

Classic Poetry Series

Richard Brautigan

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

15%

she tries to get things
out of men
that she can't get
because she's not
15% prettier

Richard Brautigan

-2

Everybody wants to go to bed
with everybody else, they're
lined up for blocks, so I'll
go to bed with you. They won't
miss us.

Richard Brautigan

30 Cents, Two Transfers, Love

Thinking hard about you
I got on the bus
and paid 30 cents car fare
and asked the driver for two transfers
before discovering
that I was
alone.

Richard Brautigan

All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace

I like to think (and
the sooner the better!)
of a cybernetic meadow
where mammals and computers
live together in mutually
programming harmony
like pure water
touching clear sky.

Richard Brautigan

At the California Institute of Technology

I don't care how God-damn smart
these guys are: I'm bored.

Richard Brautigan

AUTOBIOGRAPHY (POLISH IT LIKE A PIECE OF SILVER)

I am standing in the cemetery at Byrds, Texas.
What did Judy say? "God-forsaken is beautiful, too."
A very old man who has cancer on his face and takes
care of the cemetery, is raking a grave in such a
manner as to almost (polish it like a piece of silver.

Richard Brautigan

Boo, Forever

Spinning like a ghost
on the bottom of a
top,
I'm haunted by all
the space that I
will live without
you.

Richard Brautigan

Coffee

Richard Brautigan

Color As Beginning

Forget love
I want to die
in your yellow hair

Richard Brautigan

December 30

At 1:30 in the morning a fart
smells like a marriage between
an avocado and a fish head.

I have to get out of bed
to write this down without
my glasses on.

Richard Brautigan

Deer Tracks

Beautiful, sobbing
high-gear'd fucking
and then to lie silently
like deer tracks in the
freshly-fallen snow beside
the one you love.
That's all.

Richard Brautigan

Discovery

The petals of the vagina unfold
like Christofer Columbus
taking off his shoes.

Is there anything more beautiful
than the bow of a ship
touching a new world?

Richard Brautigan

Donner Party

Forsaken, fucking in the cold,
eating each other, lost
runny noses,
complaining all the time
like so many
people
that we know

Richard Brautigan

Gee, You're So Beautiful That It's Starting To Rain

Oh, Marcia,
I want your long blonde beauty
to be taught in high school,
so kids will learn that God
lives like music in the skin
and sounds like a sunshine harpsicord.
I want high school report cards
to look like this:

Richard Brautigan

Haiku Ambulance

A piece of green pepper
fell
off the wooden salad bowl:
so what?

Richard Brautigan

Hinged To Forgetfulness Like A Door

Hinged to forgetfulness
like a door,
she slowly closed out of
sight,
and she was the woman I loved,
but too many times she slept like
a mechanical deer in my caresses,
and I ached in the metal silence
of her dreams.

Richard Brautigan

I Feel Horrible. She Doesn't

I feel horrible. She doesn't
love me and I wander around
like a sewing machine
that's just finished sewing
a turd to a garbage can lid.

Richard Brautigan

I Live In The Twentieth Century

I live in the Twentieth Century
and you lie here beside me. You
were unhappy when you fell asleep.
There was nothing I could do about
it. I felt hopeless. Your face
is so beautiful that I cannot stop
to describe it, and there's nothing
I can do to make you happy while
you sleep.

Richard Brautigan

It's Raining In Love

I don't know what it is,
but I distrust myself
when I start to like a girl
a lot.

Richard Brautigan

I've Never Had It Done So Gently Before

The sweet juices of your mouth
are like castles bathed in honey.
I've never had it done so gently before.
You have put a circle of castles
around my penis and you swirl them
like sunlight on the wings of birds.

Richard Brautigan

Just Because

Just because
people love your mind,
doesn't mean they
have to have
your body,
too.

Richard Brautigan

Kafka's Hat

With the rain falling
surgically against the roof,
I ate a dish of ice cream
that looked like Kafka's hat.

Richard Brautigan

Karma Repair Kit: Items 1-4

Richard Brautigan

Love Poem

It's so nice
to wake up in the morning
all alone
and not have to tell somebody
you love them
when you don't love them
any more.

Richard Brautigan

Man

With his hat on
he's about five inches taller
than a taxicab.

Richard Brautigan

Mating Saliva

A girl in a green mini-
skirt, not very pretty, walks
down the street.

Richard Brautigan

Milk For The Duck

ZAP!
unlaid / 20 days

Richard Brautigan

My Nose Is Growing Old

Yup.
A long lazy September look
in the mirror
say it's true.

I'm 31
and my nose is growing
old.

It starts about 1/2
an inch
below the bridge
and strolls geriatrically
down
for another inch or so:
stopping.

Fortunately, the rest
of the nose is comparatively
young.

I wonder if girls
will want me with an
old nose.

I can hear them now
the heartless bitches!

"He's cute
but his nose
is old."

Richard Brautigan

Nine Things

It's night

Richard Brautigan

Part 10 of Trout Fishing in America

WITNESS FOR TROUT FISHING

IN AMERICA PEACE

In San Francisco around Easter time last year, they had a trout fishing in America peace parade. They had thousands of red stickers printed and they pasted them on their small foreign cars, and on means of national communication like telephone poles.

