

It's been said that nothing can shock anymore. Still, there's an element in some of your plays that seems determined to shock us.

Yeah?

In *Curse of the Starving Class*, for example, you have a character pee on stage.

Well, I wouldn't do that again if I had to do it over again. I was looking for a gesture, for something without words. It's funny how you look, you know? You look at all parts of yourself for it. Sometimes it comes out when someone pisses on stage. It's a little flashy, you know, and overblown, and maybe embarrassing, but that's the way it came out. It's just a gesture. Like the toasters in *True West*. There's an intention there that's intrinsic to itself. It only makes sense to itself. It doesn't mean anything. You can call it absurdist or whatever you want to; I don't care what you call it, but it's true to itself. It takes the impulse that was behind it to its absolute extreme, further than you would expect. And that's what I wanted. Trying to figure it out is not the point. I think explanation destroys it and makes it less than it is.

How do you write?

You mean the technical thing? I write by hand first, I write everything in notebooks. Then, after I get everything where I want it pretty much, I start typing it. And as I'm typing it, I'm rewriting it. I'm copying from the notebook and I'm rewriting on the typewriter.

Do you consider yourself a poet?

That's a very high thing to be, a poet. Cesar Vallejo is a poet. I'm not a poet yet; I'm working on it. I think a poet is a musician. Poetry is music. So it doesn't matter what form it's in, whether a line extends across the page or goes vertically. That has nothing to do with it. It's the musical nature of the language and everything that's going on in it. Vallejo, Neruda, Hank Williams. He was one of the original country-western singers. Have you ever heard any of his stuff? Great American poet. "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry"? You never heard this? Jimmy Rodgers? You've got to look into this.

Do you see your work as evolving to a certain point?

No, I don't see it like that at all. Maybe it's just going in a circle. I don't know; I really can't tell you whether it's evolving or not. I mean, it's definitely different. There's more at stake now; there's a bigger risk. □



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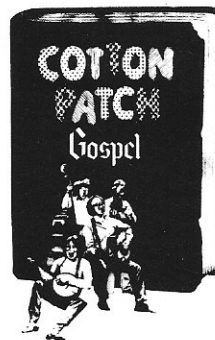
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