Conclusion

To conclude, I endeavour to say that Wesker is essentially a committed playwright and is as much a man of cause as he is an artist. There are critics who call Wesker a propagandist and deny him any artistry. In my opinion, one has to see his plays staged to see their real effect. As an artist, he is quite sincere and could do no more than ply his craft. He considers life, art, the artist's life, the man who lives, as parts of an inseparable whole. Wesker himself has expressed his theories about mass culture and the improvement of it in his celebrated final scene of *Roots*. He does not believe in sticking to any dramatic theory. He also does not like the idea of any change in the play by the director during production, and considers any such attempt on the part of the director as "rape".

Wesker has been unlucky that an eminent critic like John Russell Taylor has remained so resolutely hostile to his work. Taylor has been consistently doubtful of Wesker's merits right from the very commencement of Wesker's dramatic career. Taylor is of the opinion that *The Wesker Trilogy* and his other plays make a number of worthwhile points clumsily. To my eastern temperament, Taylor's statement appears to be an underestimation of Wesker's merits. To get a justful estimate of Wesker's work, we will have to take into account Wesker's merits and limitations as a playwright. No doubt, the plays of Arnold Wesker are not free from faults— the note of didacticism becomes too explicit in plays like *The Kitchen* and *Roots*; his technique
of flash-forward is ambiguous and confusing; there are too many scenes, monologues and quotations in some plays of Wesker; in plays like The Journalists and The Old Ones characters tend to explain themselves; there are embarrassing stage directions in some plays of Wesker.

It is surprising that Wesker has been more appreciated abroad than in England. The success of The Wedding Feast at Leeds or Love Letters on Blue Paper at the National Theatre did not generate an upward swing of interest in Britain, but meanwhile his work was eagerly seized on by theatres all over the rest of the world. Japan and Scandinavian countries showed a particular possessiveness about Wesker. He continued to direct his plays abroad with a success surprisingly in contrast with the ill-starred The Friends. The film of The Kitchen was shown in the United States in 1961. Chips was offered to the American audiences on October 1, 1963, and ran until February 8, 1964, closing after 149 performances. In 1964, Golden City won Italian Premio Marzotto drama award. In 1973, The Kitchen won gold medal as the best foreign play at National Theatre, Madrid. In 1980, Wesker was commissioned by the touring theatres of Norway, Sweden and Denmark to write a new play, Critas, which Wesker completed in July of that year.

It is interesting to note that foreign rights to Chicken Soup have been sold in Germany and Italy. Roots has been bought in the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Argentina, Holland, Turkey and Brazil. Jerusalem has been sold in the Scandinavian
countries, Germany and Yougoslavia.
Foreign rights to Chios and The Kitchen have been purchased in Germany, Holland and Argentina. Chicken Soup, Roots and Jerusalem have been successfully performed in Germany. Roots was also staged in Holland, Chios in Antwerp, and The Kitchen in Rotterdam. In 1963, Chicken Soup was performed in Bologna and Milan. All these facts prove that Wesker is one of the most important English playwrights. Harold U. Ribalow is quite right and justified when he calls Wesker one of Great Britain's "Big Three" — the other two being John Osborne and Harold Pinter.
With over a quarter of a million copies of The Wesker Trilogy sold by 1976, Wesker's name becomes conspicuous in the litany of modern playwrights.

I feel that Wesker's merits outweigh his shortcomings as a playwright. Thus Mr. Taylor's comment that The Wesker Trilogy and his other plays make a number of worthwhile points clumsily, does not present a true picture of Wesker. Every playwright has his own limitations, and therefore, we can not dismiss Wesker's plays in such a way. Wesker accuses Taylor of writing revengeful reviews and attacks Taylor's style, logic, assumptions and understanding. Though Taylor denies vindictiveness, but I feel that he has a sense of antagonism towards Wesker which he conceals under the guise of a chronicler's objectivity. In fact, Taylor has written "more in sorrow than in anger." Moreover, Taylor himself admits that his "lack of sympathy" with Wesker is "quite notorious."
Wesker is accused of being "old-fashioned". But I ponder that "old-fashioned" is not in any way a derogatory term because old fashions have a tendency to come in vogue again. But it is a fact that Wesker has suffered by his determination not to follow the fashion-conscious rhythms of the cultural world. He wanted to let his own vision mature and test it against harsh practicalities in the Centre 42 project. Another English critic Renee Winegarten says that Wesker blames the "inhuman, industrialist, capitalist society" for too many of the human ills. In her view, "Wesker takes no account of the complexity and corruption of human nature, its convolutions, its hidden abysses." The charge levelled by Renee Winegarten does not seem to be true. Wesker definitely takes account of the complexity of human nature in the character of Sarah Kahn in Chicken Soup, and in the character of Beatie Bryant in Roots. Pip Thompson in Chips with Everything is again a complex character. And in the speech of the Pilot Officer, corruption is clearly underlined by Wesker. In Golden City also corruption is clearly understood by Wesker, though Andrew Cobham, the architect hero, is not corrupted to the same degree as Pip is.

Wesker did not write merely for the sake of fame. He preferred respect to fame because in his opinion respect is a strong symbol of recognition. He once said:

I would not compromise on what I wanted to write for the sake of fame, or even for the sake of respect. If I did then I should soon be forgotten anyway, and probably
lose the respect of the people for whom I most wanted it.

Though Wesker did not seek fame, it has come. He sought respect, that too, has come. But his plays have not been admired wholeheartedly and he has been denied his due place, at least in England. He speaks for many but he is searching for his own identity — as a Jew, as a playwright, as an artist. Undoubtedly he is a playwright with a mission and is not interested in royalties alone. He has a personal vision and a voice of his own. He is prolific and does not write by rote. I anticipate that time will put Wesker in the right perspective and help him get his due place. His plays will also become dated soon.
Notes


