

must write for yourself as a certain kind of audience. In the midst of writing, it always feels as though I'm writing for the thing itself. I'm writing to have the thing itself be true. And then I feel like an audience would be able to relate to it. The theatre's about a relationship.

Between the actors and the audience?

If there's no relationship on stage, there's not going to be any in the theatre. But that has to be answered first in the writing. If you and I sit down on stage as two actors, and we don't have a relationship, what's the point? A relationship's both invisible and tangible at the same time, and you can see it between actors. You can also see the absence of it. If it's there, the audience is related immediately.

How are you affected by criticism, both favorable and unfavorable, of your work?

Well, I'm not immune to it. But you've got to follow this thing that keeps telling you blow by blow what to do, no matter what. It's very apparent [to you] what the next thing is. But critics can't tell you that. How could a critic know what your inner condition is as a writer? I'm not saying [criticism] doesn't have a pull on me. It has a definite pull on me. But whether you believe it or not is what counts. I've been in a few rodeos, and the first team roping that I won gave me more of a feeling of accomplishment and pride of achievement than I ever got winning the Pulitzer Prize. At the same time, I'm glad that the plays are successful and that they do something to people. But I'm not trying to win another Pulitzer Prize or anything.

Do you feel as if the media has certain expectations of you?

Sure. It's hard to know what they're expecting. If they're expecting me to be myself, I can guarantee that will happen all the way down the line. If they're expecting me to be Eugene O'Neill, they may be disappointed. (*laughs*)

What writers have influenced you? What playwrights?

I don't know. What's the point?

Do you go to see plays?

I don't go to the theatre at all. I hate the theatre. I really do, I can't stand it. I think it's totally disappointing for the most part. It's just always embarrassing, I find. But every once in a while, something real is taking place.

So, as for contemporary influences on your work—

Have you ever been to a rodeo?

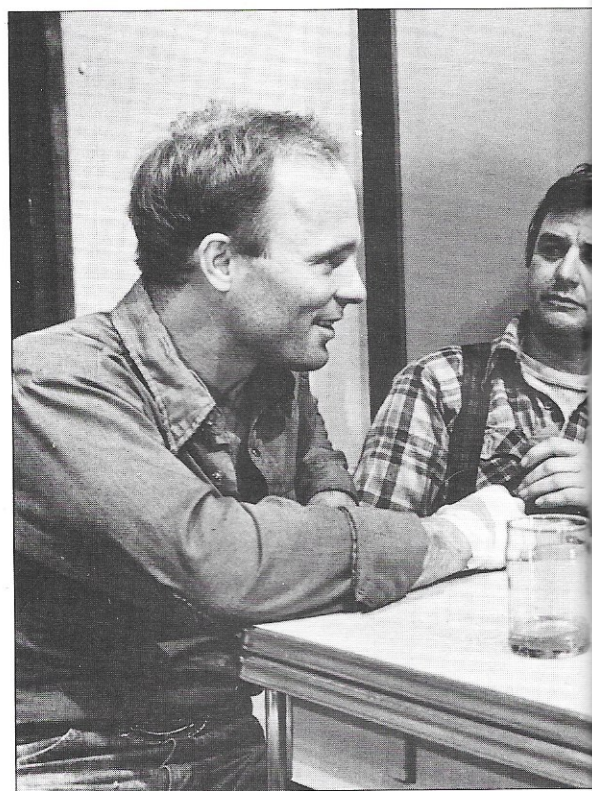
No.

Well, there's more drama that goes down in a rodeo than one hundred plays you can go to see. It's a real confrontation, a real thing going on. With a real audience, an actively involved audience. You should go to a couple of rodeos after you go to the theatre.

Do you consider your plays "experimental"?

I guess they are. I mean, it's all experimental. Experiment, by its very nature, has to do with risk. If there's no risk, there's no experiment. And every

"I never know when to end a play. A resolution isn't an ending; it's a strangulation."



play's a risk. You take a huge risk with something like that.

In its appeal? Its success?

No, a big risk in going into unknown territory. You don't know where you're going.

Are the risks in creating unusual situations, or a totally new way of presenting something? What risks do you mean?

Well, I don't know if you feel this or not, but I feel like there are territories within us that are totally unknown. Huge, mysterious and dangerous territories. We think we know ourselves, when we really know only this little bitty part. We have this social person that we present to each other. We have all these galaxies inside of us. And if we don't enter those in art of one kind or another, whether it's playwriting, or painting, or music, or whatever, then I don't understand the point in doing anything.

How does that relate to your own work?

It's the reason I write. I try to go into parts of myself that are unknown. And I think that those parts are related to everybody. They're not unique to me. They're not my personal domain.

Is there then something cathartic about the whole process of writing?

No. Catharsis is getting rid of something. I'm not looking to get rid of it; I'm looking to find it. I'm not doing this in order to vent demons. I want to shake hands with them.

How long have you been writing plays?

Seventeen, eighteen years.

How have your plays changed?

Well, actually, they're the same. They're just closer to a verification of what these emotions are. In a