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## Richard Brautigan's Body

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## Richard Brautigan's Body

I thought of you Richard  
on Earth Day nineteen-ninety  
beneath the floorboards of  
the backporch summer home  
in Marin County

They didn't recognize you  
as the trout fisherman  
or even the guy who wrote  
"The Beautiful Poem."  
They discovered no beauty

You were half dirt,  
barely dental  
when the neighbors  
realized the air  
smelled bodily  
of you, and not  
the outhouse

Five men used trowels  
to lift the stiffened fabric  
of your clothes from the dirt  
without letting you crumble out the cuff and crotch  
They worked like missionaries  
on knees and hands  
saving all of you they could

They sifted your teeth from the dirt  
with panning tools, Richard  
They took your moustache hairs  
labeled them in a Ziplock  
and rolled each ivory souvenir  
into their own pockets  
leaving only your hat to mark the grave  
they chose for you

It was worse than anything I learned  
in school --  
someone having to excavate you.  
You were not food for daisies --  
they could not grow beneath the porch  
you thickened with your dust.

*Michael Payne*