

# Under Construction

by Charles Mee

*At the doorways entering the theatre  
an artist's easel will have a blackboard on it  
announcing:*

Tonight we will be performing scenes

6

79

29

22

67

107

18

57

122

5

41

This version of the script is the way it's being done tonight  
with SITI company,  
and it seemed to us that these scenes,  
in this order, are wonderful.

But, in the future, when we, or others do it,  
it may be that we will want to throw out some of these scenes,  
write some new ones,  
change the order of things.

And so, in this way, the piece will remain,  
like America,  
permanently  
under construction.

## *PROLOGUE*

*Bing Crosby sings Dear Hearts and Gentle People:*

I love those dear hearts and gentle people  
Who live in my home town  
Because those dear hearts and gentle people  
Will never ever let you down

They read the good book  
From Fri- 'til Monday

That's how the weekend goes  
 I've got a dream house  
 I'll build there one day  
 With picket fence and ramblin' rose

I feel so welcome each time I return  
 That my happy heart keeps laughin' like a clown  
 I love the dear hearts and gentle people  
 Who live and love in my home town

There's a place I'd like to go  
 And it's back in Idaho  
 Where you're friendly neighbors smile and say hello  
 It's a pleasure and a treat  
 To meander down the street  
 That's why I want the whole wide world to know  
 (I love those dear hearts)  
 I love the gentle people  
 (Who live in my home town)  
 Because those dear hearts and gentle people  
 Will never ever let you down

*[It may be that a few members of the cast enter,  
 take their position as backup singers,  
 and sing the chorus parts along with him.]*

They read the good book  
 From Fri- 'til Monday  
 That's how the weekend goes  
 I've got a dream house  
 I'll build there one day  
 With picket fence and ramblin' rose

I feel so welcome each time that I return  
 That my happy heart keeps laughin' like a clown  
 I love the dear hearts and gentle people  
 Who live and love in my home town

(Home, home, sweet home  
 Home, home, sweet home  
 Home, home, sweet home  
 Home, home, sweet home)

**Scene 6. Thanksgiving***A table**people enter all talking in a hubbub**several conversations at once**as they bring in bowls of mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce,  
string beans....*

SOMEONE SAYS

The point is,

of course they are both games

and they both are played in a rectangular area

and the players go back and forth from one end to the other

but, in football,

all the players gather in a huddle

and the quarterback decides on the play

and then the players all go out and execute the play

and it is over

and so it goes starting and stopping and starting and stopping

with plans and more plans

whereas in basketball the whole thing is

you take out the ball

and you make it up as you go along

like life

it's an open thing

so this is why I say

the game people should really talk about

is not football

but basketball

ANOTHER PERSON

Or hockey.

FIRST PERSON

Right. Or hockey.

ANOTHER PERSON

Hockey. I don't know about hockey.

*And the following conversation about getting organized  
occurs at the same time as the sports conversation--  
two conversations going on at once around the dinner table.*

SOMEONE ELSE

I think it's time we got organized.

No more rushing for the train in the morning.

We need to have a leisurely breakfast before work

No more instant coffee.  
 No more grabbing a piece of toast on the way to the station.  
 We need to start living life sanely.  
 No more hotdogs and hamburgers for dinner.  
 We're going to start making stews and casseroles.  
 No more television.

ANOTHER PERSON SAYS: What?

THE FIRST VOICE AGAIN: No more television. I'm going to give the damn set away  
 and we're going to sit in a family group and read aloud.

ANOTHER PERSON SAYS: And you ought to get your mandolin fixed, Billy, we could  
 have friends in and sing.

THE FIRST VOICE AGAIN: No more passive entertainment.  
 No more homogenized milk.  
 We're going to save two cents a quart and shake it ourselves.  
 We need to start doing the things we believe in.

*and then mom enters with turkey*  
 saying turkey turkey turkey turkey turkey  
*and the others exclaim:*

oh, wonderful!  
 turkey! turkey!  
 and cranberry sauce!  
 I love Thanksgiving....

*and dinner table conversation resumes*  
*as people serve themselves turkey and mashed potatoes*

SOMEONE  
 Of course it could be  
 you didn't see last weekend's games.

SOMEONE ELSE  
 I did.

FIRST PERSON  
 Not everyone did.  
 The fact is,  
 if you didn't go to the games,  
 you can just shake hands with half the student body,  
 because they didn't go either.

*[random overlapping talk  
would you pass the cranberry sauce, please,  
thank you  
would you like a drumstick?  
have you had gravy?....]*

And some of the kids  
when they were asked whether they went to the last game  
what did they say?  
they said, oh I had a date, or  
I didn't have any way to get there.  
And what I say is:  
Sure, sure, you had a date,

and what's wrong with going to a basketball game on a date?  
And, as for not having a ride,  
you can always ask around and find one.  
Because  
if the team thinks that the game is important enough to play,  
then the student body should think it important enough  
to attend and to show the school spirit.  
To have top teams  
we have to have a winning student body  
that wants its teams to come out ahead!

*[the father stands to make a toast about thanksgiving]*

THE FATHER

Now, then  
one thing I think we can all agree about  
I think we can all agree  
this is a moment to remember how grateful we are for all we have  
for being able to gather with one another  
for the warmth of home and family  
and a time of safety--  
because  
when you look back  
not so long ago, in the past, people lived in places  
with thick stone walls and thick iron bars over the windows  
and they had towers on top of the big houses  
where the family could all retreat in case they were attacked  
and pour boiling oil down on top of the people  
who were trying to get into their house  
but these days we don't think about that any more  
these days there is nothing between us and a hurled rock  
but a big picture window made of glass

this is how safe we are  
 and so we count our blessings  
 we look back over the past year and take pleasure  
 in what we have done  
 and say to ourselves, even tho Bill may not have done so well with his geometry but  
 it's not a tragedy

*[he goes on and on and on  
 so that people begin getting up one by one from the table  
 excusing themselves  
 first the mom to go to kitchen to check the pie:  
 "I'm just going to check on the pie."]*

and after all it seems he couldn't help himself  
 although, frankly, I don't think  
 he should have blamed his mother  
 mothers are not always to blame

*[then the grandmother slips away from the table:  
 "I'm just going to help Sally in the kitchen."]*

sometimes the kids have to take the blame themselves  
 because when a girl gets pregnant in high school  
 she ought to leave, that's all

*[then the son has a phone call:  
 "Sorry, Dad, I have a phone call."]*

her boyfriend should stay and finish high school  
 so that he can get a good job when he gets out  
 that's my opinion

*[then another son forgot something--left his skates outside:  
 "Oh, god, I think I left my skates outside!"]*

but she should go home and have the baby  
 and then, when the baby is a little older  
 maybe the mother can get a job at the checkout counter  
 at the A & P...

*[So, at the end,  
 the dad is alone  
 with two girls  
 and he leaves, defeated, saying  
 "I'll just help clear the table."]*

*The two girls are left behind.*

*One of the girls begins to say what she wants.*

*Perhaps the other joins in.*

*Maybe some of the other women straggle back in  
and they join in voicing the list of desires, too.*

*They shouldn't repeat one another's lines--  
each should have their own lines]*

What I want.

I want to be respected.

I want my family to be proud of me.

I want to be creative.

I want whiter teeth.

I want more money.

I want better knees.

I want better skin.

I want a better body.

I want an end to war.

I want a tighter ass.

I want a better job.

I want to eat what I want and not gain weight.

I want people to care.

I want a better life for the poor.

