

DAVID DENNY

Zen and the Art of Loneliness

David Denny's poems have recently appeared in the *Carolina Quarterly*, *Slipstream*, and *San Pedro River Review*. His poetry collections include *Man Overboard* and *Fool in the Attic*. He is also the author of the short story collection *The Gill Man in Purgatory*.

Richard Brautigan feels the screen door smack him on the butt as it bangs shut. Or is that his mother's hand? Since his father left it has been like this.

Whenever a man comes through the front door, Brautigan gets shooed out the back. He may return when the man's car is gone. He grabs

his father's old rod, reel, and tackle. He sneaks a slice of bread from the deaf woman's kitchen next door. He follows the deer trail through

the woods, across the highway, and down to the banks of the McKenzie. He finds a mother lode of red worms in the moist soil

beneath the firs. He walks into the cold water up to his knees at a place where the river runs narrow and deep. He casts his line into the swift

current along the opposite shore. The mosquitoes buzzing in his ears are only buzzing. Neither the birds nor the squirrels nor the fish themselves

speak of his mother or her parade of men or the bully who trips and taunts him on the playground. After a while Brautigan loses track of time.

He vaguely hears the crank and grind of truck gears back on the highway. But that is the only reminder of that other world. His legs are numb. He casts

and casts the impaled worms into the swift current beneath the willows. There is just this and nothing more. Soon he acquires a pile of glistening rainbow trout

on the shoreline. Fish enough to feed a multitude. But there is only him, just him, a white-blond skinny boy with an empty stomach, on the cusp

of a growth spurt, out here on the dreamy rim of nowhere, hauling in this miraculous catch, under the summer sun, on the West Coast of America, 1947.

CHRISTINE HANLON

Red Skiff, 2012
Oil on panel, 6 x 6 in



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