

TODD MOORE

THE RIDDLE OF THE WOODEN GUN



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“Todd Moore runs with language and makes every word count.”

--Elmore Leonard

“Violent, raw and riddled with humor, in time, Todd Moore’s .44 magnum opus *Dillinger* will take its place in the American literary canon as one of the greatest. A longtime small press hero, Moore’s gunshot staccato cannot be rivaled, there simply is no other. Literary outlaw and maverick poet, Todd Moore is a leader of the new romantic, a visionary wordslinger cut from the same bloody cloth as Cormac McCarthy.”

--S.A. Griffin

“Todd Moore slaps you in the face and kicks your ass, with ink & paper.”

--Joe Pachinko

WOOD

“Bis vor kurzem hatte ich weder was von/ueber Todd Moore gehoert, geschweige denn gelesen. Beim Anhoeren einiger Zerx Kompilationen auf denen Todd hoechstpersoenlich seine Gedichte vortraegt, stellte sich bei mir dann das ein, was Todd in etwas so beschreibt: “Wenn’s Deinen Arsch in Bewegung bringen soll, dann ein Gedicht”. Alles was mir seitdem von Todd in die Finger kam wurde gelesen und gehoert und ich kann einfach nicht genug davon bekommen und seitdem kann ich auch wieder Blut sehen ohne gleich in Ohnmacht zu fallen.”

--Klaus Thiemann., metropolis

“Moore is the real deal. What you see is exactly what you get. There’s no fakery in his poetry. It’s all meat, no filler.”

--John Yamrus

all gone lost
half of the
known individuals present at the
crown point
escape say
dillinger had
a real gun
the other
half state
he was in
possession
of a wooden
gun thus the
regional agent
in charge of
the investigation
could not definitively offer
an opinion
four days
after dillinger’s escape
he bought a
wooden gun
tie tack from
a novelty
shop in
chicago the
pistol itself
was a 45
automatic
a small pin
pierced the

barrel & the
point was
capped w/a
miniature
bullet that
held the
wooden
gun firmly
in place
dillinger
liked it so
much he
bought
billie one
her reaction
was i'd
rather have
a real one
wooden gun
stories i
got a million
of em
which one
wd you like
to hear
the old
man sd
blowing
the sha
vings off
the barrel
of the
wooden gun
he'd just
carved

then
handing
it across
to dillinger
who took
it smiled
& sd
tell me
one the
old man
clicked
his jack
knife shut
closed
his eyes
& sd
i used to
ride w/a
guerilla
outfit the
other side
of the
big river
coming
on dark
& we
were looking
for a good
place to
camp i
had this
feeling
the kind
i used to
get when

i cd tell
something
was gonna
happen
but i
didn't
know what
word had
been passed
along to
look out
for bush
whackers
my horse
was terrible
skittish &
a shadow
near a big
oak tree made
him rear
up a little
& when
he finally
settled down
i drew my
pistol i
was car
rying an
old walker
colt the
one my
daddy
carried down
in mexico
& when

that sha
dow moved
again i
fired that
damned old
44 used to
buck &
shake the
bones some
thing awful
& then i
heard some
thing fall
back into the
underbrush
& sticks
& such
so i dis
mount
real careful
& lead my
horse over
one or two
of the men
riding beside
me came
along too
i expected
to see some
hardbitten
old ridge
runner hol
ding a rifle
instead
it was a

kid & you
know what
alls he had
was a woo
den pistol
that's all
goddam his
fucked up
soul &
there he is
sprawled out
w/my 44
slug thru
his scrawny
chest eyes
all rolled back
like death
was the
best surprise
he cd ever
hope for
then what
dillinger asked
capn rode up
sd what's
the commotion
i pointed
to the kid
i'd shot &
the capn
shrugged
sd yankee
or if not
then who
knows let

the wolves
have him
i never sd
nothing but
i was
thinking
that the
wolves
already
had him
dillinger
shoved the
wooden gun
inside
his coat
& brought
out a snub
38 he held
it out butt
first & the
old man
wrapped
his bony
hand around
the grip
the whole
time trying
to be careful
not to put
his index
finger in
side the
trigger
guard he
glanced up