The stickers had WITNESS FOR TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA PEACE printed on them.

Then this group of college- and high-school-trained Communists, along with some Communist clergymen and their Marxist-taught children, marched to San Francisco from Sunnyvale, a Communist nerve center about forty miles away.

It took them four days to walk to San Francisco. They stopped overnight at various towns along the way, and slept on the lawns of fellow travelers.

They carried with them Communist trout fishing in America peace propaganda posters:

"DON'T DROP AN H-BOMB ON THE OLD FISHING HOLE I"

"ISAAC WALTON WOULD'VE HATED THE BOMB!"

"ROYAL COACHMAN, SI! ICBM, NO!"

They carried with them many other trout fishing in America peace inducements, all following the Communist world conquest line: the Gandhian nonviolence Trojan horse.

When these young, hard-core brainwashed members of the Communist conspiracy reached the "Panhandle, " the

emigre Oklahoma Communist sector of San Francisco, thousands of other Communists were waiting for them. These were Communists who couldn't walk very far. They barely had enough strength to make it downtown.

Thousands of Communists, protected by the police, marched down to Union Square, located in the very heart of San Francisco. The Communist City Hall riots in 1960 had presented evidence of it, the police let hundreds of Communists escape, but the trout fishing in America peace parade was the final indictment: police protection.

Thousands of Communists marched right into the heart of San Francisco, and Communist speakers incited them for hours and the young people wanted to blow up Colt Tower, but the Communist clergy told them to put away their plastic bombs.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them . . . There will be no need for explosives, " they said.

America needs no other proof. The Red shadow of the Gandhian nonviolence Trojan horse has fallen across America, and San Francisco is its stable.

Obsolete is the mad rapist's legendary piece of candy. At this very moment, Communist agents are handing out Witness for trout fishing in America peace tracts to innocent children riding the cable cars.

Richard Brautigan

Part 2 of Trout Fishing in America

ANOTHER METHOD OF MAKING WALNUT CATSUP

And this is a very small cookbook for Trout Fishing in America as if Trout Fishing in America were a rich gourmet and Trout Fishing in America had Maria Callas for a girlfriend and they ate together on a marble table with beautiful candles.

Compote of Apples

Take a dozen of golden pippins, pare them nicely and take the core out with a small penknife; put them into some water, and let them be well scalded; then take a little of the water with some sugar, and a few apples which may be sliced into it, and let the whole boil till it comes to a syrup; then pour it over your pippins, and garnish them with dried cherries and lemon-peel cut fine. You must take care that your pippins are not split.

And Maria Callas sang to Trout Fishing in America as they ate their apples together.

A Standing Crust for Great Pies

Take a peck of flour and six pounds of butter
boiled in a gallon of water: skim it off into
the flour, and as little of the liquor as you
can. Work it up well into a paste, and then
pull it into pieces till it is cold. Then make
it up into what form you please.

And Trout Fishing in America smiled at Maria Callas as
they ate their pie crust together.

A Spoonful Pudding

Take a spoonful of flour, a spoonful of
cream or milk, an egg, a little nutmeg,
ginger, and salt. Mix all together, and
boil it in a little wooden dish half an hour.
If you think proper you may add a few
currants .

And Trout Fishing in America said, "The moon's coming
out." And Maria Callas said, "Yes, it is."

Another Method of Making Walnut Catsup

Take green walnuts before the shell is formed, and grind them in a crab-mill, or pound them in a marble mortar. Squeeze out the juice through a coarse cloth, and put to every gallon of juice a pound of anchovies, and the same quantity of bay-salt, four ounces of Jamaica pepper, two of long and two of black pepper; of mace, cloves, and ginger, each an ounce, and a stick of horseradish. Boil all together till reduced to half the quantity, and then put it into a pot. When it is cold, bottle it close, and in three months it will be fit for use.

And Trout Fishing in America and Maria Callas poured walnut catsup on their hamburgers.

PROLOGUE TO GRIDER CREEK

Mooreville, Indiana, is the town that John Dillinger came

from, and the town has a John Dillinger Museum. You can go in and look around.

Some towns are known as the peach capital of America or the cherry capital or the oyster capital, and there's always a festival and the photograph of a pretty girl in a bathing suit.

Mooresville, Indiana, is the John Dillinger capital of America.

Recently a man moved there with his wife, and he discovered hundreds of rats in his basement. They were huge, slowmoving child-eyed rats.

When his wife had to visit some of her relatives for a few days, the man went out and bought a .38 revolver and a lot of ammunition. Then he went down to the basement where the rats were, and he started shooting them. It didn't bother the rats at all. They acted as if it were a movie and started eating their dead companions for popcorn.

The man walked over to a rat that was busy eating a friend and placed the pistol against the rat's head. The rat did not move and continued eating away. When the hammer clicked back, the rat paused between bites and looked out of the corner of its eye. First at the pistol and then at the man. It was a kind of friendly look as if to say, "When my mother was young she sang like Deanna Durbin."

The man pulled the trigger.

He had no sense of humor.

There's always a single feature, a double feature and an eternal feature playing at the Great Theater in Mooresville,

Indiana: the John Dillinger capital of America.

