

THE MAYOR
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

London. On December 1, 1887; July 7, August 8, September 30, one day in the month of October and on the 9th of November, 1888; on the 1st of June, the 17th of July and the 10th of September 1889 . . .

The disguise was perfect.

Nobody ever saw him, except, of course, the victims. They saw him.

Who would have expected?

He wore a costume of trout fishing in America. He wore mountains on his elbows and bluejays on the collar of his shirt. Deep water flowed through the lilies that were entwined about his shoelaces. A bullfrog kept croaking in his watch pocket and the air was filled with the sweet smell of ripe blackberry bushes.

He wore trout fishing in America as a costume to hide his own appearance from the world while he performed his deeds of murder in the night.

Who would have expected?

Nobody!

Scotland Yard?

(Pouf!)

They were always a hundred miles away, wearing halibut-stalker hats, looking under the dust.

Nobody ever found out.

O, now he's the Mayor of the Twentieth Century! A razor, a knife and a ukelele are his favorite instruments.

Of course, it would have to be a ukelele. Nobody else would have thought of it, pulled like a plow through the intestines.

Trout Fishing in America is a [novella](#) written by [Richard Brautigan](#) and published in 1967. It is technically Brautigan's first novel; he wrote it in 1961 before *A Confederate General From Big Sur* which was published first.

Trout Fishing In America is an abstract book without a clear central storyline. Instead, the book contains a series of anecdotes broken into chapters, with the same characters often reappearing from story to story. The settings of most of the chapters occur in three locales: Brautigan's childhood in the Pacific Northwest of the U.S.; his day-to-day adult life in [San Francisco](#); and a camping trip in [Idaho](#) with his wife and infant daughter during the summer of 1961. Most of the chapters were written during this trip.

The phrase "Trout Fishing in America" is used in various ways: it is the title of the book, a character, a hotel, the act of fishing itself, a modifier (one character is named "Trout Fishing in America Shorty"), etc. Brautigan uses the theme of trout fishing as a point of departure for thinly veiled and often comical critiques of mainstream American society and culture. Several symbolic objects, such as a mayonnaise jar, a [Ben Franklin](#) statue in San Francisco's [Washington Square](#), trout, etc. reappear throughout the book.