I want to feel.

I want to be strong.

I want to skydive.

I want to do a back handspring.

I want to be protected.

I want to be safe.

I want to have nightmares

and wake up and share them with my lover.

I want to fuck like a teenager but with the knowledge of an adult.

I want what I don't have.

I want there to be justice.

*AND NOW ALL TOGETHER AS A CHORUS  
THE SAME LINES AT THE SAME TIME*

I want what everyone else has.

I want more than you have.

I want what people don't know about.

I want good friends who are there for you and tell you what you need to hear and make you laugh so hard you pee in your pants.

*[Deafening hard rock music from the present moment--  
not the fifties--  
so that we have moved from then to now in an instant--  
and the women break into a wild, ecstatic, enraged, abandoned,  
insane messy hair dance  
at the end of which  
they simply stop  
and walk off without ceremony.]*

*It could be that there should be a large television set  
to one side, for the entire performance,  
and it should have continuous programming on it,  
so that there could be news, the history channel,  
home movies,  
other random stuff--  
the context for everything we see,  
or else just some more random home movies.*

**Scene 41. The Backyard**

*the dad and his son with golf clubs*

NARRATOR

In class it's not so bad but when school's out and the others go off to enjoy themselves well, if you're what they call a shy guy, that's when you really feel it. The awful loneliness of being new in town. You don't know how to make people like you and you find yourself holding a grudge against them. You're standing on the outside looking in. You might have something to contribute to their conversation, but nobody cares whether you do or not. There's a barrier and you don't know how to begin breaking it down. You imagine they keep watching the way you look, the way you act. They think you're different. So you head for home. What else?

DAD

Hello, Phil. How's everything.

PHIL

Okay, I guess Dad, but school here isn't like it was back in Morristown. I don't think I ever will fit in, not here. I'm different from the guys in this town.

DAD

What about the other fellas, what do they do? What do they like?

PHIL

Gosh Dad, I don't know. I never noticed.

DAD

Why not try to find out?

NARRATOR

Now there's an idea. Maybe a good idea. Worth a try anyway, and tomorrow's not too soon to start. Pick out the most popular boys and girls in school and keep an eye on them. Who are they, now? Some of them are right here in this class. Andy McIntire for instance. People like him all right. Chick Gallagher rates high in popularity too. There's Jane Davenport. She is popular with the boys and girls. And Jack Gilbert, what's he got that makes people like him so much? Andy's got something to say and Jack's listening. He really seems interested. Come to think of it, Jack's always interested in what people are talking about. Maybe that's why he hits it off so well with everybody. Look at Jack and Beezy over there. Girls seem to like them. Why? What's the angle? They do act kind of polite. At least they seat the girls and give their orders to the waiter. They aren't loud like some of the guys.

CHICK

Cherry coke, chocolate coke, milkshake and malt, double chocolate malt, okay, I got it.

BOB

Oh!

Excuse me. I've got the orders for this table.

CHICK

I'm sorry, Bob. I was just helping out during rush hour.

BOB

Gee, thanks a lot Chick, that's swell.

PHIL

You know Dad, there's a mixer Friday night, I, uh, I wasn't going to go but in the drugstore the other day, Chick said I ought to come.

DAD

Good idea, Phil.

PHIL

Well, Dad, there is a girl I'd like to take, Mary Lou Wright. But, I'm not sure she'd go with me. I've never even talked to her. I'd probably fall all over myself. Besides, she's popular. She's probably got a date by now.

DAD

Well, it is pretty late to ask a girl. Why don't you just go stag.

PHIL

I think I will. You know, I think it will be easier after I've had a chance to talk to her at the mixer. You know what? I kind of think I'm going to fit in after all.

### **Scene 76. Blog**

*In the 80's movie Beehive by Frank Moore and Jim Self  
and filmed by Barry Shils  
two people in giant bee costumes fly through the air.*

*Meanwhile a guy comes out on stage,  
puts his feet into moonboots that are secured to the floor  
and rocks back and forth*

*while a young woman speaks into a microphone.*

*So, this is her blog, or podcast:*

BLOG

So I haven't updated this blog in forever.

So Yeah.

I live in NY now.

My apartment is pretty sweet.

We're right behind lincoln center,

and it sounds dumb but I feel rejuvenated  
everytime I walk through it.

I get the feeling like "this is why i'm here."

I wish I knew more people here.

I kinda feel like this nobody in a sea of nobodies,  
which has never really happened to me before.

It'll change soon. I hope.

SO life is ok.

It's a bit scary, but life is ok.

Stuff is a happenin.

Which is a good thing. I hope!

I had this WEIRD ASS nightmare last night.

I was in a parking lot

coming out of an event or a concert of some sort

and these evil cat people came in a black van

and got out and reeked havoc on the place  
 blowing things up and killing people with their claws  
 and i got away in a backseat of someone's car,  
 and for some reason I was taken to my friend Kim's house,  
 but it wasn't where Kim really lives,  
 it was my house,  
 but Kim lived there in my dream,  
 and i was telling her about the killer cat people  
 and she thought i was crazy,  
 and then i was in the backyard  
 and i saw the black van pull up front  
 and these 20 somethings got out,  
 but i realized that they were actually  
 the cat people disguised to not look catish  
 and be completely human,  
 and i tried to make myself not seen  
 and walked to the neighbors backyard  
 and somehow i wound up hiding in their bathroom  
 only for the door to be busted in by the cat people  
 and my friend Kim,  
 who I was alerted to was a cat person as well.  
 And then I woke up  
 and I thought:  
 What does this all mean?

**Scene 74. Travelling Salesman**

a salesman comes into a hotel room  
 puts his sample case on the bed  
 turns down the covers,  
 gets in bed

*he takes one book after another out of his sample case  
 and we hear a voiceover--the voice of a woman--  
 reading the jacket copy  
 as he turns the book over in his hand  
 and skims the pages*

**VOICEOVER**

Beebo Brinker  
 by Anne Bannon  
 Lost, lonely, boyishly appealing--  
 this is BEEBO BRINKER.  
 She landed in New York,  
 fresh off the farm...  
 her only certainty was  
 that she was different.

So innocent  
 she did not notice  
 that women watched her  
 when she entered the room.

Odd Girl Out  
 by Anne Bannon  
 She was the brain, the sparkle,  
 the gay rebel of the sorority,  
 and wonder of wonders,  
 she chose Laura as her roommate.  
 That was how it began.  
 Suddenly they were  
 alone on an island  
 of forbidden bliss.

Women in the Shadows  
 by Anne Bannon  
 A guarded look across the room.  
 That was all she dared to do,  
 and this was Greenwich Village  
 where almost anything goes....  
 She had learned long ago  
 that she could never love a man--  
 that only another woman could excite her.  
 And Laura found the strange,  
 sloe-eyed girl exciting.

I Am a Woman  
 by Anne Bannon

THE SALESMAN SPEAKS WITH THE VOICEOVER  
 She looked around the cellar  
 with Laura following her gaze.  
 "I know most of the girls in here...  
 I've probably slept with half of them.

THE VOICEOVER FADES OUT, LEAVING THE SALESMAN TO SPEAK ALONE  
 I've lived with half of the half  
 I've slept with.  
 I've loved half of the half  
 I've lived with.  
 "L for love," Beebo said,  
 looking into space.  
 "L for Laura."  
 She turned and smiled at her.

