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Life

by CHARLES L. MEE

Music.

People come through
from one side to the other,
in and out:

The five year old girl,
eating an ice cream cone, smiling,
sitting in a red wagon pulled by her father.

A golf cart, driven like crazy by a caddy,
while, in the back,
a couple embraces passionately.

A couple being pulled along on a picnic blanket
with food and a champagne bottle in a bucket,
and she is drinking and drinking and drinking the champagne.

An electric wheelchair—
a man driving,
a woman sitting on the handlebars,
she running her fingers through his hair over and over and over.

A skate board,
with a woman lying on her back on the skate board
as a man twirls it round and round in ecstasy.

A silk sheet, with silk pillows,
she lying back in her lingerie
he taking photos of her.

A homeless guy with cart of stuff.

A man and woman on a bicycle built for two—
one peddles while the other eats pizza.

As many of these vignettes as there are vehicles with wheels.

The first Greek prologue rushes out
in a panic, knowing he is late,
arranging his white gown,
and delivers a prologue:

PROLOGUE

I'm sorry

I'm late

I was meant to be here before anyone else.

I'm the prologue.

In my day, we always had a prologue
so that everyone would know what the evening was going to be
what everyone was about to see
and what it would mean
so everyone wouldn't feel lost
and hopeless and pointless
and wondering what they were doing here this evening.

And so we are doing this again
even though,

in our time,

it's no longer actually possible for a prologue
to say what something actually means.

Because, as you are about to see,
the world contains many many

one might even say millions

of amazing individual human beings

living in a world of absolute meaninglessness.

I mean

no one pretends they can say any more
what anything means.
I mean
philosophers don't pretend they can say that.
Neurophysiologists, biologists,
brain experts
they all know they don't understand anything.
Playwrights will often tell you what everything means
because they don't know any better.
They think it is possible to say what everything means
because they don't know anything except
how to put together
a narrative story with a beginning and a middle and an end
cause and effect cause and effect cause and effect
but they don't waste their time reading philosophy or science
and so they think they know what their shows mean.
They even think their shows will tell an audience what to think
about their lives
about the world
about society
and politics
and everything.
And it will, but it will be
umm
it will be
uh, you know.
It might even be that Nietzsche turns out to have been right
when he said
people make up stories
to hide from themselves
the fact that beneath their feet lies an abyss
of utter meaninglessness.

[The second prologue came rushing in
toward the end of the first prologue's speech,
pulling together his toga
and brushing his hair with his fingers.]

SECOND PROLOGUE

Well, I think what we can say now
more than that
is that everyone
meaningless or not
is a work of art.
And therefore an extraordinary
fantastic
creature.

FIRST PROLOGUE

A work of art
you mean something that someone else made?
Or a self portrait?

SECOND PROLOGUE

Self-made.
Of course,
tremendously influenced
in its making
by the times in which it was made
and the culture and so forth
so yes, influenced, it almost might be said
partly made by some someone else's
and, of course,
people look different from one century to the next
because there is history
and things changing
and the ever-changing culture
so when we look at a self-made work of art
we can see it is from the twentieth century
or the twenty-first century
and that will definitely affect
our understanding of who we are looking at
and how the looked at person
has composed himself to be looked at.

[The third prologue has entered,
fixing his toga and his hair
as he entered.]

THIRD PROLOGUE

I'm sorry I'm late.
I was meant to be the prologue this evening.
We have different prologues on different evenings,
and this was my evening
and I gather that
because I'm late
you've been told things that just aren't true.
The thing is
ultimately
the ultimate true prologue is that
human beings are not able to understand
their lives or the world
or anything at all.
We are able to experience life
but not to understand it.
That's it for us:
we experience life,
we don't understand it.

FIRST PROLOGUE

I don't think people are going to like that.

SECOND PROLOGUE

They want a story that makes everything cohere
or an explanation if it doesn't come together
but in any case
some understanding of what it's all about
not just a bunch of random bla bla bla

THIRD PROLOGUE

You know
it may be
that
they will just have to figure it out for themselves

although, of course, like life itself
I suppose that's not a possibility
but rather everyone will need to content themselves
not with understanding
but simply with the experience whatever
or else
if that's not acceptable to them
then they can leave
they can go out and have a cup of coffee and a snack
and then come back whenever they want
or else they can just leave if they would like to.

SECOND PROLOGUE

no, if they just leave they will feel bad
in retrospect it would feel to them like suicide

[The first and third prologues throw up their hands.

Angelica enters.
Looking hesitant.
She steps forward.
Takes out a razor blade.
and starts cutting herself,
her forearms, upper arms,
neck, thighs as she speaks:]

ANGELICA

I was hoping for a point.
I was hoping for some help
with my life.

But

so

now I see

and so

[a couple of the prologues
gently and sympathetically
put their arms around her
and help her to exit
followed by the third prologue.

And now
a group enters, one at a time,
and in pairs and trios,
taking positions where they stand
looking a little nervous and uncertain,
not quite sure where they are supposed to be standing,
and then watching the others come in.

A naked guy, painted red,
with a white face, red lips
black all around the eyes
red and black streaks on his face

A guy with a cubist face and body

The steel head of a bulldog rusted and black and brown

A woman,
her face painted with blotches of crimson and green and blue

Rodin's naked thinker

A Lichtenstein cartoon drawn face

A light blue octopus with a sweet, sleepy woman's face

Sunbathers—as many as budget allows

THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING

THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING
THEY SING

as they sing
it may be that one of them
just for the sheer pleasure of it
dances

and, after the song,
a number of couples sit at café tables
having cups of tea.

So,
like this:
Tom and Edna are a couple at one table
Harriet and Millicent are a couple at another table
Henry is alone at a table talking on his cell phone to someone
George is alone, with earphones, skyping with someone
(or else George is just talking to the air)

TOM
To me
if I wanted to have a happy life
I would just want to have a life with you.

EDNA

What do you mean?

IF you wanted a happy life.

You mean you don't want a happy life?

TOM

I do want a happy life.

Yes, I do.

Would you live your life with me?

EDNA

Yes.

I would love to.

I love you.

TOM

I love you.

EDNA

Do you think we can be together our entire lives?

Or things will change?

You will change?

Your feelings will change?

TOM

The way I feel

feels more certain than any other way I've ever felt
about anyone or anything

it feels forever.

I've never been more sure of anything.

I feel it so solidly within my whole self.

I love you.

EDNA

I want to live with you forever.

HARRIET [speaking to George]

I know how I feel.

This is how I feel.

GEORGE

And this is how I feel, too.

HARRIET

And you can count on it
forever
you can depend on it
so it will bring you total peace.

MILLICENT

Could we be considered a couple?
And tell people
when we introduce ourselves
that we are a couple?

TOM

It could be.

HENRY

Or not.
If you prefer not.

MILLICENT

I would like it.
Because I love you
and just because of that
but also
just as a secondary benefit
it would make me feel so secure.

TOM

This is a feeling we like.

EDNA

Nothing better.

GEORGE

Security is such a rare thing these days.
I don't understand it.

It feels so good
so warm
so eternal.

HARRIET

You would think it would be something
everyone would hold on to
rather than just have a fling
have another fling
marry again and again
feeling always on the edge of the cliff
anxious
and thinking it could all pass away
at any moment.

EDNA

And that's why
when I say I love you
I want you to know you can count on it
forever
so we both feel secure in our lives
at peace
centered
relaxed
warm
comfortable
at ease
happy.

When you think how we used to live in the ocean,
in the salt water,
and you think
we don't live there any more:
really we just took the ocean with us
when we came on land.
You know, the womb is an ocean really,
babies begin in an ocean
and human blood has the same concentration of salt as seawater, and no matter
where we are,

on top of a mountain
or in the middle of a desert,
when we cry or sweat,
we cry or sweat seawater.

In the beginning,
all human beings were half human
and half animals,
like the ichthyocentaur,
which was half fish and half centaur.
They were human down to the waist,
they were dolphins from the waist down,
and they had the feet of horses or lions.
They were related to sea horses.

And so
for your diet
you shouldn't forget seaweed
nori, digitata, kelp, bladderwrack
because the body should only take in foods
that come from wet places

We need to replenish
all those vitamins and minerals
that come from the sea.
This is why we recommend seaweed
and not just
as some people think
for body wraps
for your firming and toning seaweed facial
but as they say
what is good for the outside of your body
is good for the inside, too
because
we are all sea creatures
and we cannot thrive
unless we embrace our oceanic selves

and remember
always
to have an oceanic diet.

[Tom,
who went out a few moments ago,
returns with a piece of installation art.]

TOM
I've brought you something.

EDNA
Oh.
What is that?

TOM
It's a tree stump.

EDNA
Oh.
Yes.

[A decayed rotting beautiful tree stump
from the middle of the woods
on a little red wagon.

And now
more installation art pieces are brought in by the other actors

HENRY
I have something.
For you to enjoy.

[an artist's easel
with a rectangular frame on it
and an old filthy gray T-shirt covering the frame
and hanging down on one side

with some random messy painting on one corner of the T-shirt
and a skateboard fastened to the front of the T-shirt
with a Coca Cola sign fastened to the skateboard]

GEORGE

I'm putting this here.

[a statue of an upside down elephant,
not standing on his head, but standing on his extended trunk,
his hind legs up in the air

and the other actors bring in other items
but without needing to say anything

a three decker hamburger
with tubes of paint instead of burger in the bun

a dress mannequin
on a stand with wheels
and hanging from the sides
a pitchfork and a big cane harvesting knife

a white pig covered in tattoos

5 foot tall upright silver thumb

the bust of a guy
with a hundred toy cars glued to his head

brown metal ammunition boxes

a detour sign for a chest

two dozen fabulous socks

All the actors but one leave

and the actor who remains has a dialogue with one of the installation art pieces

INSTALLATION PIECE

You're just going to leave us here?

ACTOR

I thought so. It's a nice place.

INSTALLATION PIECE

But just to be here, for no reason at all.

ACTOR

Well, for the reason of being somewhere.
You'd rather be somewhere than nowhere.

INSTALLATION PIECE

Right.
Even though we have nothing to do.

ACTOR

Except to BE.

INSTALLATION PIECE

To be.
Right.
Is this a philosophical discussion?

ACTOR

What would you rather have?

INSTALLATION PIECE

I'd rather have lunch.

ACTOR

What do you eat?

INSTALLATION PIECE

I eat anything.

ACTOR

Here.

Here's a protein bar.

INSTALLATION PIECE

Thanks!

ACTOR

OK!

INSTALLATION PIECE

What is the point?

ACTOR

Of?

INSTALLATION PIECE

Of life.

I mean what is the point?

And is there life on other planets?

And so when we die

in a trillion trillion years

some other planet will be the center of the universe

and those life forms aren't people with arms and legs

but rather fish

or vegetables that move around like octopuses

and what is the point for them?

just to enjoy the moment?

or the few years they have

and that's it

no worry about the point of life

or the goal

or the meaning

or the job

but just existence for a while

and then disappearance

with everyone saying

well, but that's a planet that can't support any life form anyway.

Silence.

ACTOR

Right.

Another moment's silence,
and then the actor turns and leaves.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

I wasn't hoping just to be left behind.
What I had in mind was an active life.

THIRD INSTALLATION PIECE

Sure.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

But that's not how it's turned out.

FOURTH INSTALLATION PIECE

I understand.

a urinal brought in by a half dozen of the actors

INSTALLATION PIECE

Omigod, it's the urinal!

URINAL

Hi!

INSTALLATION PIECE

Hello.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

Wow! The urinal!

A celebrity!

THIRD INSTALLATION PIECE

Right!

I know!

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

What are you doing here?

URINAL

What are you doing here?

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

I mean are you having an appearance?

You're going to make a speech or something?

URINAL

I'm just visiting friends.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

Wow.

I've always wondered like

what it's like to be a urinal.

I mean not that I want to be pissed on.

I mean I'm sorry

I'm not meaning to make bad jokes about it or anything

I mean I really always wondered

after I heard about you

what it was like to be a urinal

a famous urinal.

URINAL

Well. Sure.

Well, you can imagine.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

Well no, not really actually.

[Some actors come back in to see the urinal

An Arcimboldo vegetable face guy

A Louis XIV woman in court dress

A Niki de Saint Phalle figure

A person looking like a gold clock from Versailles

A cubist head and face atop a plain suit

One of the prologues

FIRST INSTALLATION PIECE

You know

if no one else has anything in mind

I have a poem I'd like to recite

is that ok?

I mean I don't want to take attention away from the urinal

This was actually something I wanted to do

even before he got here

if that's ok with everyone.

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

sure

FIRST INSTALLATION PIECE

It's something in fact that I hope everyone will join in on

if you like

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

Sure.

That would be great.

FIRST INSTALLATION PIECE

So, I'll start

and you join in?

SECOND INSTALLATION PIECE

Good.

[And, in fact, after the first installation piece begins,
as the poem gets going
the other installation pieces join in
along with the actors.]

Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm

Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm

Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm
Bumm bimbimm bamm bimbimm

Bemm bemm
Bemm bemm
Bemm bemm
Bemm bemm

Tilla loola luula loola
Tilla luula loola luula
Tilla loola luula loola
Tilla luula loola luula

Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiEe
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla

Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee

Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee

Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiiEe
Tatta tatta tuiEe tuiiEe

Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla
Tilla lalla tilla lalla

Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tuii tuii tuii tuii
Tee tee tee tee
Tee tee tee tee

Ooo bee ooo bee
Ooo bee ooo bee
Ooo bee ooo bee
Ooo bee ooo bee

and then come the dancers

A guy with a bird for a head (birdbrain?)

A guy with a board box for a body
and a bag for a head

A guy wearing a garbage can upside down
so his head is a yellow glass bowl
in a hole in the bottom of the garbage can
his shins and feet can be seen at bottom
his arms come out the side and hold crutches or canes

A guy who has a huge eyeball for a head

HARRIET

It's true.

With a novel or a book you always come to the end,
but you can just keep reading or writing one postcard after another and never come
to the end.

Each one of them unique—and never an end

This is a kind of pleasure we simply don't know any more,
though it seems harmless enough when you think about it.

There's no point to it, and yet it's such a pleasure.

It's not what you would call goal-oriented,
that's the pleasure of it, I suppose,
you just take it for its own sake.

EDNA

And I like that you can never tell which is the front
and which is the back of a postcard.

[Someone comes into the café,
looks around,
sees the blackboard on the back wall
and goes to it
and writes some of Einstein's formulas on the blackboard
while everyone else is speaking.
Formulas like these:

$Rpv - 1/2gpvA = 8\pi G/c4Tpv$

$RuzBv = [S2]x\{TuayM - TuaBy + luaBlaya - TuayTaBa$

but more of them.]

MILLICENT

I'm worried about what we know these days
because Leonardo da Vinci only had 83 books in his library
and you might say
that was a lot of books in the 15th century
and that's true
but still

only 83 books
so he wasn't distracted by a billion things
he could focus
and think thoroughly about what he thought about
and spend time thinking about it
and exploring it
and seeing what he might do with it
what he might make of it
whereas these days
you might snap up a little bit of this
and a little bit of that
and stick them together
and think wow! that's cool!
and you're done
and it's a superficial life
yes
it might be a wide ranging, free, open life
not closed minded
open to the world
all admirable things
but still
superficial
to overcome that
to feel fully and subtly and completely
all the nuances and quiet little aspects
and deep, flowing things
that's hard these days.

[Angelica comes in,
accompanied by one of the prologues,
looks around,
listens to the people talking,
and takes out her razor blade,
and begins slashing her arms and thighs,
and, after a little while,
the prologue will put a gentle arm around her,
whispering in her ear,
and gently escort her out.]

HARRIET

I like a lover who kisses my fingertips.

MILLICENT

Or even better: my wrists.

EDNA

I like a lover who kisses my face and my eyelids,
who spends a lot of time kissing my eyes
and running his fingertips around my nose
and running his tongue along my lips.

HARRIET

I like a slow, deliberate touch.

MILLICENT

I like a lover who plays with my feet.

EDNA

I like a lover who's a little bit rough,
who grabs my hands and holds them so tight I can't get away
or messes up my hair and pins my legs the way a wrestler might.

MILLICENT

I like a lover who holds my buttocks
or enters me from behind,
not anally, you know, but from behind.

HARRIET

I like to have the lights on.

EDNA

I like to have it last a long time.

HARRIET

I like to start with a few clothes on and be undressed slowly .

MILLICENT

I like to have my thighs massaged.

EDNA

I like to hear a man groan with pleasure.

TOM

The thing is
when you said
we ought to be together
I thought you meant it.

EDNA

I did mean it.

TOM

And then it turns out
you travel all the time.

EDNA

Just for my job.
Just to do my job.

TOM

And you want to keep that career.

EDNA

I think I should.

TOM

But I don't want to be with someone
who isn't with me.

