excitement in knowing people is to
hand on what you know and to learn what you
don’t know. Learn from me,’ he say, ‘I don’t
know much but learn what I know? So let me
try and explain to you what he explain to me.

(114) p

Beatie recites a song. Mrs.Bryant asks the meaning of the song.
Beatie in turn asks her mother how the words affect her. Mrs.Bryant likes
the tune of the song and the words never mean anything to her. Beatie
points out that it does not do anything as they will not find passion in the
third rate song. Mrs.Bryant asks Beatie to explain the difference between
third rate song and first rate song. Mrs.Bryant does not understand what
went wrong with Beatie. Beatie used to argue with Ronnie and ask him
what made a pop song third rate one, and could not understand what he
said.

Beatie: ‘Give yourself time woman,’ he say. ‘Time!
You can’t learn how to live over night. I don’t
even in now,’ he say ‘and half the world don’t
know but we got to try – try,’ he say, ‘’cos
we’re still suffering from the shock of two
world wars and we don’t know it. Talk, he say,
‘and look and listen and think and ask
questions.’ But Jesus! I don’t know what
questions to ask or how to talk. And he gets so
riled. And yet sometimes so nice. ‘It’s all going
up in flames,' he say, 'but I'm going to make
bloody sure I save someone from the fire.'

(115) p

Meanwhile a faint sound of an ambulance is heard. Mrs.Bryant
looks up but says nothing. Beatie turns to whipping the eggs again and
Mrs.Bryant begins to sing, Beatie helps her mother and ends the song.
Beatie has brought life to the house. Beatie never heard her mother
expressing such feeling. Mrs.Bryant feels that the world does not want
feelings. Mr.Bryant appears at the back door and lays a bicycle against the
wall. He is a small shriveled man wearing denims, a peaked cap, boots and
gaiters. He appears to be in some pain. Beatie greets him. He got pain in
the guts so he came early. Mrs.Bryant advises him to go to the doctor.
Mr.Bryant announces the death of Stan. Beatie informs Mr.Bryant about
the arrival of Ronnie and the whole family is going to greet him. They have
to behave properly and there should not be any swearing. Mr.Bryant
decides not to talk in front of Ronnie. A young man Mr.Healey appears
round the garden. He is the farmers son. Healey enquires about
Mr.Bryant's illness. Mr.Bryant assures that he will be alright and will join
the work at two 'O' clock. Mr.Bryant warns Beatie not to bake pastries
with his electricity. Beatie puts the things away. She goes into the other
room and returns with a small packet. It is a present. She throws it away
and begins to cry. Mrs.Bryant requests Beatie to stop crying. Beatie wants
her family to entrust honest feelings to each other, listen to one another,
and ask after the others needs. She decries their lack of curiosity and genuine interest in each other.

In Scene two, Mr. and Mrs. Bryant’s argue with each other. Mrs. Bryant tells Beatie that Jimmy Skeleton, the owner of the pub has been arrested for accosting some man in the village. Mrs. Bryant asks Beatie about Ronnie’s mother. Sarah got a sick husband. She has to look after him. Sarah is not educated and is a foreigner. Ronnie is also not educated. He is an intellectual, failed all his exams, but he reads the things, works for an hour, in a hot kitchen. He teaches kids in a club to act. At the week-ends he attends the political meetings. She tries hard to keep up with him at the week-ends. Beatie looks at her reflection. She finds herself funny. Mrs. Bryant switches off the radio. Beatie exclaims that she does not know anything about anything. Beatie never knows anything about the news as Mrs. Bryant always switches off after the headlines. She never reads good books as there are no books in the house. They live in the country, spend the time among the green fields, grow flowers and breathe fresh air and got no majesty. Their minds are cluttered with nothing and they shut out the world. They hindered her life. Ronnie’s mother Sarah cared more for Beatie than Mrs. Bryant. Sarah advised her to take up evening classes and learn something. Mrs. Bryant gives an explanation that they are only country folk and do not have big things. Beatie exclaims that it makes no difference between country and town girls. Mrs. Bryant expresses her doubt that Ronnie may not like them.
Beatie: Oh, he'll like you all-right. He like people. He d've loved Stan Mann. Stan Mann would've understood everything Ronnie talk about. Blust! That man liked livin'. Besides, Ronnie say it's too late for the old 'uns to learn. But he says it's up to us young'uns. And then of us that know her got to teach them of us as don't know. (128) p

Mrs. Bryant believes that Ronnie must have had a hard time trying to change Beatie but she tells her mother Ronnie does want to change people. He is of the opinion that they cannot change people. Can only give some love and hope they will take it. Ronnie is just trying to teach Beatie and she is trying to understand.