Richard Brautigan

Part 3 of Trout Fishing in America

SEA, SEA RIDER

The man who owned the bookstore was not magic. He was not a three-legged crow on the dandelion side of the mountain.

He was, of course, a Jew, a retired merchant seaman who had been torpedoed in the North Atlantic and floated there day after day until death did not want him. He had a young wife, a heart attack, a Volkswagen and a home in Marin County. He liked the works of George Orwell, Richard Aldington and Edmund Wilson.

He learned about life at sixteen, first from Dostoevsky and then from the whores of New Orleans.

The bookstore was a parking lot for used graveyards. Thousands of graveyards were parked in rows like cars. Most of the kooks were out of print, and no one wanted to read them any more and the people who had read the books had died or forgotten about them, but through the organic process of music the books had become virgins again. They wore their ancient copyrights like new maidenheads.

I went to the bookstore in the afternoons after I got off work, during that terrible year of 1959.

He had a kitchen in the back of the store and he brewed cups of thick Turkish coffee in a copper pan. I drank coffee and read old books and waited for the year to end. He had a small room above the kitchen.

It looked down on the bookstore and had Chinese screens in front of it. The room contained a couch, a glass cabinet

with Chinese things in it and a table and three chairs. There was a tiny bathroom fastened like a watch fob to the room.

I was sitting on a stool in the bookstore one afternoon reading a book that was in the shape of a chalice. The book had clear pages like gin, and the first page in the book read:

Billy
the Kid
born
November 23,
1859
in
New York
City

The owner of the bookstore came up to me, and put his arm on my shoulder and said, "Would you like to get laid?" His voice was very kind.

"No," I said.

"You're wrong," he said, and then without saying anything else, he went out in front of the bookstore, and stopped a pair of total strangers, a man and a woman. He talked to them for a few moments. I couldn't hear what he was saying. He pointed at me in the bookstore. The woman nodded her head and then the man nodded his head.

They came into the bookstore.

I was embarrassed. I could not leave the bookstore because they were entering by the only door, so I decided to go upstairs and go to the toilet. I got up abruptly and walked to the back of the bookstore and went upstairs to the bathroom, and they followed after me. I could hear them on the stairs.

I waited for a long time in the bathroom and they waited an equally long time in the other room. They never spoke. When I came out of the bathroom, the woman was lying naked on the couch, and the man was sitting in a chair with his hat on his lap.

"Don't worry about him," the girl said. "These things make no difference to him. He's rich. He has 3, 859 Rolls Royces." The girl was very pretty and her body was like a clear mountain river of skin and muscle flowing over rocks of bone and hidden nerves.

"Come to me," she said. "And come inside me for we are Aquarius and I love you."

I looked at the man sitting in the chair. He was not smiling and he did not look sad.

I took off my shoes and all my clothes. The man did not say a word.

The girl's body moved ever so slightly from side to side.

There was nothing else I could do for my body was like birds sitting on a telephone wire strung out down the world, clouds tossing the wires carefully.

I laid the girl.

It was like the eternal 59th second when it becomes a minute and then looks kind of sheepish.

"Good," the girl said, and kissed me on the face.

The man sat there without speaking or moving or sending out any emotion into the room. I guess he was rich and owned 3, 859 Rolls Royces.

Afterwards the girl got dressed and she and the man left. They walked down the stairs and on their way out, I heard him say his first words.

"Would you like to go to Emie's for dinner?"

"I don't know," the girl said. "It's a little early to think about dinner."

Then I heard the door close and they were gone. I got dressed and went downstairs. The flesh about my body felt soft and relaxed like an experiment in functional background music.

The owner of the bookstore was sitting at his desk behind the counter. "I'll tell you what happened up there," he said, in a beautiful anti-three-legged-crow voice, in an anti-dandelion side of the mountain voice.

"What?" I said.

"You fought in the Spanish Civil War. You were a young Communist from Cleveland, Ohio. She was a painter. A New York Jew who was sightseeing in the Spanish Civil War as if it were the Mardi Gras in New Orleans being acted out by Greek statues.

"She was drawing a picture of a dead anarchist when you met her. She asked you to stand beside the anarchist and act as if you had killed him. You slapped her across the face and said something that would be embarrassing for me to repeat.

You both fell very much in love.

"Once while you were at the front she read Anatomy of Melancholy and did 349 drawings of a lemon.

"Your love for each other was mostly spiritual. Neither one of you performed like millionaires in bed.

"When Barcelona fell, you and she flew to England, and then took a ship back to New York. Your love for each other remained in Spain. It was only a war love. You loved only yourselves, loving each other in Spain during the war. On the Atlantic you were different toward each other and became every day more and more like people lost from each other.

"Every wave on the Atlantic was like a dead seagull dragging its driftwood artillery from horizon to horizon.

"When the ship bumped up against America, you departed without saying anything and never saw each other again. The last I heard of you, you were still living in Philadelphia. "

"That's what you think happened up there?" I said.

"Partly, " he said. "Yes, that's part of it. "

He took out his pipe and filled it with tobacco and lit it.

"Do you want me to tell you what else happened up there?" he said.