EDNA

So you mean
we're breaking up.

HARRIET

I thought I was your only love.

GEORGE

You are my love.

HARRIET

But then you want what you call
an open relationship.
And that breaks my heart.

MILLICENT

Now I know what it is to be really really sad.

TOM

I didn't ever want to break up.

HENRY

I'm sorry.

MILLICENT

No, I'm the one who's sorry.

TOM

But I think you give me no choice.

EDNA

It's you who give me no choice.

GEORGE

A life should be open
to a million fantastic choices.

HARRIET

No.

EDNA

Really.

No.

[A guy comes in with a violin,
quietly finds a place to stand,
and begins to play his violin.
He plays on and on.]

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ

In childhood, in our father's house,
we live the happiest life, I think, of all mankind.
But when we have understanding
and have come to youthful vigor,
we are pushed out.
And this,
we must approve
and consider to be happiness.

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ

No man was ever born
but he must suffer.
He buries his children and gets others in their place;
then dies himself.
And yet men bear it hard,
that only give dust to dust!
Life is a harvest that man must reap like ears of corn;
one grows, another falls.
Why should we moan at this,
the path of Nature that we must tread?

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ

Heaven and earth were once a single form;
but when they were separated from each other into two,
they bore and delivered into the light all things:
trees, winged creatures,
beasts reared by the briny sea—
and the human race.

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ

Let any man get hold of as much pleasure as he can
as he lives his daily life;
the future will always be unknown.

TOM

The best thing is a life free from sickness,
the power each day
to take hold of what one desires.

EDNA

The time of life is short,
and once a person is hidden beneath the earth
he lies there for all time.

HENRY

A man is nothing but breath and shadow.

GEORGE

Time makes all things dark
and brings them to oblivion.

HENRY

A cup without a bottom is not put on the table.

GEORGE

First you will see a crop in flower,
all white;
then a round mulberry
that has turned red;
lastly
old age
of Egyptian blackness
takes over.

[As the violinist continues to play
a guy in a dress does an angry
solo dance
full of shivering and convulsing

A giant statue with several Picasso heads
comes through.

A guy crosses the stage
with a skeleton on his back
its hands and arms over the shoulders of the guy carrying him
so the guy can hold the skeleton's forearms to keep it on his back

A skeleton's skull
five feet tall
with an upside nose in the shape of a heart, painted red
and deep black curving lines defining various parts of his skull
walks across stage.

The guy with the violin stops playing,
looks disappointed,
looks at his violin,
feels angry,
goes to one side of the stage,
opens the bottom drawer of a storage cabinet,
puts the violin into the drawer,
looks at it,
hesitates,
then puts one foot into the drawer
and stomps the violin repeatedly
so that we hear the sound of shattering wood.

Silence.
After a moment
the violin player opens the drawer
where he smashed his violin.
He looks down at the violin in the drawer,
then reaches down
and picks up the violin
and takes it back out of the drawer,
and the violin is in perfect shape.
He brushes a little dust off it,
holds it with gentle affection
and leaves, embracing his violin,
as we hear other music come from the heavens.

Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music

Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music

There is a parade of beautiful dresses
worn by both men and women

and a solo guy comes out
rolls up his pant leg
lies down on the floor on his back
puts one naked foot in the air
and paints it ten different messy colors with oil paint

And now the actors bring in some more
beautiful installation pieces:

a baby carriage with wire frames on top of it
holding a boulder
and it's just left there

a christmas tree
with fork feet holding it up
and decorated with large silver fish
{the fish will speak later}

a dress mannequin
on a stand with wheels
and hanging from the sides
a pitchfork and a big cane harvesting knife
{and the pitchfork speaks later}

one big shiny ball
with another one placed on top of it
kind of like a snowman
but pink or orange

a perfect rectangle
made of crushed beer cans
or some glistening aluminum or silver metal

a hundred dolls standing up in a perfect rectangle
{and they will speak later}

a vast assemblage of
giant red lips
the reins and bit for a horse
blonde hair
a red sweater
{and the lips will speak later}

a big red balloon poodle
{it will speak later}

TOM
Getting back together
I wish I understood
There are too many factors going on
for me to understand.

EDNA
We should all embrace love, because

TOM
this is a good thing.

