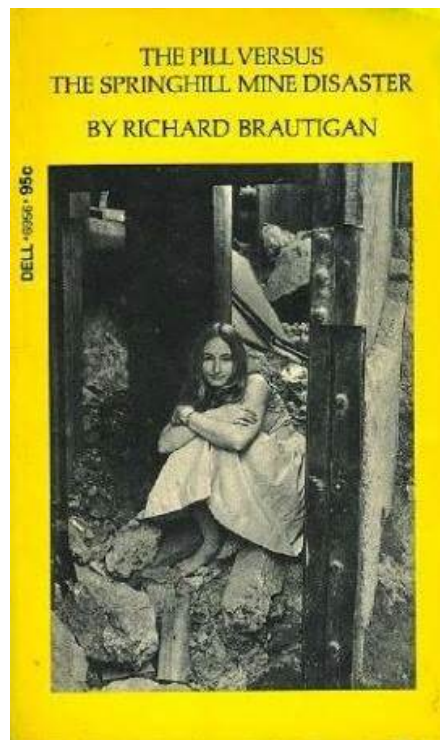




## The Pill vs. the Springhill Mine Disaster

*Richard Brautigan*

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# The Pill vs. the Springhill Mine Disaster

*Richard Brautigan*

## **The Pill vs. the Springhill Mine Disaster** Richard Brautigan

Brautigan's poetic style is often surreal, often tender, with touches of humor. The poems are written in clear, straightforward free verse. Here is an example of his style from "The Chinese Checker Players": "When I was six years old/I played Chinese checkers/with a woman/who was ninety-three years old."

Recurrent themes in the book include love, sex, loss & loneliness. Incorporated throughout are an intriguing mix of pop & 'high' culture references: Jefferson Airplane, Ophelia, the New York Yankees, John Donne etc. The book often has an earthy flavor. He writes about such topics as his own penis or the smell of a fart. Some particularly memorable poems include the following:

"All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace," a sci-fi vision of a "cybernetic meadow"; the open-ended "Karma Repair Kit: Items 1-4"; "Discovery," a joyful poem about sexual intimacy; the surreal "The Pumpkin Tide"; the funny, haiku-like "November 3"; & "A Good-Talking Candle," which invites readers into altered states of perception.

Altho most of the poems are very short, there is one longer poem: the 9-part, 9-page "the Galilee Hitch-hiker," which chronicles the surreal adventures of Baudelaire — among other experiences, he opens an unconventional hamburger stand in San Francisco. If you only know Brautigan from his weird & wonderful novels, read this collection.-Michael Mazza (edited)

## **The Pill vs. the Springhill Mine Disaster Details**

Date : Published November 5th 1970 (first published 1968)

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Author : Richard Brautigan

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## From Reader Review The Pill vs. the Springhill Mine Disaster for online ebook

### Heirloom Books says

There is something about reading Brautigan that reignites my flame for poetry. I'll be on a poetry kick for the next week.

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### Simon Robs says

A book of poems, the best of which (for me) are the titles funny, clever, quirky. They are mostly love poems and/or paeans to his long blonde lover. There was a fun series of nine or so poems with Baudelaire as central character; and, a few with Hamlet, Ophelia, too. It is a Beat style collection more free flow riffs than anything. The kind of poems to pass around between friends reading aloud at campfire whilst getting high on whatever. Just fun.

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### Sabine Berzina says

5, since I couldn't rate it lower because of "Star Hole"

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### S. says

Of the load of books I read on my 2-week vacation this summer, this is the one I enjoyed most. It's a collection of mostly short poems that are overall funny and endearing. Anyone who writes a poem called "Haiku Ambulance" has already scored points with me. I also like the "versus" poems - "The Pill versus the Springhill Mine Disaster," "General Custer versus the Titanic," etc. I like the "Galilee Hitch-Hiker" poems and also "The Wheel" and "I Lie Here in a Strange Girl's Apartment." My very favorite is "Your Catfish Friend."

Not all the poems go over well. Some were crippled by a bad joke or just seemed lame. "Flowers for Those You Love," for example, fell flat.

Butcher, baker, candlestick maker,  
anybody can get VD,  
including those you love.

Please see a doctor  
if you think you've got it.

You'll feel better afterwards  
and so will those you love.

\*\*\*

Some of the poems seemed dated, too, though it may be my own brain dating them.

In the interest of fairness, here's one of the poems I liked:

### **Your Departure versus the Hindenburg**

Every time we say good-bye  
I see it as an extension of  
the Hindenburg:  
that great 1937 airship exploding  
in medieval flames like a burning castle  
above New Jersey.  
When you leave the house, the  
shadow of the Hindenburg enters  
to take your place.

Believe it or not it's my first go at a book by Brautigan, although I've read a lot ABOUT him and remember well when he committed suicide in the 80s because at the time I was majoring in English at college. I remember also that he was somewhat dismissed for not being able "to grow" as a writer, that his work continued to do the same tricks over and over. Then and now, I don't necessarily find that grounds for criticism.