"L for Lust  
and L for the L of it,

THE VOICEOVER FADES BACK IN WITH THE SALESMAN  
L for Lesbian  
L for let's--

THE VOICEOVER ALONE  
let's,"  
she said,  
and blew smoke softly  
into Laura's ear.

*and then he sits, looking disconsolately out front,  
while on the back wall behind him we see this scene from  
On the Waterfront*

TERRY

It wasn't him!

(years of abuse crying out in him)

It was you, Charley. You and Johnny. Like the  
night the two of youse come in the dressing  
room and says, "Kid, this ain't your night— we're  
going for the price on Wilson." It ain't my night.  
I'd of taken Wilson apart that night! I was ready—  
remember the early rounds throwing them  
combinations.

So what happens— This bum Wilson  
he gets the title shot— outdoors in the ballpark!  
— and what do I get— a couple of bucks and  
a one-way ticket to Palookaville.

(more and more aroused as he relives it)

It was you, Charley. You was  
my brother. You should of looked out for me.  
Instead of making me take them dives for the  
short-end money.

CHARLEY

(defensively)

I always had a bet down for  
you. You saw some money.

TERRY

(agonized)

See! You don't understand!

CHARLEY

I tried to keep you in good with Johnny.

TERRY

You don't understand! I could've been a contender. I could've had class and been somebody. Real class. Instead of a bum, let's face it, which is what I am. It was you, Charley.

**Scene 114. Reality TV auditions**

*a live video cameraman comes on to videotape whatever happens on stage*

*and then others straggle back in  
and now everyone wants to be on camera  
and gets in front of it  
and does bits to get noticed  
everyone does audition pieces as tho for a reality tv show  
someone walks on a beam  
while a couple keeps falling down a set of steps like rag dolls  
Whatever special gifts the actors have.*

*And, during this, another piece of text is spoken--  
For example, John Cage:*

JOHN

I think the real changes that will take place in society will take place primarily through our renunciation of government and our concern with the earth as a problem in relation to the living of human beings. I think that modern art and modern music have served to draw the attention of the individuals to the enjoyment of the world around them. And when you see that work in art then you can have more courage that it will work in the world outside of art.

I think it was Steve Reich who said it was clear I was involved in process, but it was a process the audience didn't participate in because they couldn't understand it. I'm on the side of keeping things mysterious, and I have never enjoyed understanding things. If I understand something I can put it on a shelf and leave it there.

If I understand something,  
 I have no further use for it.  
 So I try to make a music which I don't understand  
 and which will be difficult for other people to understand, too.

## **Scene 22. The barber shop**

THE BARBER SAYS

the question naturally comes up:  
 what is an acceptable haircut, and what isn't  
 and the truth is  
 you need to ask if you don't want to get into trouble  
 does a boy have his mother's permission?  
 this boy went home one day with a crewcut  
 the first time he had ever been to the barbershop on his own  
 and when he got home his mother made him wear a hat  
 even though it was the middle of summer  
 and when his father came home  
 his father was upset  
 and you wouldn't think a haircut  
 could cause such trouble in a marriage  
 but a haircut is a very big deal  
 the mother would never let her son  
 come back on his own to the barbershop for a haircut  
 and so, just at the age when the boy should have been discovering  
 how to be an independent person  
 he was crushed  
 his spirit was crushed  
 and so, in the end,  
 he never grew up to be a confident self-assured person

*[a guy is getting a haircut  
 while other guys stand around  
 listening to this chatter  
 and the dairy queen maids are hanging around, too*

*And the narrator steps up to a microphone and says:*

NARRATOR

Nonetheless,  
 things can still work out  
 if a boy and girl know how things ought to go.  
 Take, for example, The First Date.  
 John calls for Mary at her home at the appointed time.  
 Mary is ready for John  
 and answers the door herself when he rings

(because he has come to see her, not some member of her family).  
 She greets him pleasantly  
 and leads him into the living room  
 where her parents are waiting to meet him.  
 Mary introduces John to her parents by saying something like,

MARY

"Mother, this is John.  
 Dad, you remember John plays center on the team."

NARRATOR

This little lead as a part of the introduction  
 gives Dad and John something to talk about the first thing.  
 Dad may ask a simple question  
 on how the team is doing this season.  
 John is put at his ease and answers,  
 while Mother and Dad relax and enjoy getting acquainted with him. In a few moments  
 Mary picks up her coat and,  
 smiling at John,  
 indicates that they had probably better be on their way.  
 If John holds the coat for Mary,  
 she accepts his assistance graciously;  
 if he does not,  
 she slips into her coat without comment and prepares for departure. As the couple is  
 about to leave,  
 Mary turns to her parents and says,

MARY

"We are going to the Bijou for the double feature

NARRATOR

(or whatever),

MARY

you know. We should be home before midnight."

NARRATOR

This declaration of plans  
 and specifying of time for homecoming  
 has a double purpose.  
 It lets her folks know that she is taking responsibility  
 for getting in before it is too late,  
 and prevents them from putting down the parental foot too hard. Further, such initiative  
 on Mary's part  
 lets John know what is expected of him in getting Mary home.  
 If Mary has already talked over their plans with her parents

before John has arrived,  
 her last minute announcement is simply  
 a confirmation for all four of them.  
 The couple leave,  
 with John opening the door for Mary,  
 while she accepts the courtesy with a smile.  
 When they reach the box office,  
 Mary steps back and looks at the display cards  
 while John buys the tickets.  
 Inside, if there is an usher,  
 Mary follows him while John follows her down the aisle.  
 If there is no usher on duty,  
 John goes ahead and finds seats while Mary follows.  
 Once seated, John helps Mary slip out of her coat and get settled. They enjoy the show  
 without annoying their neighbors with talking, giggling,  
 or other disturbing behavior.  
 Out of the theater,  
 John may suggest something to eat  
 or he may conduct Mary to the place of his choice.  
 At this point, Mary is careful to let John take the lead.  
 When he asks her what she would like to have,  
 she thoughtfully hesitates  
 until she sees what price range he has in mind.  
 She says something along the following line,

MARY

"What is good here, John?"

NARRATOR

or

MARY

"What do you suggest?"

NARRATOR

If John recommends the steak sandwich with French fries,  
 or the double-gooney sundae with nuts,  
 this gives Mary the general idea of what he is prepared to spend.  
 If she is friendly and shrewd she may note that John,  
 in his desire to do the right thing,  
 is suggesting something extravagant.  
 If so, she will ask for something that she knows costs a little less. But if John says,

JOHN

"Which do you like better, coke or root beer?"

NARRATOR

Mary graciously keeps within these bounds.  
Over their food,  
John and Mary talk about the movie they have just seen  
or friends they have in common  
or anything that is of mutual interest.  
As they leave the restaurant,  
John pays the check and Mary thanks him by saying simply,

MARY

"That was good; thank you, John."

NARRATOR

Once back to Mary's house,  
Mary gets out her key,  
unlocks the door,  
and then turns to John with a smile.  
She says,

MARY

"It's been a lovely evening. Thank you, John,"

NARRATOR

or something similar that lets John know  
she has enjoyed the date.  
John replies,

JOHN

"I have enjoyed it too. I'll be seeing you."

NARRATOR

Then she opens the door  
and goes in without further hesitation.  
Since this is the first date,  
neither John nor Mary expect a good-night kiss.