In Act III all the family members assemble. Beatie and Mrs. Bryant are making preparations to welcome Ronnie. It is raining Frank and Pearl Bryant enter. He is pleasant and dressed in a blue pin-striped suit, is ruddy-faced and blond haired. An odd sort of shyness makes him treat everything as a joke. His wife is a pretty brunette, young and ordinarily dressed in plain, flowered frock, Beatie Mrs. Bryant receive them. Frank had his lunch yet he is hungry. He comes to know that Ronnie is a socialist and a jew. He feels it as a queer combination. They have not received any letter from Ronnie. Beatie comes down dressed in her new frock and looks happy, healthy and radiant. Frank contemplates wants to look at the paintings but Beatie does not want to give them to him. Pearl appreciates Beatie's dress.
Frank asks for the other family members. Jenny and Jimmy are about to come and Susie and Stan may not come as they do not talk to Mrs. Bryant. Pearl and Mrs. Bryant do not speak. Just because one day Mrs. Bryant asked Pearl to change her Labour Tataman. When Mrs. Bryant took ill, Pearl asked her to do it for herself as she did not look ill to her. But Mrs. Bryant gives a different version. Beatie condemns it as a bloody family. Jenny and Jimmy enter and wish Frank and Pearl. They talk about storm and thunder. They find it strange when Beatie says that Ronnie loves it. Ronnie sits and watches the storms for hours. Beatie says that Ronnie has a sister who got married and lives nearby and her husband makes furniture by hard. London is an inhuman place to them so they live in the country. Mr. Bryant enters. He is in denims and rain coat tired and stooped slightly. Mrs. Bryant looks neat and wears flowered frock. Every one sits around now. Jenny takes out some knitting and Jimmy picks up a paper to read. There is a silence. It is not an awkward silence, just a conversationless room. Jenny left her child with Mrs. Mann. Mrs. Mann and Stan are not married. She just started looking after him when Mr. Mann had the first stroke and stayed with him. She lost her job because of him. Pearl left her child with her father. Frank reads out that a boy of 6 years assaulted the woman. Mrs. Bryant says that if she has the chance she will clear all the crime streets. Beatie springs up to action, grabs Jimmy’s hat and umbrella. Places hat on her mother's head and umbrella in her arms and asks her to sum up and give judgement. Beatie encourages her mother to speak and
give judgement. Every one leans forward eagerly to hear Mrs.Bryant talk. She looks startled and speechless. Beatie questions her why she passes judgement on people.

Beatie: Then why do you sit and pass judgement on people? If someone do something wrong you don't stop and think why. No discussion, no questions, just -off with his head. I mean look at Father getting less money. I don't see the family sitting' together and discussion' it. It's a problem! But which of you said it concerns you? (138) p

Mrs.Bryant does not want others to interfere in her matters. Beatie exclaims that it is her family. Mrs.Bryant asks her to leave the matter. Mr.Bryant now is clean and dressed in blue pin striped suit. Beatie asks them to stop gossiping. Pearl mocks Beatie that gossiping is better than quoting.

Beatie sets out a moral problem. It is a problem of right and wrong. Beatie asks them to listen. She says that there are four huts. Two huts on one side of a stream and the other two huts on the other side of the stream. On one side a wise man and a girl live and on the other side Tom lives in one hut and Archie in the other. There is a ferry man who runs a boat across the river. The girl loves Archie but he does not love her. Tom loves the girl but she does not love Tom. One day the girl hears that Archie is going to America. She decides to try again. So she goes to the ferry man
and ask him to take her across. The ferry man asks her to take off her
clothes. The girl does not know what to do. She goes and asks the wise
man for advice, and is told to do what she thinks right. The girl thinks
about it and being in love she decides to strip. The ferry man takes her over
but does not touch her. She rushes to Archie to declare her love again.
Archie promises to take her with him, so she sleeps with him that night and
when she wakes up in the morning he has gone. She is left alone. She goes
to Tom and explain her plight and asks for help. He chucks her out. She is
left alone. She cannot get back and cannot do anything. Beatie asks "who is
the person most responsible for her plight? There is a general air of thought
for the moment and Beatie looks triumphant and pleased with herself. All
the family members try to answer her question. Beatie answers that the girl
is responsible. She decides to strip off and go across and she does that
because of love. She becomes the victim of two phony men one who does
not love her takes advantage of her and one who says he loves her does not
love her enough to help her. Beatie jumps on to a chair, thrusts her first
into the air like Ronnie and glorying in what is the beginning of a hysterical
outburst of his quotes.