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### **Matt says**

One of my favorite all-time poetry reads. Brautigan's poetic worldview is unique, uncluttered, and remarkably non-pretentious.... and sticks to your ribs all the more for it.

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### **Ju\$tin says**

2.5

eh

some of these were good-great

most were just ok-bad

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### **Khashayar Mohammadi says**

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

The instagram poetry of its time! I'm unsure whether or not I enjoy it on an ironic level!

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### **Kent Winward says**

Death by mine disaster vs. conception denied by chemistry, neither win as life and its vagaries triumph in Brautigan's poetry.

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### **Navid Lambert-Shirzad says**

A friend of mine had a glance at this book and said something that gave me an idea: if they had twitter back then, Brautigan's tweets would be like the poems you find in this book!

I usually don't read poetry. I started reading this book because it is a Brautigan book and found quite a few of its poems brilliant. As nothing is perfect, this book has plain and mediocre poems as well.

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### **Keith says**

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.

I like to think  
(right now, please!)  
of a cybernetic forest  
filled with pines and electronics  
where deer stroll peacefully  
past computers  
as if they were flowers  
with spinning blossoms.

I like to think  
(it has to be!)  
of a cybernetic ecology  
where we are free of our labors  
and joined back to nature,  
returned to our mammal  
brothers and sisters,

and all watched over  
by machines of loving grace.

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### **M. Sarki says**

I read this book again today after more than a thirty year distance from the last time we visited. Not so hotsy totsy. But it was "ok". Unfortunately, by reading this a second time around old Richard lost a star in my ranking. I think his novels will hold up better.

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### **lisa z says**

i was 17, i had dropped out of high school that day. i walked out of the cold dead building with a sense of complete freedom and sarcasm. i loved telling everyone there and my parents that this education would clearly not do, the beginning of a litany of bad decisions i would make over the course of the next several years. i was convinced there was something more moving and educational out there for me though i had no clue of where or how to go for such things. it was the first perfectly warm spring day which had everything to do with my final decision there was no way i could be locked in a box on a day like that. i got into my shitty car with a box of camel reds and drove directly to fern cliff with my friends ben and nick who had also made the decision. we got wonderfully high and stood in the waterfall in our underwear laughing at our cloudy rebellion and what we thought of as brilliance. i would spend many more days with those two in same places. later that day as i couldn't go home, i went to the longbranch coffee shop in carbondale sat in the window with my blank book and plotted out ignorantly my new plan. he came over and asked to sit with me, it was apparent that he was light years ahead of me in so many ways. i ended up back at his apartment in a lustful haze from his talking. we drank green tea out of tiny cups he read from this book as i laid on his bed. we rubbed our bodies together for hours, and i realized at that moment that i would leave that place for good and find somewhere much like his and start on my learning journey away from all of the cowards and authority around me. thank you even though i don't remember your name, you gave me a glimpse into something beautiful you made me thirsty. though soon after my life would take a more devastating but gorgeous turn i never lost that yellow thickness of his room and the music of him reading aloud to me as i doze in and out of confusion and contentment. i carried this book with me everywhere for four years and gave it to the next man that made me feel something quite similiar. i want the book back dammit

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### **Courtney Johnston says**

Nine of my favourite Richard Brautigan poems (god, how I love this collection)

#### **THE PILL VERSUS THE SPRINGHILL MINE DISASTER**

When you take your pill  
it's like a mine disaster.  
I think of all the people  
lost inside of you.

From THE GALILEE HITCHHIKER (Part 4: The Flowerburgers)

Baudelaire opened  
up a hamburger stand  
in San Fransisco,  
but he put flowers  
between the buns.  
People would come in  
and say, "Give me a  
hamburger with plenty  
of onions on it."  
Baudelaire would give  
them a flowerburger  
instead and the people  
would say, "What kind  
of a hamburger stand  
is this?"

CASTLE OF THE CORMORANTS (one of my to-death poems)

Hamlet with  
a cormorant  
under his arm  
married Ophelia.  
She was still  
wet from drowning.  
She looked like  
a white flower  
that had been  
left in the  
rain too long.  
I love you,  
said Ophelia,  
and I love  
that dark  
bird you  
hold in  
your arms.

*Big Sur*  
*February 1958*

MAP SHOWER (For Marcia)

I want your hair  
to cover me with maps  
of new places,

so everywhere I go  
will be as beautiful  
as your hair.

I'VE NEVER HAD IT DONE SO GENTLY BEFORE (For M)

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.

I FEEL HORRIBLE. SHE DOESN'T

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

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.

It makes me nervous.  
I don't say the right things  
or perhaps I start  
to examine,  
evaluate,  
compute  
what I am saying.

If I say, "Do you think it's going to rain?"  
and she says, "I don't know,"  
I start thinking: Does she really like me?

In other words  
I get a little creepy.

A friend of mine once said,  
"It's twenty times better to be friends  
with someone  
than it is to be in love with them."