"Go ahead."

"You crossed the border into Mexico, " he said. "You rode your horse into a small town. The people knew who you were and they were afraid of you. They knew you had killed many men with that gun you wore at your side. The town itself was so small that it didn't have a priest.

"When the rurales saw you, they left the town. Tough as they were, they did not want to have anything to do with you. The rurales left.

You became the most powerful man in town.

You were seduced by a thirteen-year-old girl, and you and she lived together in an adobe hut, and practically all you did was make love.

"She was slender and had long dark hair. You made love standing, sitting, lying on the dirt floor with pigs and chickens around you. The walls, the floor and even the roof of the hut were coated with your sperm and her come.

"You slept on the floor at night and used your sperm for a pillow and her come for a blanket.

"The people in the town were so afraid of you that they could do nothing.

"After a while she started going around town without any clothes on, and the people of the town said that it was not a good thing, and when you started going around without any clothes, and when both of you began making love on the back of your horse in the middle of the zocalo, the people of the

town became so afraid that they abandoned the town. It's been abandoned ever since. "People won't live there.

"Neither of you lived to be twenty-one. It was not necessary.

"See, I do know what happened upstairs," he said. He smiled at me kindly. His eyes were like the shoelaces of a harpsichord.

I thought about what happened upstairs.

"You know what I say is the truth," he said. "For you saw it with your own eyes and traveled it with your own body. Finish the book you were reading before you were interrupted. I'm glad you got laid."

Once resumed the pages of the book began to speed up and turn faster and faster until they were spinning like wheels in the sea.

Richard Brautigan

Part 4 of Trout Fishing in America

THE AUTOPSY OF TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA

This is the autopsy of Trout Fishing in America as if Trout Fishing in America had been Lord Byron and had died in Missolonghi, Greece, and afterward never saw the shores of Idaho again, never saw Carrie Creek, Worsewick Hot Springs, Paradise Creek, Salt Creek and Duck Lake again.

The Autopsy of Trout Fishing in America:

“The body was in excellent state and appeared as one that had died suddenly of asphyxiation. The bony cranial vault was opened and the bones of the cranium were found very hard without any traces of the sutures like the bones of a person 80 years, so much so that one would have said that the cranium was formed by one solitary bone. . . . The meninges were attached to the internal walls of the cranium so firmly that while sawing the bone around the interior to detach the bone from the dura the strength of two robust men was not sufficient. . . . The cerebrum with cerebellum weighed about six medical pounds. The kidneys were very large but healthy and the urinary bladder was relatively small. ”

On May 2, 1824, the body of Trout Fishing in America left Missolonghi by ship destined to arrive in England on the evening of June 29, 1824.

Trout Fishing in America's body was preserved in a cask holding one hundred-eighty gallons of spirits: O, a long way from Idaho, a long way from Stanley Basin, Little Redfish Lake, the Big Lost River and from Lake Josephus and the Big Wood River.

Richard Brautigan

Part 5 of Trout Fishing in America

WORSEWICK

Worsewick Hot Springs was nothing fancy. Somebody put some boards across the creek. That was it.

The boards dammed up the creek enough to form a huge bathtub there, and the creek flowed over the top of the boards, invited like a postcard to the ocean a thousand miles away.

As I said Worsewick was nothing fancy, not like the places where the swells go. There were no buildings around. We saw an old shoe lying by the tub.

The hot springs came down off a hill and where they flowed there was a bright orange scum through the sagebrush. The hot springs flowed into the creek right there at the tub and that' s where it was nice.

We parked our car on the dirt road and went down and took off our clothes, then we took off the baby's clothes, and the deerflies had at us until we got into the water, and then they stopped.

There was a green slime growing around the edges of the tub and there were dozens of dead fish floating in our bath. Their bodies had been turned white by death, like frost on iron doors. Their eyes were large and stiff.

The fish had made the mistake of going down the creek too

far and ending up in hot water, singing, "When you lose your money, learn to lose."

We played and relaxed in the water. The green slime and the dead fish played and relaxed with us and flowed out over us and entwined themselves about us.

Splashing around in that hot water with my woman, I began to get ideas, as they say. After a while I placed my body in such a position in the water that the baby could not see my hard-on.

I did this by going deeper and deeper in the water, like a dinosaur, and letting the green slime and dead fish cover me over.

My woman took the baby out of the water and gave her a bottle and put her back in the car. The baby was tired. It was really time for her to take a nap.

My woman took a blanket out of the car and covered up the windows that faced the hot springs. She put the blanket on top of the car and then lay rocks on the blanket to hold it in place. I remember her standing there by the car.

Then she came back to the water, and the deerflies were at her, and then it was my turn. After a while she said, "I don't have my diaphragm with me and besides it wouldn't work in the water, anyway. I think it's a good idea if you don't come inside me. What do you think?"

I thought this over and said all right. I didn't want any more kids for a long time. The green slime and dead fish

were all about our bodies.

I remember a dead fish floated under her neck. I waited for it to come up on the other side, and it came up on the other side.

Worsewick was nothing fancy.

Then I came, and just cleared her in a split second like an airplane in the movies, pulling out of a nosedive and sailing over the roof of a school.