Beatie: No one do that bad that you can't forgive them.
We can't be sure of everything but certain basic
things we must be sure about or we'll die!

(141) p

Beatie: 'People must listen. It's no good talking to the
converted. Everyone must argue and think or
From the words of Beatie we can understand that Ronnie believes in human dignity and tolerance and cooperation and equality. They hear a knock on the front door. Beatie jumps to receive him but she sees a postman, who delivers a letter and the parcel.

Beatie reads the letter, the contents stun her. She cannot move. She stares around speechlessly at every one. Mrs. Bryant takes the letter and reads the contents in a loud voice:

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? (142) p

Now they come to know that he is not coming. An awful silence ensues. Every one looks uncomfortable. Jenny never expected it to happen
like that. Mrs. Bryant becomes angry but Beatie discovers herself for the first time. Ronnie always tried to help her but she had not received that properly. One he tried to teach her to type, but soon she gave up for fear of making mistakes. Now they hear the other side of the story. She realizes that asking questions can establish common values, can build community through understanding and lessen fear. Somehow she knows that the process of posing questions is an important tool because, beginning with dialogue, it nurtures the educational process. Questioning engages the listener, forcing responsible analysis and reducing indifference and ignorance. Since this argument is obviously more complex than we would expect of Beatie and her family, we have to recognize that Ronnie is speaking through her.

Beatie: He used to suggest I start to copy real objects on to my paintings instead of only abstracts and I never took heed. (143) p

Beatie: He gimma a book sometimes and I never bothered to read it.

Frank asks her of all the discussions they head.

Beatie: I never discussed things. He used to beg me to discuss things but I never saw the point on it. (143) p

She had no patience, she could help him. She recollects the words of Ronnie, "...we've been together for three years but you don't know who I am or what I'm trying to say and you don't care do you?" She has not understood Ronnie. Mrs. Bryant mocks her. "The apple don't fall far from
the tree – that it don’t.” Beatie finds fault with the family members. Now she wants their help, words of comfort Beatie requests them to talk to her. At last she cries. Th. words of Beatie hurts Mrs.Bryant. She slaps Beatie. Everyone is a little shocked at the harsh treatment. She wants her family to be like Ronnie's interested in politics, the fine arts, and socialism. She has been persuaded by him that the working classes can improve their quality of life through education, not so much in the way of better jobs and opportunity for employment but through a richer daily routine.

Mrs.Bryant blames Beatie that she never lived at home since she has left school. She went away from the house and filled her head with high class society. When it turns out she cannot understand herself.

    Well, am I right gal? I’m right end I? When you tell me I was stubborn, what you mean was that he told you was stubborn – eh? When you tell me I don’t understand you mean you don’t understand isn’t it? When you tell me I don’t make no effort you mean you don’t make no effort... (145) p

Mrs.Bryant can’t help Beatie, but asks Beatie to talk. Now Beatie accepts the reviews of Mrs.Bryant that the apple don’t fall far form the tree do it? She is just like her mother, stubborn, empty, without any tools for living. She finds that she does not have Roots. Though she comes from farm labourers yet she does have roots just like the town people. Frank wants to know the meaning of Roots.
Beatie: Roots, roots, roots! Christ, Frankie you’re in the fields all day, you should know about growing things. Roots! The things you come from, the things that feed you. The things that make you proud of yourself – roots! (145) p

Blust, we are dead? And you know what Ronnie say sometimes? He say it serves us right! That’s what he say, it’s our own bloody fault! (147) p

Beatie: Oh, he thinks we count all right living in mystic communion with nature. Living in mystic bloody communion with nature. But us count? Count Mother? I wonder. Do we? Do you think we really count! You don’t wanna take any notice of what them oleo papers say about the workers bein’ all … (147) p

Suddenly Beatie stops as if listening to herself. She pauses, turns with an ecstatic smile on her face. She is not quoting, now she is talking. All the family members proceed to sit. Beatie realizes herself “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 …

The murmur of the family sitting down to eat grows as Beatie’s last cry is heard. Whatever she will do they will continue to live as before. At last Beatie stands alone.