*and the barber chair is left behind on stage when the scene ends*

**Scene 29. The Homecoming GI***greeted by everyone**and he tells what he hopes for now*

GI

What I hope now  
 is to be in the living room after dinner  
 with my sister  
 with her silver locket around her neck  
 my mother, with large pearl earrings and a beige cardigan  
 my father, in his casual holiday dress,  
 gray flannel trousers, hand-knit argyle socks  
 a red and green plaid Pendleton shirt  
 standing with easy confidence  
 holding a china cup and saucer in his hand  
 my Irish setter Pat  
 stretched out on the carpet  
 elegant and soulful  
 I myself, stretched out on the leather couch  
 wearing a navy blue pullover  
 the game on television  
 the backyard barbecue talking about the Cubs  
 big Chuck Buckley wearing an apron and a chef's hat  
 standing at the grill holding in one hand a spatula  
 in the other a Scotch and water  
 the robust good cheer  
 football and the economy  
 the rise and fall of the Dow Jones  
 the best route to drive to the golf club in Park Ridge  
 the tweed jacket  
 the football letter sweater  
 the goodness of intentions  
 the deep pleasure in things as they are  
 the gratitude for the given order of things.

*and then a young woman speaks to the returning GI  
and says:*

THE YOUNG WOMAN SAYS

What I want:

I want to graduate  
 and go to college  
 Northwestern, I hope it will be Northwestern  
 and my husband earns a lot of money  
 and we have thirteen kids  
 twelve boys and one girl

a football team, one sub, and a cheerleader.  
 What I always tell the freshmen is:  
 Study now,  
 because you can't learn it all in your senior year.

AND THE GI SAYS:  
 Right.

OTHER GUYS SAY  
 That's right.  
 That's for sure.

*and the GI is followed out, a hero, by the guys  
 and his suitcase is left behind*

*Other things that might be left behind in the course of the evening:  
 a cheerleader's megaphone  
 a soldier's hat  
 a prayer book  
 a pair of shined shoes  
 a football helmet  
 a baseball glove  
 a pair of Chuck Taylor Converse red high top sneakers  
 a barber's shaving mug*

### **Scene 103. Women**

THE WOMAN SAYS  
 The blue-collar worker is the backbone of our society,  
 Society needs the services and products they provide, whether the workers themselves  
 dream of something better or not. Many of them love their jobs, too –  
 that doesn't change that quite a few of them  
 aren't qualified to do much else.  
 There's no shame in that.

Not that this is why I did it.  
 Not that I am saying that.  
 Luckily, that was never my reason.  
 I was not forced into it in that way.  
 It was my choice.

Not everyone can be a prostitute.  
 You do need a special talent.  
 It's definitely a hell of a hard, fucking job.  
 You need enormous amounts of patience,  
 enormous amounts of compassion.

You have to put up with a lot of shit.  
It's like being in a war –  
you're in a war zone.  
You're in a society which is misogynistic and full of sexual guilt,  
and you take that shit on.  
It can get to you.  
I compare it a lot to being a nurse.

I had a transsexual, hermaphroditic lover for a while--  
a female to male, transsexual,  
surgically made hermaphrodite.  
A new option for people.  
That's one of the great things about living these days.  
My new lover is totally androgynous.  
I think it's beautiful.

These days, you see men dressing as women wearing monkey boots,  
and women dressing as men but with false eyelashes.  
Now, everything's getting mixed together  
which I really like.  
And strap-on dildos, of course,  
are really being used a lot to play with gender.  
Women are getting these big dicks –  
it's great.  
And they really know how to use them.  
It's so real.  
And of course it never gets soft.

My friend Trish is really good at thrusting.  
Women aren't generally as good at thrusting,  
but she has really got it down.  
Her dick is totally real to her  
and I suck it like it's real  
and I feel like she feels everything that I do.  
It's just beautiful.  
The technology has vastly improved.  
When I first got into porno movies  
they were tied on with pieces of elastic  
and were really flimsy.  
These were invented by men,  
but now women are designing these fabulously beautiful  
leather strap-on things.

### Scene 18. The Barbershop Quartet

*a barbershop quartet forms out of the group  
and steps forward to sing  
a classic barbershop quartet song  
such as:*

#### BARBERSHOP QUARTET SINGS

"ma", he's mak-ing eyes at me, "ma", he's aw-ful nice to me,  
"ma", he's al-most break-ing my heart,  
i'm be-side him, mer-cy let his consc-ience guide him;  
"ma", he wants to mar-ry me, be my hon-ey bee,  
ev-'ry min-ute he gets bold-er,  
now he's lean-ing on my should-er,"ma", he's kiss-ing me.

### Scene 49. Bad Stuff

*A guy comes out with bloody hands,  
blood up to his elbows  
and he stands and shows them to the audience  
as three young women wearing Victoria's Secret lingerie  
are brought in on leashes by a guy with a whip  
and a black cripple, badly burned from head to foot,  
stumbles in, falls, and writhes on the ground  
and another guy brings in a guy on a leash who hops up and down  
and an old Mafia don comes in wearing sunglasses and stands there  
and a guy comes in on his knees,  
walks on his knees along the front of the stage  
and goes out again  
all the while some great popular music is playing.*

*And it may be that  
on the rear wall  
is projected a still, or moving scroll  
with as much of this Jennie Holzer text on it  
as seems enough:*

a little knowledge can go a long way

a lot of professionals are crackpots

a man can't know what it is to be a mother

a positive attitude means all the difference in the world

a sense of timing is the mark of genius

a sincere effort is all you can ask  
all things are delicately interconnected  
ambivalence can ruin your life  
any surplus is immoral  
anything is a legitimate area of investigation  
at times your unconsciousness is truer than your conscious mind  
bad intentions can yield good results  
being alone with yourself is increasingly unpopular  
being happy is more important than anything else  
children are the hope of the future  
decency is a relative thing  
don't place too much trust in experts  
eating too much is criminal  
enjoy yourself because you can't change anything anyway  
every achievement requires a sacrifice  
everyone's work is equally important  
exceptional people deserve special concessions  
good deeds eventually are rewarded  
grass roots agitation is the only hope  
if you live simply there is nothing to worry about  
ignoring enemies is the best way to fight  
illness is a state of mind  
it's better to be a good person than a famous person

it's not good to operate on credit  
it's vital to live in harmony with nature  
just believing something can make it happen  
keep something in reserve for emergencies  
killing is unavoidable but nothing to be proud of  
listen when your body talks  
men are not monogamous by nature  
murder has its sexual side  
pain can be a very positive thing  
people are responsible for what they do unless they are insane  
people won't behave if they have nothing to lose  
raise boys and girls the same way  
redistributing wealth is imperative  
religion causes as many problems as it solves  
remember you always have freedom of choice  
romantic love was invented to manipulate women  
sometimes science advances faster than it should  
sometimes things seem to happen of their own accord  
starvation is nature's way  
sterilization is a weapon of the rulers  
the desire to reproduce is a death wish  
the family is living on borrowed time  
the idea of revolution is an adolescent fantasy

the new is nothing but a restatement of the old  
 the only way to be pure is to stay by yourself  
 true freedom is frightful  
 you are a victim of the rules you live by  
 you can't expect people to be something they're not