My sperm came out into the water, unaccustomed to the light, and instantly it became a misty, stringy kind of thing and swirled out like a falling star, and I saw a dead fish come forward and float into my sperm, bending it in the middle. His eyes were stiff like iron.

Richard Brautigan

Part 6 of Trout Fishing in America

THE HUNCHBACK TROUT

The creek was made narrow by little green trees that grew too close together. The creek was like 12, 845 telephone booths in a row with high Victorian ceilings and all the doors taken off and all the backs of the booths knocked out.

Sometimes when I went fishing in there, I felt just like a telephone repairman, even though I did not look like one. I was only a kid covered with fishing tackle, but in some strange way by going in there and catching a few trout, I kept the telephones in service. I was an asset to society.

It was pleasant work, but at times it made me uneasy. It could grow dark in there instantly when there were some clouds in the sky and they worked their way onto the sun. Then you almost needed candles to fish by, and foxfire in your reflexes.

Once I was in there when it started raining. It was dark and hot and steamy. I was of course on overtime. I had that going in my favor. I caught seven trout in fifteen minutes.

The trout in those telephone booths were good fellows. There were a lot of young cutthroat trout six to nine inches long, perfect pan size for local calls. Sometimes there were a few fellows, eleven inches or so--for the long distance calls.

I've always liked cutthroat trout. They put up a good fight, running against the bottom and then broad jumping. Under their throats they fly the orange banner of Jack the Ripper.

Also in the creek were a few stubborn rainbow trout, seldom heard from, but there all the same, like certified public accountants. I'd catch one every once in a while. They were fat and chunky, almost as wide as they were long. I've heard those trout called "squire" trout.

It used to take me about an hour to hitchhike to that creek. There was a river nearby. The river wasn't much. The creek was where I punched in. Leaving my card above the clock I'd punch out again when it was time to go home.

I remember the afternoon I caught the hunchback trout.

A farmer gave me a ride in a truck. He picked me up at a traffic signal beside a bean field and he never said a word to me.

His stopping and picking me up and driving me down the road was as automatic a thing to him as closing the barn door, nothing need be said about it, but still I was in motion traveling thirty-five miles an hour down the road, watching houses and groves of trees go by, watching chickens and mailboxes enter and pass through my vision.

Then I did not see any houses for a while. "This is where I get out," I said.

The farmer nodded his head. The truck stopped.

"Thanks a lot," I said.

The farmer did not ruin his audition for the Metropolitan Opera by making a sound. He just nodded his head again. The truck started up. He was the original silent old farmer.

A little while later I was punching in at the creek. I put my card above the clock and went into that long tunnel of telephone booths.

I waded about seventy-three telephone booths in. I caught two trout in a little hole that was like a wagon wheel. It was one of my favorite holes, and always good for a trout or two.

I always like to think of that hole as a kind of pencil sharpener. I put my reflexes in and they came back out with a good point on them. Over a period of a couple of years, I must have caught fifty trout in that hole, though it was only as big as a wagon wheel.

I was fishing with salmon eggs and using a size 14 single egg hook on a pound and a quarter test tippet. The two trout lay in my creel covered entirely by green ferns ferns made gentle and fragile by the damp walls of telephone booths.

The next good place was forty-five telephone booths in. The place was at the end of a run of gravel, brown and slippery with algae. The run of gravel dropped off and disappeared at a little shelf where there were some white rocks.

One of the rocks was kind of strange. It was a flat white rock. Off by itself from the other rocks, it reminded me of a white cat I had seen in my childhood.

The cat had fallen or been thrown off a high wooden side-

walk that went along the side of a hill in Tacoma, Washington. The cat was lying in a parking lot below.

The fall had not appreciably helped the thickness of the cat, and then a few people had parked their cars on the cat. Of course, that was a long time ago and the cars looked different from the way they look now.

You hardly see those cars any more. They are the old cars. They have to get off the highway because they can't keep up.

That flat white rock off by itself from the other rocks reminded me of that dead cat come to lie there in the creek, among 12, 845 telephone booths.

I threw out a salmon egg and let it drift down over that rock and WHAM! a good hit! and I had the fish on and it ran hard downstream, cutting at an angle and staying deep and really coming on hard, solid and uncompromising, and then the fish jumped and for a second I thought it was a frog. I'd never seen a fish like that before.

God-damn ! What the hell!

The fish ran deep again and I could feel its life energy screaming back up the line to my hand. The line felt like sound. It was like an ambulance siren coming straight at me, red light flashing, and then going away again and then taking to the air and becoming an air-raid siren.

The fish jumped a few more times and it still looked like a frog, but it didn't have any legs. Then the fish grew tired

and sloppy, and I swung and splashed it up the surface of the creek and into my net.

The fish was a twelve-inch rainbow trout with a huge hump on its back. A hunchback trout. The first I'd ever seen. The hump was probably due to an injury that occurred when the trout was young. Maybe a horse stepped on it or a tree fell over in a storm or its mother spawned where they were building a bridge.

There was a fine thing about that trout. I only wish I could have made a death mask of him. Not of his body though, but of his energy. I don't know if anyone would have understood his body. I put it in my creel.