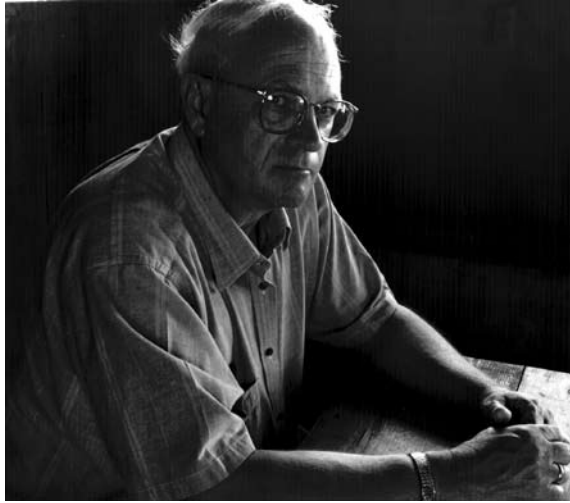
at dillinger
smiled
& sd it
feels light
then added
but then
death don't
weigh hardly
anything
just nothing
at all lost
wooden gun
tag was
the exact
opposite
of regular
tag van
meter sd
you had to
capture the
kid who
held the
wooden gun
see the
game worked
this way
you had
to pick the
longest straw
before you
cd have
the wooden
gun &
then you
had to be

fast enough
& tough
enough to
hold onto
it some
kids were
so tough
you cd
never get
the gun
away from
them ex
cept maybe
if they fell
down dropped
the gun &
you were
quick enough
to pick it up
& take off
w/it gun tag
was the toughest
tag i knew of
real desperado
stuff it involved
fists
feet
muscles
&
guts
you cd use
almost anything
as a wooden
gun but most
of us

just broke
sticks off
tree limbs
but it had
to be a stick
that had
another one
growing out
of it so that
it looked
as tho it had
a handle
& when
you got
called home
& you
were still
holding onto
that wooden
gun
hell
you broke
it in two
that meant
you won it
all
what was
it you won
dillinger asked
nothing
everything
mostly
the night
belongs to you
on his

way out
of millie's
diner dill
inger grabbed
a book of
matches
out of a bowl
sitting at
the end of
the counter
the book
cover was
a wooden
gun that read
dillinger's
escape gun
the counter
man sd take
a handful
& give one
to dillinger
for me
dillinger
grinned
& sd
don't mind
if i do

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Todd Moore's poetry has appeared in more than a thousand literary journals in the last forty years. He has had more than a hundred books and chapbooks published since 1976. His work has been anthologized in *THE OUTLAW BIBLE OF AMERICAN POETRY*, *DRINKING WITH BUKOWSKI*, and *LAST CALL*. *Metropolis*, *Outlaw Poetry and Free Jazz Network*, *LummoX*, and *St. Vitus* are among the numerous online websites and zines which have or are currently featuring his essays and poetry. In 2004 Moore along with Tony Mofeit founded the Outlaw Poetry Movement. Presently, Moore co edits, along with his son Theron, *ST. VITUS POETRY PRESS*. Moore has been called a Meat Poet, a Shock Poet, a Visceral Realist, a street poet, a dirty realist, a noir poet, a pornographer of violence, and an outlaw. He has been working on the ongoing long poem *DILLINGER* since 1973. And, since 1976 *DILLINGER* has been appearing piece meal in book and chapbook form. Hailed as both cinematic and hypnotic *DILLINGER* has been critically acclaimed as the best long poem of the last part of the twentieth century and the first part of the twenty first century. As an epic it rivals *THE CANTOS*, *THE WASTE LAND*, *PATERSON*, and *THE MAXIMUS POEMS*, as well as such novels as *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*, *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, and *BLOOD MERIDIAN*. It has been suggested that *DILLINGER* is the only long poem to appear in the last sixty years which could legitimately lay claim to the title of national epic. And, Todd Moore's essays are beginning to shape and define a whole generation of American poets. Critics now refer to Moore as a cult writer, possibly a legend. Undoubtedly, Moore is becoming one of the preeminent poets of the age.

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