I think he's right and besides,  
it's raining somewhere, programming flowers  
and keeping snails happy.  
That's all taken care of.

BUT

if a girl likes me a lot  
and starts getting real nervous  
and suddenly begins asking me funny questions

and looks sad if I give the wrong answers  
and she says things like,  
"Do you think it's going to rain?"  
and I say, "It beats me,"  
and she says, "Oh,"  
and looks a little sad  
at the clear blue California sky,  
I think: Thank God, it's you, baby, this time  
instead of me.

## 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 harpsichord.  
I want high school report cards  
to look like this:

Playing with Gentle Glass Things  
A

Computer Magic  
A

Writing Letters to Those You Love  
A

Finding out about Fish  
A

Marcia's Long Blonde Beauty  
A+!

## THE HORSE THAT HAD A FLAT TIRE

Once upon a valley  
there came down  
from some goldenblue mountains  
a handsome young prince  
who was riding  
a dawncolored horse  
named Lordsburg.

I love you  
You're my breathing castle  
Gentle so gentle  
We'll live forever

In the valley

there was a beautiful maiden  
whom the prince  
drifted into love with  
like a New Mexico made from  
apple thunder and long  
glass beds.

I love you  
You're my breathing castle  
Gentle so gentle  
We'll live forever

The prince enchanted  
the maiden  
and they rode off  
on the dawn-colored horse  
named Lordsburg  
toward the goldenblue mountains.

I love you  
You're my breathing castle  
Gentle so gentle  
We'll live forever

They would have lived  
happily ever after  
if the horse hadn't had  
a flat tire  
in front of a dragon's  
house.

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## Mat says

A mostly superb and seminal collection by Brautigan.

Brautigan's poetic style is deceptively simple, singular and charming. At times it carries the simply dignity of a haiku, at others it's a small surrealistic or dadaist masterpiece.

*The Pill Vs. The Springhill Mine Disaster* is essentially a collection of the poems that Brautigan had written up until the late 60s and, indeed, showcases some of his strongest work.

I have heard that *Loading Mercury with a Pitchfork* contains even stronger work and is a largely overlooked masterpiece of Brautigan poetry so look forward to checking that one out around Xmas time.

I highly recommend this as a generous and wide 'sampler' of Brautigan's witty but at times perplexing poetry. These poems run the full gamut from eroticism to hilarity to perplexing dead-end non sequiturs. But at the end of the day, Brautigan is quite simply incomparable and inimitable - one person who truly deserves the label 'unique'. Not even Haruki Murakami who was heavily influenced by Brautigan could capture that special ambience which is a perfect blend of the medieval and the modern that this great artist was able to

conjure up with his economical sentences stripped down to a bare Hemingway-esque style.

Highly enjoyable and highly recommended.

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## **Darwin8u says**

UNEVEN POEMS/reviewed unevenly

Brautigan's words jump  
like a funky beat poet  
in ways I can support  
I loved TFiA and see seasons of potential  
on the table of this book,  
but many  
poems casually  
rolled  
onto  
the floor (for me)  
  
uneaten.

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## **Maya Day says**

Best poetry I've ever read. His metaphors borderline between completely bizarre to beautiful. Sometimes hit or miss, but when it hits, it hits so hard.

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## **Shawn says**

It's like Bukowski and Pound had a love child in the 50's and this is that child's note book as he falls in love in the 60's and 70's. Very terse, often simple, sometimes funny, sometimes touchingly vulgar, Brautigan's poetry is simple yet redolent with meaning. His love poems show clear devotion, his nature poems also incorporate his fascination with technology, his...random? poems capture the minutiae of random moments of boredom, of time-killing. The imagery is often dream like and colorful, and makes for a delightful quick read, like a psychedelic colored swirl scoop of gelato.

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## **Amanda says**

*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 helpless. 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.*

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### **Julia says**

Brautigan quickly became my favorite poet as soon as I read a few poems from this book. I know some people do not like the poems that seem "lazy" but those are the poems that make me love him even more. There are some that will really make you nod your head in contentment, and there are some that will make you cock your head to the side and stare. He proves that you can truly write a poem about anything. Everything is poetry as long as you think it is. Some are so simple, and the mere fact that he has turned something so matter of fact into a poem makes me sigh in amazement. I know poetry means creating a masterpiece. But sometimes poetry means seeing things for what they are. It doesn't always have to be complicated. It can be stating the facts. Making people laugh. Simple can be great. Anyway, I think if the people who say "Ugh poetry is so boring! I hate it! It's cheesy!" read this, their minds will change.

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### **Person113 says**

'It's Raining in Love' is probably my all time favorite single poem at the moment as it is one of the most relatable things I have ever read (\*cries socially awkward, shy, timid tears\*). As for the rest of this collection, it remains quite consistently entertaining, humorous, and amusingly surreal throughout, which is not at all surprising considering these are all poems straight from the brilliant comic mind of Richard Brautigan, one of the strangest and funniest writers I have ever come across, and also one of the very best.

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