Later in the afternoon when the telephone booths began to grow dark at the edges, I punched out of the creek and went home. I had that hunchback trout for dinner. Wrapped in cornmeal and fried in butter, its hump tasted sweet as the kisses of Esmeralda.

Richard Brautigan

Part 7 of Trout Fishing in America

THE PUDDING MASTER OF

STANLEY BASIN

Tree, snow and rock beginnings, the mountain in back of the lake promised us eternity, but the lake itself was filled with thousands of silly minnows, swimming close to the shore and busy putting in hours of Mack Sennett time.

The minnows were an Idaho tourist attraction. They should have been made into a National Monument. Swimming close to shore, like children they believed in their own immortality .

A third-year student in engineering at the University of Montana attempted to catch some of the minnows but he went about it all wrong. So did the children who came on the Fourth of July weekend.

The children waded out into the lake and tried to catch the minnows with their hands. They also used milk cartons and plastic bags. They presented the lake with hours of human effort. Their total catch was one minnow. It jumped out of a can full of water on their table and died under the table, gasping for watery breath while their mother fried eggs on the Coleman stove.

The mother apologized. She was supposed to be watching

the fish --THIS IS MY EARTHLY FAILURE-- holding the dead fish by the tail, the fish taking all the bows like a young Jewish comedian talking about Adlai Stevenson.

The third-year student in engineering at the University of Montana took a tin can and punched an elaborate design of holes in the can, the design running around and around in circles, like a dog with a fire hydrant in its mouth. Then he attached some string to the can and put a huge salmon egg and a piece of Swiss cheese in the can. After two hours of intimate and universal failure he went back to Missoula, Montana.

The woman who travels with me discovered the best way to catch the minnows. She used a large pan that had in its bottom the dregs of a distant vanilla pudding. She put the pan in the shallow water along the shore and instantly, hundreds of minnows gathered around. Then, mesmerized by the vanilla pudding, they swam like a children's crusade into the pan. She caught twenty fish with one dip. She put the pan full of fish on the shore and the baby played with the fish for an hour.

We watched the baby to make sure she was just leaning on them a little. We didn't want her to kill any of them because she was too young.

Instead of making her furry sound, she adapted rapidly to the difference between animals and fish, and was soon making a silver sound.

She caught one of the fish with her hand and looked at it for a while. We took the fish out of her hand and put it back into the pan. After a while she was putting the fish back by herself.

Then she grew tired of this. She tipped the pan over and a dozen fish flopped out onto the shore. The children's game and the banker's game, she picked up those silver things, one at a time, and put them back in the pan. There was still a little water in it. The fish liked this. You could tell.

When she got tired of the fish, we put them back in the lake, and they were all quite alive, but nervous. I doubt if they will ever want vanilla pudding again.

Richard Brautigan

Part 8 of Trout Fishing in America

A RETURN TO THE COVER OF
THIS BOOK

Dear Trout Fishing in America:

I met your friend Fritz in Washington Square. He told me to tell you that his case went to a jury and that he was acquitted by the jury.

He said that it was important for me to say that his case went to a jury and that he was acquitted by the jury, said it again.

He looked in good shape. He was sitting in the sun. There's an old San Francisco saying that goes: "It's better to rest in Washington Square than in the California Adult Authority." How are things in New York?

Yours,

"An Ardent Admirer"

Dear Ardent Admirer:

It's good to hear that Fritz isn't in jail. He was very worried about it. The last time I was in San Francisco, he told

me he thought the odds were 10-1 in favor of him going away. I told him to get a good lawyer. It appears that he followed my advice and also was very lucky. That's always a good combination.

You asked about New York and New York is very hot.

I'm visiting some friends, a young burglar and his wife. He's unemployed and his wife is working as a cocktail waitress. He's been looking for work but I fear the worst.

It was so hot last night that I slept with a wet sheet wrapped around myself, trying to keep cool. I felt like a mental patient.

I woke up in the middle of the night and the room was filled with steam rising off the sheet, and there was jungle stuff, abandoned equipment and tropical flowers, on the floor and on the furniture.

I took the sheet into the bathroom and plopped it into the tub and turned the cold water on it. Their dog came in and started barking at me.

The dog barked so loud that the bathroom was soon filled with dead people. One of them wanted to use my wet sheet for a shroud. I said no, and we got into a big argument over it and woke up the Puerto Ricans in the next apartment, and they began pounding on the walls.

The dead people all left in a huff. "We know when we're not wanted," one of them said.

"You're damn tootin'," I said.

I've had enough.

I' m going to get out of New York. Tomorrow I'm leaving for Alaska. I'm going to find an ice-cold creek near the Arctic where that strange beautiful moss grows and spend a week with the grayling. My address will be, Trout Fishing in America, c/o General Delivery, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Your friend,
Trout Fishing in America

THE LAKE JOSEPHUS DAYS

We left Little Redfish for Lake Josephus, traveling along the good names--from Stanley to Capehorn to Seafoam to the Rapid River, up Float Creek, past the Greyhound Mine and then to Lake Josephus, and a few days after that up the trail to Hell-diver Lake with the baby on my shoulders and a good limit of trout waiting in Hell-diver.