An important theme in *Roots* as Dornan points out that “through language and art the family will find its Roots – its connection to others in
a larger cultural sense. This theme is effectively presented through Beatie. Beatie, who has borrowed it from Ronnie, her lover, knows language is bridges, Ronnie has told her, “so that you get safely from one place to another. And more bridges you know about the more places you can see” (p.90) to her sister and others that conversation draws.

People together by giving them tools by helping each other. Language may be consoling in times of praises. Commenting on Beatie’s abilities to analyse and persuade, Dornan remarks, “She realizes that asking questions can establish common values, can build community through understanding and lessen fear. Somehow she knows that the process of posing questions is an important tool because, beginning with dialogue, it nurtures the educational process. Questioning engages the listener, forcing responsible analysis and reducing indifference and ignorance. Since this argument is obviously more complex than we would expect of Beatie and her family, we have to recognize that Ronnie is speaking through her. Wesker’s point is that education is essential as a pre-requisite to the compassionate treatment of others. His concern of course, is not only for all humanity but especially for the protection of ethnic minorities like the jews who have historically suffered torment. According to Wesker, the jews dread ignorance above all else; it is the evil force that has led to pogroms and persecutism.
Commenting on the continued relevance of Wesker's *Roots* and its major character Beatie Billington remarks, 'Time has altered the play in one respect: the absent boy friend Ronnie would today be preaching the virtues of pop, rather than high culture. Otherwise Wesker's play retains all its impassioned socialist humanity.'³

The play towards the end suggests that Ronnie and Beatie cannot come together that the country and the city are poles apart is not a happy closure to the play. Although that is the truth the playwright could have done well by making Ronnie accept Beatie and take upon himself the burden of transforming her. As Alan Dent says, "In the third act it begins to emerge that a young woman cannot really ever escape from her country roots, and that there is really nothing she can do about it unless she stays in town and stops interfering with her own rustic but contented relatives."⁴

There is a short criticism that Beatie was created as one who did not know her own opinion until her man taught her and abuse her. Wesker himself was unhappy with the nail implications. When the play was produced in 1989 he remarked that Beatie's character is "perhaps a little stylized."⁵

Whatever might the feminist or Wesker might say it reminds Beatie is so strong a women to become sentimental about her love for Ronnie. Instead of crying foul at her lover she has reconcile to the loss. It is to be
noted by the end of Act III she has found her own voice and began to articulate Ronnie's arguments with clarity.

Bernard in his introduction to the printed text of *Roots* writes that "Mr. Wesker's ear .... Is extraordinarily acute, enabling him to record the speech of his people with immense conviction."

J.C. Trewin inferred that "some of the roots we prize without considering them too closely need to be grubbed up at once."

Walter Allen sums up the play as "This is by far the best and most faithful play about British working class life that has appeared."

*Roots* is not the illuminating and self evident title that it might be: talking of an individual's 'roots' one is inclined to assume connotations of a rich family tradition and respect for the past. The play is concerned not only with these, but also, and sometimes contradictorily with knowledge about the present time, understanding of the modern world, and the ordering of values by other criteria than mere tradition. Its message is a more social version and a more accurate title for the play would offer an image of networks of interrelationships.

*Roots* suggests the organic development and wholeness of human personality which is as important here as it was in *The Kitchen*. The connection with the other parts of the trilogy however is peripheral as regards plot, and in sharp contrast as regards subject matter. The heroine,
Beatie Bryant, is engaged to Ronnie Kahn, who appears in the other two parts of the trilogy but remains unseen in *Roots*. *Roots* here are what give a sense of belonging to a world that has purpose, instead of which her family are helpless passengers ignored by those in power. The slow stop-and-start rhythm is totally convincing and quite unlike the more historic and voluble rhetoric of the Kahns and their friends. The control of different speech styles comes easily to Wesker. Beaties conversation is so very persuasive that it overshadows the massive and intransigent nature of the social problem, to which her escape is the exception.
REFERENCES:


