



No Laughing Matter

Angus Wilson

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

No Laughing Matter

Angus Wilson

No Laughing Matter Angus Wilson

Over 60 years in the life of an English family are covered as the author depicts the complex reactions of a family in which love and hate, interest and boredom, admiration and contempt struggle for mastery.

No Laughing Matter Details

Date : Published December 3rd 2005 by House of Stratus (first published 1967)

ISBN : 9781842324448

Author : Angus Wilson

Format : Paperback 608 pages

Genre : Fiction

 [Download No Laughing Matter ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online No Laughing Matter ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online No Laughing Matter Angus Wilson

From Reader Review No Laughing Matter for online ebook

Schaza Askar says

A panoramic novel that stretches from 1912 to 1967 *No Laughing Matter* is perhaps Angus Wilson's most autobiographical novel.

The novel chronicles the end of the bourgeois way of life as seen through the lives of the six Matthews children and their dysfunctional middle-class family. Depicting the decline of the Matthews family. The parents - Billy Pop and the Countess who are incoherent and impulsive creatures and they don't talk to each other - are objects of mockery to their children who promise themselves never to make their mistakes. Quentin, the eldest, is a socialist who adores women. He ends up having physical and psychological wounds. His enthusiastic views decrease over the years until he transforms into a cynical TV critic. He becomes crusty towards the end. He is also a fanatical patriot. He uses politics - like George Orwell - as a vehicle to move across countries. Whenever he's on TV, he is reminding people of the degenerating time they arrived at. Gladys, plump and submissive, is unlucky in love and eventually falls for a crook and con artist named Alfred. Alfred the fraudulent uses her in his tricks and deception. She ends up in prison because of Alfred the deceitful. Rupert, the handsome actor, has a successful career until he fails to adapt to the changing theatre. He somehow has the Oedipus complex and hates his father. Margaret is a brilliant and highly acclaimed novelist. She flies from a relationship to another trying to live the modern woman's life, when sexual intercourse was banned before marriage, but deep inside she becomes bitter as her twin sister Sukey sinks into domestic bliss. Sukey wanted to challenge her past life with her family and creates a decent happy life with her husband and four sons. She is playing her part so cleverly the thing that makes Margaret envy her. As for Marcus, the baby of the family, he becomes an art collector and believes that his career is his life. His mother turned him into a compliant and easy-dominant version of herself. She was continuously putting him down, while the poor lad can not read her changes in mood. He ends up as a homosexual. It is always about the dubious and questionable success the six Matthews children accomplish, which is exactly what happened with their parents.

All their life, the six Matthews children, were trying to draw away from their parents and everything related to their past, but they kept coming back to it.

An ambitious and enriching novel *No Laughing Matter* is an extraordinary work in its depictions of complex family relationships, and what is going on in their psyches, where everyone struggles to be an individual.

Catherine says

I started this while sleepy and got a bit lost in the extended interwoven dreams of the first section: I couldn't work out if the family were in Kensington or on the trail in America. I therefore determined to wait until I was awake before I got back to it but was on a rather active holiday so it got put aside for a week and re-started. Second time round it made sense, but if you like your narratives to be straightforward this isn't for you. There are continuing shifts of perspective and style and great gaps in the timeline (admittedly any significant events in these gaps are back-filled in later sections) that took some getting used to, and no less than eight major characters each with their own major role. So it took a bit of getting into, but, in the end it was fascinating.

The Matthews 'children' (well into their old age by the end of the book) are the product of a shabby genteel marriage between parents who appear to be at daggers drawn throughout their lives, but stay together until the end. In the meantime they make the lives of their children and their housekeeper/cook at best tense and at worse miserable and the book studies the effects this has on each of the children and their future.

I could see that it was well and cleverly done, follow the psychological development of each of them, and even understand why they forgave their parents in the end, but in the end didn't find either of the boys particularly sympathetic. Mags the struggling writer, Sukey the conventional mother and Gladys' sufferings for her lover were far more intriguing than the pompousness of war veteran Quentin or the studied interbellum queerness of Marcus. I also didn't really see the point of continuing the book to the next generation; the children didn't seem to grow much after their parents' death and it seemed more like a 'What Katy Did Next' bolt on - the bit that in a film would be a line or two of text next to a still of that person. There you go Mr Wilson, another format you could have played with.

Although I enjoyed reading this, I did leave it feeling relieved I'd finished rather than sad it had ended. Were it not so long, I might have rated it higher, and the rating may go up in retrospect.

Arukiyomi says

You know you're in the presence of literary genius when there are large parts of a novel you feel out of your depth in. I felt like I fell into a torrent at one end and could only touch the bottom about once every 50 or so pages. But, somehow, I enjoyed it. Not quite sure why though.

This is the story of a set of six quite unique siblings from childhood right up to their dotage. Using this vehicle, Wilson comments on the influence of the times on society while also very successfully portraying familial influences, both good and bad, which anyone growing up in that generation will be familiar with.

In a way it made me think of a fleshed out version of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* although I'm pretty sure that he'd turn in his grave if he could hear me say that. The writing style varies considerably and is one of the strengths of the novel. This was one of Wilson's later works and, as such, shows the full range of his abilities with some very abstract imagery, great dialogue and even long stretches in play form.

As long as you hang on tight and trust him, this makes for a curiously unified whole in the same way that a kaleidoscope actually shows you all of what you are looking at. But also like a kaleidoscope, you can feel disoriented along the way.

Through it all, the siblings battle on with their lives and there are great sections where the narrative really takes off. I particularly enjoyed the scene with Quentin behind the iron curtain encountering a young and less than ideal Soviet state.

But just as I found myself enjoying the plot, the characters or the style, Wilson would dive off down another literary alley and I'd find myself having to get my bearings again. It was all fairly exhausting in the end, in the same way as trying to hold your own against a chess master would leave you wanting to lie down in a quiet room. It's no wonder Wilson cited Proust as one of his strongest influences. Thank goodness he wasn't inspired by his verbosity!

Megan Baxter says

This is finished in the sense of "I give up," not in the sense of "I actually managed to finish it."

I got about a hundred and twenty pages in, came to the scene where two parents drown kittens in order to get money, stopped, thought, realized there was no part of this book I was enjoying, gently put it down, and backed away.