**Scene 472. L.A.**

*This could be spoken by a man or a woman:*

My head is a lot better in LA  
 There's always a feeling when I am sitting here  
 If you know my work,  
 you know that things are never finished....  
 so  
 then you have a lot of narrative threads  
 that interweave self-portraiture  
 fictional characters  
 cultural commentary  
 and much more  
 drama  
 humor  
 slapstick  
 critique  
 theatricality  
 entrepreneurship  
 attitude  
 quests  
 discoveries  
 self-sampling  
 internal recycling  
 auto-cannibalism  
 revelations  
 cosmologies.  
 Coming together and coming apart  
 and becoming something else  
 free-form  
 random  
 non-hierarchical  
 everywhere and nowhere.  
 And then you need an overview

because  
or at least a point of view  
because  
all trees and no forest  
means there isn't any difference between here and there  
even though you still want to be  
everywhere and nowhere.  
It's all a blur  
and the blur could be permanent  
that would be OK  
a blur, that's a cool thing, too.  
I understand art as the pursuit of something.  
As it is pulling me in this direction  
I don't quite understand why I am going in this direction.  
It is important that each piece creates  
a territory for me to go in  
like a direction that is opening up.  
In this piece, which is called Perfect World,  
the thing is you can fall off of it  
and it can kill you.  
You can walk on this surface  
but it has these holes  
these cracks  
and then these soft spots,  
these traps,  
where it's just papered over.  
I wanted to build this thing  
which somehow mimics real life.  
I am not interested in artists who close things down,  
I am interested in situations which open things up.  
That is just an optimistic perspective.  
I want to build a work which includes the public  
but does not exclude the artist.  
If you imagine you have children  
one is a drug-addict with crack  
one is a drug addict with ecstasy  
one is thirteen and has four kids  
and one is kind of a genius.  
It is important to see each one  
in relationship to the other one  
in relationship to yourself.  
It is about seeing where all the positive parts are  
in the things that you have created.  
You have to deal with them.  
You have to like them all the same.  
Because what we have come to learn

is that the future is made  
 not by arguing well  
 but by speaking differently.  
 And speaking differently:  
 that's the job of poets.  
 Because truth is not something we discover;  
 truth is something we create.  
 How it is to be a human being  
 is something we decide  
 not because of how it has always been  
 but because  
 whether or not it has ever been that way before,  
 this is who we want to be  
 and how we want to behave  
 now.  
 Just because, in the past, there have been slaveholders  
 and patriarchs  
 we are not destined to live the same way forever.  
 The reason people study history  
 is so that they can see  
 the way things are  
 is not the only way they have been  
 or the only way that they can be.  
 It is up to us to see what human nature can become.

### **Scene 5. Hair Brushing**

*four women all brush one girl's hair and then each other's*

SOMEONE SAYS

What they say is there are rules.  
 And everyone knows what they are.  
 Number 1.  
 Have dinner ready:  
 Plan ahead, even the night before,  
 to have a delicious meal--on time.  
 This is a way of letting him know  
 that you have been thinking about him  
 and are concerned about his needs.

SOMEONE ELSE SAYS

Number 2.  
 Prepare yourself.  
 Take 15 minutes to rest so you will be refreshed when he arrives.  
 Touch up your makeup  
 put a ribbon in your hair

and be fresh looking.  
Be a little zestful and a little more interesting.

#### SOMEONE ELSE SAYS

Number 3.

Minimize the noise.

At the time of his arrival

eliminate all noise of washer, dryer, dishwasher or vacuum.

Be happy to see him.

Greet him with a warm smile

and be glad to see him.

*And then there is a radio voiceover? and the girls answer variously yes, no, etc etc all in a jumbled unison*

#### RADIO VOICE

Are you fit for marriage? To help you decide for yourself, the author presents in this article several tests that are being used throughout the country to determine individual fitness for marriage. By taking the three tests that follow and studying the results, you can measure your own marital aptitudes. Give serious thought to the result and you will find it's likely taking out a personal love-insurance policy that pays dividends throughout your married life.

Are you 21 or over?

#### VARIOUS VOICES

Yes Yes No Yes No

#### RADIO VOICE

Are or were your parents happily married?

#### VARIOUS VOICES

Very happy Average Above average I'd say average Unhappy

Were you happy as a child?

Very happy Unhappy Average Average

To what degree were you punished as a child?

Often and severely Rarely but severely Never Often but mildly Mildly

Where did you first learn about sex?

Don't remember From other children From strange adults books

What is your present attitude toward sex?

Disgust Necessary evil Indifferent Pleasant anticipation Intense interest

Have you ever wanted to be of the opposite sex?

Never as a child, yes As an adolescent As an adult As an adult? Yes!

How do you rate with your partner in mental ability?

Slightly inferior Definitely inferior Very similar Slightly superior Very superior

How do you rate with your partner in willingness to cooperate?

Definitely inferior Very similar Slightly superior Very superior

Is your religion the same as your partner's?

Yes No Yes Yes No

Have you a tendency to be careless or disorderly?

Yes No Yes No

Are you uncommonly bossy?

Yes No Yes No Yes

For the Man: Does he insist on having his own way?

Always Frequently Occasionally Seldom Never

For the woman: Has she a mean disposition?

Frequently Seldom Never Never

When his luck goes bad does he brood over it and look for your sympathy?

Yes No Sometimes Yes No

Does she try to please you?

Always Frequently Occasionally Seldom Never

Is he usually stubborn and insistent in his demands?

Yes No sometimes Yes No

Can you get him to change his mind?

Always Frequently Occasionally Seldom Never

Does she try to make you miserable if you so much as look at another woman?

Yes No yes, no Yes

Does he expect you to shower him with attention and affection in public?

Yes No Yes No Yes

Does she create scenes in public places?

Yes No Yes Yes Yes

Do you believe implicitly in your partner's:

Good Judgment?

Yes No Yes No

Honesty?

Yes Yes Yes No

Fidelity?

*[silence]*

### **Scene 79. Film Noir**

NARRATOR

When they reached the dark hallway,  
she slowed their walk.

WESLEY

Tired?

VANESSA

No.

It's just that I want to be kissed.

NARRATOR

She looked at him gravely.  
He walked away, and she followed him.  
It was a long time before he spoke.

WESLEY

When you get to be my age,  
you won't take things so lightly.

VANESSA

I don't take them lightly now.

WESLEY

You may be a minx, for all I know.

VANESSA

I'm not sure what that means.

WESLEY

Look it up.

VANESSA

Where?

WESLEY

Well, I have a fine dictionary in my cabin.  
Let's both look it up.

NARRATOR

He wished that he could have cut that last speech.

VANESSA

Let's go to mine  
where there are no dictionaries at all.

NARRATOR

With a surge of dizzying feeling  
he wanted her more than he had ever wanted anything.  
Vanessa led him to her cabin.  
The night steward sitting in the corridor said,  
Good evening,  
and vanished.  
She whispered:

VANESSA

Won't you come in?  
I'll make you some scrambled eggs.

NARRATOR

She laughed, stepped into the cabin,  
held open the door,

and he was drawn magnetically in.  
 She closed the door.  
 They stood in the blackness and she waited a full minute  
 before turning on a light.  
 She moved to the table and fixed two drinks.

WESLEY  
 Not until I know who you are.

NARRATOR  
 She handed him his glass and took a thoughtful sip from her own.

VANESSA  
 Vanessa Foley

NARRATOR  
 she said

VANESSA  
 and I'm sort of mad about you.

WELSEY  
 Sort of.

VANESSA  
 Really.

*Another story:*

NARRATOR  
 They passed from the road into a meadow.  
 The long grasses whispered to their slow tread.  
 He ignored the heavy dew  
 which soaked his shoes  
 until he realized that he was not caring for her....

WILBUR  
 Sakes alive! You'll catch your death of cold.  
 Let's sit on this gate.