Knowing the trout would wait there like airplane tickets for us to come, we stopped at Mushroom Springs and had a drink of cold shadowy water and some photographs taken of the baby and me sitting together on a log.

I hope someday we'll have enough money to get those pic-

tures developed. Sometimes I get curious about them, wondering if they will turn out all right. They are in suspension now like seeds in a package. I'll be older when they are developed and easier to please. Look there's the baby ! Look there's Mushroom Springs ! Look there's me !

I caught the limit of trout within an hour of reaching Hell-diver, and my woman, in all the excitement of good fishing, let the baby fall asleep directly in the sun and when the baby woke up, she puked and I carried her back down the trail.

My woman trailed silently behind, carrying the rods and the fish. The baby puked a couple more times, thimblefuls of gentle lavender vomit, but still it got on my clothes, and her face was hot and flushed.

We stopped at Mushroom Springs. I gave her a small drink of water, not too much, and rinsed the vomit taste out of her mouth. Then I wiped the puke off my clothes and for some strange reason suddenly it was a perfect time, there at Mushroom Springs, to wonder whatever happened to the Zoot suit.

Along with World War II and the Andrews Sisters, the Zoot suit had been very popular in the early 40s. I guess they were all just passing fads.

A sick baby on the trail down from Hell-diver, July 1961, is probably a more important question. It cannot be left to go on forever, a sick baby to take her place in the galaxy, among the comets, bound to pass close to the earth every

173 years.

She stopped puking after Mushroom Springs, and I carried her back down along the path in and out of the shadows and across other nameless springs, and by the time we got down to Lake Josephus, she was all right.

She was soon running around with a big cutthroat trout in her hands, carrying it like a harp on her way to a concert--ten minutes late with no bus in sight and no taxi either

Richard Brautigan

Part 9 of Trout Fishing in America

SANDBOX MINUS JOHN
DILLINGER EQUALS WHAT?

Often I return to the cover of Trout Fishing in America. I took the baby and went down there this morning. They were watering the cover with big revolving sprinklers. I saw some bread lying on the grass. It had been put there to feed the pigeons.

The old Italians are always doing things like that. The bread had been turned to paste by the water and was squashed flat against the grass. Those dopey pigeons were waiting until the water and grass had chewed up the bread for them, so they wouldn't have to do it themselves.

I let the baby play in the sandbox and I sat down on a bench and looked around. There was a beatnik sitting at the other end -of the bench. He had his sleeping bag beside him and he was eating apple turnovers. He had a huge sack of apple turnovers and he was gobbling them down like a turkey. It was probably a more valid protest than picketing missile bases.

The baby played in the sandbox. She had on a red dress and the Catholic church was towering up behind her red dress. There was a brick john between her dress and the church. It was there by no accident. Ladies to the left and gents to the right.

A red dress, I thought. Wasn't the woman who set John Dillinger up for the FBI wearing a red dress? They called her "The Woman in Red. "

It seemed to me that was right. It was a red dress, but so far, John Dillinger was nowhere in sight. my daughter played alone in the sandbox.

Sandbox minus John Dillinger equals what?

The beatnik went and got a drink of water from the fountain that was crucified on the wall of the brick john, more toward the gents than the ladies. He had to wash all those apple turnovers down his throat.

There were three sprinklers going in the park. There was one in front of the Benjamin Franklin statue and one to the side of him and one just behind him. They were all turning in circles. I saw Benjamin Franklin standing there patiently through the water.

The sprinkler to the side of Benjamin Franklin hit the left-hand tree. It sprayed hard against the trunk and knocked some leaves down from the tree, and then it hit the center tree, sprayed hard against the trunk and more leaves fell. Then it sprayed against Benjamin Franklin, the water shot out to the sides of the stone and a mist drifted down off the water. Benjamin Franklin got his feet wet.

The sun was shining down hard on me. The sun was bright and hot. After a while the sun made me think of my own discomfort. The only shade fell on the beatnik.

The shade came down off the Lillie Hitchcock Colt statue of some metal fireman saving a metal broad from a mental fire. The beatnik now lay on the bench and the shade was two feet longer than he was.

A friend of mine has written a poem about that statue. God-damn, I wish he would write another poem about that statue, SO it would give me some shade two feet longer than my body.

I was right about "The Woman in Red," because ten minutes later they blasted John Dillinger down in the sandbox. The sound of the machine-gun fire startled the pigeons and they hurried on into the church.

My daughter was seen leaving in a huge black car shortly after that. She couldn't talk yet, but that didn't make any difference. The red dress did it all.

John Dillinger's body lay half in and half out of the sandbox, more toward the ladies than the gents. He was leaking blood like those capsules we used to use with oleomargarine, in those good old days when oleo was white like lard.

The huge black car pulled out and went up the street, bat-light shining off the top. It stopped in front of the ice-cream parlor at Filbert and Stockton.

An agent got out and went in and bought two hundred double-decker ice-cream cones. He needed a wheelbarrow to get them back to the car.

Richard Brautigan

Please

Do you think of me
as often
as I think
of you?

