Life

by C H A R L E S L. M E E

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,
herself, 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
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 that 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.]
They can recite it.  
Or they can sing it the way it has been sung.  
It is Kurt Schwitters’ poem Ursonate.

And the urinal can take a solo in the middle.]

FIRST INSTALLATION PIECE
UHNUHNUHNUHNUHNUHNUHNUHN
UHNUHNUHN
EEEEEEEEEEEE
POOH-POOHPOOH-POOHRRRA
slslsl

[the others can begin to join in now]

drrrrroomoom
UHNUHNUHNUHN
aaaaaaatzeen
UEEEE EE EE EE EE
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

Rrupfttilffto?
Bee bee bee bee bee
Zee zee zee zee zee

Pe pe pe pe pe
Pii pii pii pii pii
Poo poo poo poo poooo?

Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm bimbimm
Grimm glimm gnimm 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
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 loola
Tilla loola luula loola
Tilla luula loola loola
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
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
and they all dance

music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing
music and dancing

And, when we come to the end of the music and dancing,
people find chairs in the café
and sit down with one another
and have a conversation.

EDNA
I miss postcards.
You know.
Postcards are unique,
and no one sends them any more.
It just isn't done.
And I often wonder: why not?
Has someone taken a moral position?
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 it’s 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=8piG/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
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
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
Music
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.
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.

And then,
when everyone else is gone,
a single dancer enters
and does a solo to beautiful love song music
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
love song
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.