NARRATOR  
 He had spoken so softly that the charm was not shattered,  
 and, swathed in glory,  
 they perched on the three-barred wooden gate  
 of a barbed wire fence.  
 She sat on a lower bar and leaned her head against his knee.

He instinctively stroked her cheek.

WILBUR

I've never felt so happy before.  
I don't want ever to lose you.  
Can't we be married?  
I'm not worthy....

MYRTLE

Wilbur, you don't love me!  
It's just the moonlight and walking with a woman.  
You don't know what you want yet.  
You wouldn't propose to me if it were a hot afternoon,  
a muggy, wilty afternoon, and we were walking down Main Street.

WILBUR

But you do like me. And when we're both lonely....

MYRTLE

Probably no one will ever love me as I want.  
Why should they?  
I'm just a little hat trimmer with a love for tea and cats!

WILBUR

You aren't. You are the one person I could love  
if you could only understand how much I mean it.

NARRATOR

And as he said it  
he knew he didn't quite mean it;  
he knew he was merely living up to the magic moment,  
and he listened to his own high-pitched voice  
going on in poetic periods unnatural to him....

WILBUR

When I look into your eyes  
I see all the fairy stories my mother used to read to me....

MYRTLE

But you don't want a lady story teller.  
You want a nice home  
and somebody to send out the laundry for you.  
I understand. I often want a home myself.  
But I'm funny. I distrust sentimentality.  
You ought to think what you're saying....

NARRATOR

Suddenly she was crying  
 in sobs accumulated through years of loneliness.  
 She crouched on the lower bar of the gate  
 and hid her eyes against his knee.  
 Her hat fell off and her hair was a little disordered.  
 Yet this touch of prosaicness did not shock him.  
 It brought her near to him,  
 made her not a moon wraith, but a person like himself.  
 He patted her shoulder till she sat up and laughed a little,  
 and they strolled back toward the town.

And he: the overwrought self  
 that had sung of love and fairy tales was gone.  
 But he felt toward her  
 a sincere and eager affection.

**Scene 55. The Family Car**

*and everyone gets out at the Drive-In  
 holding cokes and popcorn  
 and sets up folding chairs  
 and watches the movie of The Perversion,  
 a documentary made for classrooms in the Fifties,  
 in which a man stands behind a desk in front of a map  
 of the United States and says:*

GEORGE

Hello there.  
 I'm George Putnam.  
 I'd like to begin with a fact  
 a floodtide of filth is engulfing our country  
 in the form of newstand obscenity  
 and is threatening to pervert  
 an entire generation of our American children.  
 We know that once a person is perverted  
 it is practically impossible for that person  
 to adjust to normal attitudes in regard to sex.  
 it is also a fact that no matter who buys this material  
 seventy-five to 90% of it ends up in the hands of our children.  
 Now you might ask yourself  
 why this sudden concern?  
 Pornography and sex deviation  
 have always been with mankind.  
 This is true.  
 But, now, consider another fact:

never in the history of the world have the merchants of obscenity  
 the teachers of unnatural sex acts  
 had available to them  
 the modern facilities for disseminating this filth:  
 high speed presses, rapid transportation,  
 mass distribution.  
 All have combined to put the vilest obscenity  
 within reach of every man, woman, and child in the country.  
 for one reason  
 it is big business  
 profitable business  
 for the mercenary persons who produce it  
 and for its more than 800 distributors.  
 obscene literature is a two billion dollar a year business  
 that's two billion dollars  
 through this material youth can be stimulated  
 to sexual activity for which he has no legitimate outlet  
 he is even enticed to enter the world of homosexuals  
 lesbians, sadists, masochists and other sex deviants

*[As the movie goes on and on,  
 one by one  
 the members of the family leave  
 to get a coke, a popcorn--  
 "gonna get a coke, be right back...."  
 and they never return.]*

Perversion for profit.  
 Here is the most vicious  
 the most insidious feature of these publications--  
 they constantly portray abnormal sexual behavior as  
 being normal.  
 They glorify unnatural sex acts  
 they tell youngsters that it's smart, it's thrilling,  
 it provides kicks to be a homosexual, a sadist  
 and every other kind of deviant.

*[So finally the stage is empty,  
 as the movie sound fades  
 and then:]*

**Scene 57. The Dugout**

*all the guys come out  
with gloves and baseball bats and sing a song*

*Maybe they sing this Frank Sinatra song  
or some other:*

Out of the tree of life I just picked me a plum  
You came along and everything's startin' to hum  
Still, it's a real good bet, the best is yet to come

Best is yet to come and babe, won't that be fine?  
You think you've seen the sun, but you ain't seen it shine

a-Wait till the warm-up's underway  
Wait till our lips have met  
And wait till you see that sunshine day  
You ain't seen nothin' yet

The best is yet to come and babe, won't it be fine?  
Best is yet to come, come the day you're mine

Come the day you're mine  
I'm gonna teach you to fly  
We've only tasted the wine  
We're gonna drain the cup dry

Wait till your charms are right for these arms to surround  
You think you've flown before, but baby, you ain't left the ground

a-Wait till you're locked in my embrace  
Wait till I draw you near  
a-Wait till you see that sunshine place  
Ain't nothin' like it here

The best is yet to come and babe, won't it be fine?  
The best is yet to come, come the day you're mine

Come the day you're mine  
And you're gonna be mine

*When they leave,  
they leave their baseball bats behind.*

**Scene 83. Union Station**

*everyone arriving at Christmas  
with brief cases and hats and newspapers?  
some or all holding a Christmas stocking?  
Christmas carols are playing  
or are they all singing a Christmas carol?  
and then everyone rushing off in different directions?*

*Or do they all rush through  
while we hear a voiceover giving this recipe:*

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1 tablespoon diced jalapeños
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/3 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons dark rum
- 1 lime, juiced
- 2 cups coffee, sweetened
- 10 tablespoons vanilla-flavored syrup, divided
- 4 egg yolks
- 3 tablespoons superfine sugar
- 1 pound mascarpone cheese
- 4 packages lady fingers, 1 dozen per package
- 3 cans (14 1/2 fl. oz. each) reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 packages (16 oz. ea) frozen cut broccoli
- 1 small onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 teaspoon bottled minced garlic
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped ginger
- 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 large cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 package (9 oz.) Fettuccine
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated Parmesan cheese

- 1 pound fresh tomatoes, chopped  
 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil or 1 tablespoon dried basil, crushed

**Scene 85. Howl**

*We hear a saxophone  
 and we are in a coffee house in North Beach, San Francisco.*

*Some people sit at tables, smoking.*

*Bukowski sits up center at a small table with a microphone  
 and a glass of something.*

BUKOWSKI

My Father  
 was a truly amazing man  
 he pretended to be  
 rich  
 even though we lived on beans and mush and weenies  
 when we sat down to eat, he said,  
 "not everybody can eat like this."

and because he wanted to be rich or because he actually  
 thought he was rich  
 he always voted Republican  
 and he voted for Hoover against Roosevelt  
 and he lost  
 and then he voted for Alf Landon against Roosevelt  
 and he lost again  
 saying, "I don't know what this world is coming to,  
 now we've got that god damned Red in there again  
 and the Russians will be in our backyard next!"

I think it was my father who made me decide to  
 become a bum.  
 I decided that if a man like that wants to be rich  
 then I want to be poor.

and I became a bum.  
 I lived on nickles and dimes and in cheap rooms and  
 on park benches.  
 I thought maybe the bums knew something.

but I found out that most of the bums wanted to be  
 rich too.  
 they had just failed at that.

so caught between my father and the bums  
 I had no place to go  
 and I went there fast and slow.  
 never voted Republican  
 never voted.

buried him  
 like an oddity of the earth  
 like a hundred thousand oddities  
 like millions of other oddities,  
 wasted.

*[Bukowski gets up from the table,  
 gathers up his papers  
 and walks away]*

#### BILL DOW

Many people from many lands  
 Are living here as one.  
 They work together, learn together  
 For them living is fun.

This nation of ours is a powerful one,  
 It's known from shore to shore.  
 But as it grows, as everyone knows,  
 Cooperation is needed even more.

Rivers, valleys, mountains, plains,  
 Make up our beautiful land.  
 America is a wonderful place,  
 Made by God's own hand.

*[another poet, a woman, comes up,  
 sits down at the same table]*

*someone plays guitar  
 or other happenings performance events occur  
 without reference to the reading  
 while she reads:*

#### THE WOMAN POET

He's got me down on my knees  
 and I can't even focus on anything I have no time to understand  
 the position of my body or the direction of my face I see  
 a pair of legs in rough corduroy and the color of

the pants are brown and  
 surrounded by darkness  
 and there's a sense of other people there  
 and yet I can't hear them breathe or hear their feet or  
 anything  
 and his hand suddenly comes up against the back of my head  
 and he's got his fingers locked in my  
 hair and he's shoving my face forward and twisting my head  
 almost gently  
 but very violent in that gentleness and I  
 got only half a breath in my lungs the smell of  
 piss on the floorboards and this fleshy bulge in his  
 pants getting harder and harder as my face  
 is forced against the front of his pants  
 the zipper tears my lips I feel them getting bruised  
 and all the while he's stroking my face and tightening his fingers  
 around the locks of my hair and  
 I can't focus my eyes my head being pushed and pulled and  
 twisted and caressed and it's as if I have no hands  
 I know I got hands I had hands a half hour ago  
 I remember lighting a cigarette with them  
 lighting a match  
 and I remember how warm the flame was when I lifted it  
 toward my face and my knees are hurting from the floor  
 it's a stone floor and my knees are  
 hurting 'cause they banged on the floor  
 when he dragged me down the cellar stairs  
 I remember a door in the darkness  
 and the breath of a dog his dog  
 as it licked my hands when I reached out to stop  
 my headlong descent its tongue licking out at my  
 fingers and my face slams down  
 and there's this electric blam inside my head  
 and it's as if my eyes suddenly opened on the large sun  
 and then went black with the switch thrown down  
 and I'm shocked and embarrassed  
 and his arms swing down he's lifting me up saying  
 lookin' for me?, and he buries his face  
 in my neck and I feel the saliva  
 running down into the curve of my neck  
 and my arms are hanging loose  
 and I can see a ceiling and a dim bulb tossing back and forth.

*so this is like a spoken word performance at City Lights bookshop  
 in San Francisco in the fifties*

## A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,  
 dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,  
 angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in  
 the machinery of night,  
 who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural  
 darkness of cold-water flats  
 floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and  
 imagination?

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming  
 under the stairways! Boys

sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!

Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless! Mental Moloch! Moloch  
 the heavy judger of men!

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and  
 Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose

buildings are judgment! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!  
 Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch  
 whose fingers are ten armies!

Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in  
 the long streets like endless

Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose  
 smokestacks and antennae crown the  
 cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks!

Moloch whose poverty is the

specter of genius! Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch whose  
 name is the Mind!

America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

### Scene 68. No Pig

*[A guy comes out to speak.*

*After a few moments, while he speaks,*

*another guy comes out*

*and begins to dance--*

*without any musical accompaniment--*

*dancing not even to the spoken text,*

*rather just dancing in his own quiet world.]*

We ended up living in a tiny apartment

in a house owned by an Indian couple in Flushing, Queens.  
My stepmother cried the whole first night.  
We've come to America, and look at this apartment!  
It was one of those Archie Bunker neighborhoods.  
You know when you watch All in the Family,  
that first aerial shot with all those tiny homes  
right next to each other?  
That's exactly where we lived.  
I got left back a year at the local public school  
because I didn't know English.  
I didn't know how to say  
"May I go to the bathroom?"  
or  
"I don't know what you're saying."  
My desk was right in front of the teacher's desk  
and I would sit there all day and not go to the bathroom  
until I went home.  
Then I got a little picture book  
and I would point to a picture of a toilet  
and the teacher would know, OK,  
it's time to go to the bathroom.  
My teacher told my stepmother at a parent-teacher conference  
that I wasn't learning English fast enough.  
When I came home  
my father was extremely upset with me.  
He told me, in Farsi, that I must be stupid.  
I had the hardest time trying to tell the cafeteria lady  
that I couldn't eat pork.  
My father taught me how to say, NO PIG! NO PIG!  
It took about a month for the cafeteria lady  
to realize I couldn't eat pork.  
Whenever they were having pork products,  
she would make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich,  
which was horrible, because I hated peanut butter and jelly!  
So I didn't eat anything.  
Then my father told me to say chicken,  
but I would say "kitchen" instead of chicken.  
It took me so long to differentiate between the two.  
Imagine me:  
"KITCHEN! NO PIG! NO PIG!"

## **Scene 92. The Woman in the Red Dress**

*music overwhelms the scene  
and the woman in the red dress enters dancing*

*then a guy enters  
another guy enters  
a bunch of people are entering from every direction  
wild music  
unsynchronized frenzy  
until finally all 10 or 12 are making the same gesture together, scattered over the stage,  
but dancing the same gestures and moves*

*and maybe this could happen, too:*

*at a certain point,  
a woman is lying on the floor  
a guy leans down and locks lips with her  
and raises her from the floor into a flamenco-like dance  
with lips permanently locked in a kiss  
they go on and on and on and on and on  
until he passes out and falls to the ground in a heap  
she turns to another guy and locks lips with him immediately  
and they dance  
but she stops them, interrupts the dance  
to tell him he is dancing the wrong way  
they lock lips and dance again  
she stops to correct him again  
ditto  
ditto  
until she spins around, grabs the sleeve of his shirt  
and rips it  
then he is pissed  
they argue  
they argue and argue and argue and argue and argue  
till the guy turns front and takes a dance posture  
and flexes his bicep  
he flexes his bicep to the music  
5 guys join him in bicep flexing dance  
all in unison  
then they all do a hip thrust  
very macho  
then turns upstage and wiggle their butts  
(not SO macho)  
they move through other male display dance moves  
finger snapping, etc  
then three women step up and do the same male display moves*

**Scene 67. The Commuter Platform**

*just a guy with gray flannel suit, fedora, brief case  
met at the station by his wife*

JAY

Camila, I don't want to hurt you,  
but I'd better say this and get it over.

CAMILA

Say what, Jay?

JAY

I want a divorce.

CAMILA

Are you joking?

JAY

Do I look as though I'm joking?

CAMILA

I see. You want a divorce.  
But what for? I don't....

JAY

What does any man want a divorce for?

CAMILA

You're not telling me you want to marry again?  
At your age! I don't believe it!

JAY

I'm not Methuselah!

CAMILA

Then there is another woman?

JAY

What do you think I'm telling you?

CAMILA

And you're in love with her?  
Well, if you want a divorce, you'll get it.  
You always get what you want.

JAY

I had hoped you'd be reasonable about this thing, Camila.