Richard Brautigan

Private Eye Lettuce

Three crates of Private Eye Lettuce,
the name and drawing of a detective
with magnifying glass on the sides
of the crates of lettuce,
form a great cross in man's imagination
and his desire to name
the objects of this world.
I think I'll call this place Golgotha
and have some salad for dinner.

Richard Brautigan

Romeo and Juliet

If you will die for me,
I will die for you
and our graves will be like two lovers washing
their clothes together
in a laundromat
If you will bring the soap
I will bring the bleach.

Richard Brautigan

San Francisco

This poem was found written on a paper bag by Richard Brautigan in a laundromat in San Francisco. The author is unknown.

Richard Brautigan

Surprise

I lift the toilet seat
as if it were the nest of a bird
and I see cat tracks
all around the edge of the bowl.

Richard Brautigan

The Beautiful Poem

I go to bed in Los Angeles thinking
about you.

Richard Brautigan

The Fever Monument

I walked across the park to the fever monument.
It was in the center of a glass square surrounded
by red flowers and fountains. The monument
was in the shape of a sea horse and the plaque read
We got hot and died.

Richard Brautigan

The First Winter Snow

Oh, pretty girl, you have trapped
yourself in the wrong body. Twenty
extra pounds hang like a lumpy
tapestry on your perfect mammal nature.

Three months ago you were like a
deer staring at the first winter snow.

Now Aphrodite thumbs her nose at you
and tells stories behind your back.

Richard Brautigan

The Moon Versus Us Ever Sleeping Together Again

I sit here, an arch-villain of romance,
thinking about you. Gee, I'm sorry
I made you unhappy, but there was nothing
I could do about it because I have to be free.
Perhaps everything would have been different
if you had stayed at the table or asked me
to go out with you to look at the moon,
instead of getting up and leaving me alone with
her.

Richard Brautigan

The Shenevertakesherwatchoff Poem

For Marcia

Richard Brautigan

To England

There are no postage stamps that send letters
back to England three centuries ago,
no postage stamps that make letters
travel back until the grave hasn't been dug yet,
and John Donne stands looking out the window,
it is just beginning to rain this April morning,
and the birds are falling into the trees
like chess pieces into an unplayed game,
and John Donne sees the postman coming up the street,
the postman walks very carefully because his cane
is made of glass.

Richard Brautigan

Trout Fishing in America

THE COVER FOR
TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA

The cover for Trout Fishing in America is a photograph taken late in the afternoon, a photograph of the Benjamin Franklin statue in San Francisco's Washington Square.

Born 1706--Died 1790, Benjamin Franklin stands on a pedestal that looks like a house containing stone furniture. He holds some papers in one hand and his hat in the other. Then the statue speaks, saying in marble:

PRESENTED BY
H. D. COGSWELL
TO OUR
BOYS AND GIRLS
WHO WILL SOON
TAKE OUR PLACES
AND PASS ON.

Around the base of the statue are four words facing the directions of this world, to the east WELCOME, to the west WELCOME, to the north WELCOME, to the south WELCOME. Just behind the statue are three poplar trees, almost leafless except for the top branches. The statue stands in front of the middle tree. All around the grass is wet from the

rains of early February.

In the background is a tall cypress tree, almost dark like a room. Adlai Stevenson spoke under the tree in 1956, before a crowd of 40, 000 people.

There is a tall church across the street from the statue with crosses, steeples, bells and a vast door that looks like a huge mousehole, perhaps from a Tom and Jerry cartoon, and written above the door is "Per L'Universo."

Around five o'clock in the afternoon of my cover for Trout Fishing in America, people gather in the park across the street from the church and they are hungry.

It's sandwich time for the poor.

But they cannot cross the street until the signal is given.

Then they all run across the street to the church and get their sandwiches that are wrapped in newspaper. They go back to the park and unwrap the newspaper and see what their sandwiches are all about.

A friend of mine unwrapped his sandwich one afternoon and looked inside to find just a leaf of spinach. That was all.

Was it Kafka who learned about America by reading the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin.....

Kafka who said, "I like the Americans because they are healthy and optimistic."

Richard Brautigan

We Stopped at Perfect Days

We stopped at perfect days
and got out of the car.
The wind glanced at her hair.
It was as simple as that.
I turned to say something--

Richard Brautigan

Xerox Candy Bar

Ah,
you're just a copy
of all the candy bars
I've ever eaten.

Richard Brautigan

Yes, the Fish Music

A trout-colored wind blows
through my eyes, through my fingers,
and I remember how the trout
used to hide from the dinosaurs
when they came to drink at the river.
The trout hid in subways, castles,
and automobiles. They waited patiently for the dinosaurs to go away.

Richard Brautigan

Your Catfish Friend

If I were to live my life
in catfish forms
in scaffolds of skin and whiskers
at the bottom of a pond
and you were to come by
one evening
when the moon was shining
down into my dark home
and stand there at the edge
of my affection
and think, "It's beautiful
here by this pond. I wish
somebody loved me,"
I'd love you and be your catfish
friend and drive such lonely
thoughts from your mind
and suddenly you would be
at peace,
and ask yourself, "I wonder
if there are any catfish
in this pond? It seems like
a perfect place for them."

Richard Brautigan