
What word in Brautigan's title immediately alerts you to the fact that this poem was probably writ-

ten in the twentieth century? What image does this title put in your mind?

All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace

Richard Brautigan

I like to think (and
the sooner the better!)
of a cybernetic³ meadow
where mammals and computers
5 live together in mutually
programming harmony
like pure water
touching clear sky.

I like to think
10 (right now, please!)
of a cybernetic forest
filled with pines and electronics

3. cybernetic: having to do with computers.

where deer stroll peacefully
past computers
15 as if they were flowers
with spinning blossoms.

I like to think
(it has to be!)
of a cybernetic ecology
20 where we are free of our labors
and joined back to nature,
returned to our mammal
brothers and sisters,
and all watched over
25 by machines of loving grace.

Responding to the Poem

Analyzing the Poem

Identifying Details

1. Every time the poet repeats "I like to think," he follows with a remark in parentheses. List these remarks. What is he impatiently hoping for?
2. The **imagery** in this poem is striking because it mixes two categories of things that we normally think of as having nothing in common. What are these two categories? (Look at lines 4, 12, 13, and 14.)

Interpreting Meanings

3. Are machines usually regarded as the enemies of nature or as the guardians of nature? How are they regarded by this poet?
4. Why is the phrase "machines of loving grace" unusual and surprising?
5. This poem is a vision of the future, but in what sense might it be said that we already live under the guardianship of machines? Do you think of them as machines of "loving grace"? Explain why or why not.



6. Do you think any part of this poet's vision can come true? Would you *want* his vision of the future to come true—or do you find it unappealing? Explain.
7. Would you call this poem optimistic or pessimistic in *tone*? Why?

Writing About the Poem

A Creative Response

Imitating the Poem. Write a **free-verse** poem of your own in which you express your own vision of an ideal future. Open with Brautigan's words: "I like to think . . .," and repeat these words every time you present a new **image** or set of images. You may want to present images of nature, images of tech-

nology, or other images or combinations of images. Choose your words carefully to express your **tone**, or attitude: Will you be sincere, ironic, awed, sarcastic, playful, optimistic, pessimistic, or something else? Write at least six lines.

Reading About the Writer

Richard Brautigan (1935–1984), who was born in Tacoma, Washington, spent most of his adult life in San Francisco, and was part of a group called the "San Francisco poets." Although Brautigan began his writing career as a poet, his first public recognition was for his loosely constructed comic novels. In 1967 he became a cult hero with the publication of *Trout Fishing in America*.