After all, you're a sensible woman.  
 As to getting what I want,  
 you've always had what you wanted, haven't you?

CAMILA

I've always had what you wanted me to have.  
 There's a difference.

JAY

It isn't as though I really meant anything to you.  
 I haven't meant anything to you for years.

CAMILA

I wouldn't say that, Jay.  
 You've supported me.

*and his fedora and brief case are left behind*

### **Scene 36. Mrs. Bridge**

*woman in red dress  
 entering, dancing solo  
 with floor lamp  
 looking for a place to put it  
 no dialogue here, just music?  
 Benny Goodman or Guy Lombardo or Bing Crosby  
 trying the lamp here, not liking it,  
 trying it there, not liking it,  
 trying it somewhere else,  
 finally placing the lamp and exiting*

### **Scene 96. Cell Phones**

Hello? Hello? Trish!  
*etc etc*

*the talker continues as all the other actors  
 look straight out at audience  
 finally another of them takes a cell phone call  
 is her lover breaking up with her? or it is difficult?  
 and then all 12 people are on cell phones at the same time  
 having the same conversation  
 about a love affair  
 a breakup  
 each taking different lines of the same conversation  
 or of archetypal conversations around this event  
 archetypal lines*

**Scene 99. I Remember**

*While television news footage of war--  
and, or, if there is more than one screen,  
of war and race riots and other violence--  
is projected,  
this text is spoken by one man.  
or else one man begins  
and then one or two or three others join him.*

I remember many Sunday afternoon dinners  
of fried chicken or pot roast.

I remember my father's collection of arrow heads.

I remember loafers with pennies in them.

I remember game rooms in basements.

I remember "come as you are" parties.  
Everybody cheated.

I remember drugstore counter stools with no backs,  
and swirling around and around on them.

I remember two-dollar bills. And silver dollars.

I remember "Double Bubble" gum comics  
and licking off the sweet "powder."

I remember catching myself with an expression on my face  
that doesn't relate to what's going on anymore.

I remember the little "thuds" of bugs  
bumping up against the screens at night.

I remember when polio was the worst thing in the world.

I remember my first cigarette. It was a Kent.

I remember my first erections.  
I thought I had some terrible disease or something.

I remember the only time I ever saw my mother cry.  
I was eating apricot pie.

I remember when, in high school,

if you wore green and yellow on Thursday  
it meant you were queer.

I remember an American history teacher  
who was always threatening to jump out the window  
if we didn't quiet down. (Second floor.)

I remember Liberace.

I remember pony tails.

I remember driftwood lamps.

I remember potato salad.

I remember salt on watermelon.

I remember lightning.

I remember my father in a tutu.  
As a ballerina dancer in a variety show at church.

I remember getting erections in school  
and the bell rings  
and how handy zipper notebooks were.

I remember not looking at crippled people.

I remember chalk.

I remember daydreams of dying  
and how unhappy everybody would be.

I remember the sound of the ice cream man coming.

I remember once losing my nickel in the grass  
before he made it to my house.

I remember that life was just as serious then  
as it is now.

**Scene 147. The Future**

*woman with computer (and headphones) dancing  
she comes out alone,  
stands there, opens computer,  
puts on headphones--we can't hear what she hears  
then she dances solo to this unheard music--  
and, after a couple minutes John Cage comes in  
and speaks his text at a microphone while she continues to dance to the unheard music*

CAGE

My attitude toward old age  
is one of gratitude for each day.  
It strikes me  
that since there's obviously a shorter length of time left  
than I've already had  
I'd better hurry up  
and be interested in whatever I can.

I remember that it seemed to be essential  
when I was in my twenties  
to focus my attention on one thing  
and I made a choice between music and painting.  
I chose music.  
But now it seems perfectly natural to open out  
to every single thing I possibly can do  
because I'm not going to be here much longer.  
The best thing is to enjoy to do  
as much as possible while I am here.

The business of the great things from the past  
is a question of preservation and the use of things  
that have been preserved.  
I don't quarrel with that activity,  
and I know that it will continue.  
But there is another activity,  
one to which I am devoted,  
and it is the bringing of new things into being.  
The difference between these two things  
is the difference between spring and summer.

**Scene 123. The Gathering**

Music

Each person brings in some thing  
and puts it down somewhere

so that items on the stage accumulate

VERY old guy in print house dress and clogs

a guy in a dress with a red crown of flowers  
comes downstage and smokes cigarette smiling  
just that, no more, and is happy

a guy enters and sits on box  
he has on a strait jacket  
watches TV on packing crates  
he frees his hands and eats bread and sings along with TV  
making drumming motions with his hands

narrator wanders with sheaf of papers in hand  
inadequate

a guy in a monkey suit

a woman in a beautiful black dress enters  
and paces while she smokes  
she is angry, hostile  
as though challenging anyone's right to challenge her smoking  
or her being there  
and, in the end, she just turns upstage and rushes out

a guy wearing a roller blade on only one foot  
going in circles  
while another guy rolls around with yellow high heeled shoes on his hands

a clown wearing a clown hat, carrying a brief case

Asian woman appears in chinky/junky outfit  
looking like one of the dancers in the Strange Mushroom company  
she leaves,  
returns in red shirt, white undies  
with a pillow in her arms  
looking for someone  
and turns abruptly and leaves at once  
she returns wearing a white shirt and tie and glasses  
like an office worker  
--as tho she has been trying out identities that will be acceptable

guy puts on 15 shirts  
and 8 pairs of pants  
then has a fit getting out of them

throwing them around  
 making pile of laundry and diving into it

a little guy wearing a wedding dress

chandelier of neon words such as Taco,  
 Oval office  
 sign on a piece of cardboard: Quality Control  
 pickle jars  
 four immense white boxes with red ribbons  
 as though Christmas gifts from Harry and David  
 a huge installation of styrofoam balls  
 plywood  
 fed ex boxes  
 and hand carts  
 desk chairs with wheels  
 boxes of foam  
 boxes of plastic wrap  
 huge vertical column plastic bags full of foam  
 piles of CDs  
 aluminum tubes  
 buckets  
 construction worker's plastic helmets  
 boards  
 a film projector  
 a shovel  
 a scanner  
 upside down yellow rain boots  
 poster for Marilyn Chambers, Behind the Green Door, adults only  
 computer components  
 construction site striped yellow and black tape  
 caution signs  
 road blocks--wooden horses  
 heavy duty orange electrical extension cords  
 tables with things on them  
 the tables might be turned over onto their sides  
 so that foam balls and rubber balls roll out across the stage  
 fans blowing shit

#### CAGE

And so it is out of this chaos,  
 this accumulation of history and novelty,  
 that we begin building.  
 We are in the constant process of construction  
 making and remaking  
 from where we are and what we have.

This is what human beings do.  
This is the human project  
as long as we are alive.

*and then the celebratory music:*

*Aaron Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man  
and the lights go to black  
and when they come up  
does Copland play for the curtain call, too?*

*The End.*

A NOTE ON THE TEXT: This piece was composed with the dramaturgical collaboration of Tom Damrauer. It was, in part, inspired by, and samples some texts from, John O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Jason Rhoades, John Cage, Sloan Wilson, instructional films of the fifties, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Lydia Lunch, Barney Rosset, Garson Kanin, Sinclair Lewis, Charles Bukowski, Lester Bangs, David Wojnarowicz, Annie Sprinkle, Jennie Holzer, Carla Nowlin, Lydia Gaston, and Richard Rorty.