EDNA
we need to be touched
we need to be felt

TOM

we need nurturing

GEORGE

we need some sort of manifestation of love

HARRIET

because life is a process of becoming

GEORGE

and once you are involved in that
you're lost forever

MILLICENT

but what a fantastic journey!

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ {the fish?}

Every day is new.

Every flower is new.

Everything in the world!

Every morning of your life!

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ {the pitchfork}

In Japan, even the running of the water is a ceremony!

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ {the dolls}

You have to ask yourself:

when was the last time you listened to the water?

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ {the lips}

People take showers

and run water in their sinks every day of their lives

and they never hear it!

ANOTHER PERSON SITTING IN THE CAFÉ {the poodle}

You should go home tonight

and turn on the faucet

and listen to the water!

MILLICENT

Because:

HENRY

it's beautiful!

GEORGE

And how many people these days are intimidated when someone says:
I want to touch you.

MILLICENT

Everybody has to be loved!

HENRY

I was talking with a little boy once,
and I said: what can you do, David.
And he said: I can spit.
He could spit!

I said: what else can you do, David?
And he said: I can put my finger up my nose.
And I said: you bet you can!
Isn't it some sort of miracle
that you can raise your hand whenever you want to
and want to put your finger in your nose
and it gets there!
We should celebrate our wonder!
Everyone!
You've got to have people who are interested in your tree!
And not the lollipop tree!
And you've got to be interested in their tree!
You've got to say:
show me your tree, Johnny.
Show me your tree,
and then we'll know where we can begin!

HARRIET

You can't blame people for how they are.

TOM
Right.

EDNA
I could agree with that.

HENRY
I could agree with that.

GEORGE
What's the argument here?

TOM
And not so simple.
Sometimes you look at the branches of the camphor tree,
and you see how tangled they are.
They make a person feel
estranged from the tree in a way
and yet it's because the tree is divided into so many branches
that sometimes the image of the tree is used to describe
people in love.

INSTALLATION ART PIECE {the balloon poodle}
What I think is— what love is:
Love is how you relate to people

TOM
or, if your love is channeled in some other way
it is how you are cold or indifferent or hurtful
to another person.

EDNA
And so love is who you are
and how you are
what kind of person you are

TOM
it's the most factual thing about how you are.

GEORGE

You can't talk your way around it,
make it come out some other way.
It remains the deepest fact about you.
The only way you really know how you relate to other human beings
is in the most secret, secret place
where you are most vulnerable
most open to your private self
when you are making love

HENRY

and you don't even know what you're doing
until you're doing it
and then you see what sort of person you are
whether you are making love with someone else
then you've done it
it's not talk any more
you've acted out your most private deepest self
and lodged it in the flesh of another human being

MILLICENT

so that another person feels pain or pleasure
and then you know:
this is who I am.

HARRIET

This is what I do.

EDNA

And who I am

MILLICENT

what I want to do

HENRY

what feels good to me

GEORGE

the person or the behavior I can't keep myself from

is so strange
so idiosyncratic
is so odd
so that usually I repress it

INSTALLATION ART PIECE {the dolls}

if I find myself drawn irresistibly to a man
with bushy eyebrows
or a comforting voice
or something even stranger
muscular thighs
or hair on his chest
or a certain weakness
a vulnerability
so that I sense I can hurt him in a certain way
and then take him to me like a wounded animal
and comfort him
if these are the things that make me weak and shaky with desire
I know this is my truest self
what makes me break out in a sweat.
the kind of thing that makes me a little sick to my stomach
it feels so incredible to me
and of course, I feel embarrassed by it
because people will think I am a sick person

ANOTHER INSTALLATION ART PIECE {the lips}

and you think: I don't even know where this comes from.
You think back through your childhood:
could it have been this or that?
But the thing that makes you crazy with desire
is too exact and too
strange
to have come from anything you can remember.

MILLICENT

You have touched the real mystery of human beings
the thing beyond any knowing
the thing that comes from so deep down
no one can tell you where it comes from

TOM

And you hope it is good
and sweet
and generous
and warm
and gentle
and lovely

EDNA

Because this is what you are giving
to someone you love.

Music
Music

People come through
from one side to the other,
in and out:

The five year old girl,
eating an ice cream cone, smiling,
sitting in a red wagon pulled by her father.

love song
and then the lights fade.

Charles Mee's work has been made possible by the support of Richard B. Fisher
and Jeanne Donovan Fisher.