



Gerard Malanga

start with something personal and see how it follows out and opens to something that's much bigger. That's what I'm interested in.

Should one then be able to project his own experience onto what has occurred on stage?

Yeah, you can do that if you want to. But it doesn't have any real value. The only time it has value is when you hook up with something that you *don't* know. Something that you can't pin down. Something where you say, "I feel something here that's going on that's deeply mysterious. I know that it's true, but I can't put my finger on it." I'm not interested if it reminds you of your mother, or your sister, or your cousin, or anything like that. So what? Everybody has something like that. That's what I mean about this social thing, that similarities between social neuroses in American society really don't mean much in the long run because they're always going to change. But if emotions that come up during a play call up questions, or seem to remind you of something that you can't quite put your finger on, then it starts to get interesting. Then it starts to move in a direction we all know, regardless of where we come from or who we are. It starts to hook up in a certain way. Those, to me, are mythic emotions.

What ties do you feel to the American West?

Well, it's all subjective. I just feel like the West is much more ancient than the East. Much more. It is. I don't know if you've traveled out here at all but there are areas like Wyoming, Texas, Montana and places like that, where you really feel this ancient thing about the land. Ancient. That it's primor-

"If you're only interested in taking a couple of characters and having them clash for awhile, and then resolve their problems, then why not go to group therapy or something?"

dial. Of course, you can say that about New England. But it doesn't have the same power to me, because it's this thing about space. No wonder these mysterious cults in Indian religions sprang up, you know? It wasn't as though these people were just . . . just fell down from the sky. It has to do with the relationship between the land and the people—between the human being and the ground. I think that's typically Western and much more attractive than this tight little forest civilization that happened back East. It's much more physical and emotional to me. New England and the East Coast have always been an intellectual community. Also, I was raised out here, so I guess it's just an outcome of my background. I just feel like I'll never get over the fact of being from here.

There's a very disorienting element in some of your plays. In certain places the dialogue is very realistic but the situation seems very surrealistic, and this dichotomy is never resolved.

I think it's a cheap trick to resolve things. It's totally a complete lie to make resolutions. I've always felt that, particularly in theatre when everything's tied up at the end with a neat little ribbon and you're delivered this package. You walk out of the theatre feeling that everything's resolved and you know what the play's about. So what? It's almost as though why go through all that if you're just going to tie it all up at the end? It seems like a lie to me—the resolutions, the denouement and all the rest of it. And it's been handed down as if that is the way to write plays.

What's the alternative?