

TRIPLE



REDUX

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Tim

Hunt

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REDUX
by
Tim Hunt

Neo-Mimeo Editions: 2025

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Many of these poems appeared in a slightly
different version in Hunt's Tao Of Twang (2014)

Neo-Mimeo Editions

Nualláin House, Publishers

Digital Press Project

Inquire at

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T. Texas Twiddle Ponders His Allure

Darlin' ,

Does this buckle
make my belly
look big?

T. Texas Twiddle Remembers Learning
the Facts of Life

This was 1939, maybe 1940,
thereabouts,
and T. Texas was just a boy

riding his first round up with the men
who sat so easy in the saddle
their cigarettes seemed to roll themselves

as they'd duck the brim of their work Stetsons,
then look back up
and take that first draw—

left hand lazy at their sides, the right
holding the reins up for show
as a real fancy lady'd hold one of them bone
china teacups

standing to be admired in Miss Maudie May's
parlor.

T. Texas hadn't ever been in Maudie May's
but he'd heard talk and seen pictures

and thought it must be like that.

T. Texas watched everything
trying to know what to do next.
Especially he watched the men.

It seemed their eyes were always
on the horizon, steady
on the emptiness beyond the range of hills,

as they drove the herd
out from the gap and across the valley.

T. Texas wondered what they saw

in that empty sky beyond the hills
and how many years it took to see it,
but there was, he knew,

no way to ask or for them to tell it.

Later at the ranch
the cowboy with the white moustache
sat on the pickup's running board,

leaning onto his knees and tapping a line
of Prince Albert the length of the paper.
T. Texas watched closely,

imagining his fingers would someday
be so knowing.

Neither of them paid the old cow any mind

as she drifted up, lifted her tail,
the brown stream spattering the door
and down the side of the cowboy's face.

The cowboy licked the paper's edge,
rolled it, and flicked the match.

T. Texas waited

as if he weren't shuffling his feet.

"Ain't ya gonna Wipe it off?" "Nah,"
the cowboy said, "Comes off better dry."

T. looked down at the toe of his boot,
then up at the horizon
and waited.

T. Texas Ponders the Scene

T. Texas was drinking his Café Americano,
back to the wall and watching the window
like a true cowboy should.

And, too, watchin' the young'uns
with their grandé skinny whatsits lattés
with who knows what sprinkled on top.

Geeyahd. What had the world come to?

T. Tex cupped his cup, warming his hands
and remembering when
java, joe, and swill were all the same thing

as you leaned on the diner's counter
and an aproned cutie
curtseyed a fresh pot toward your mug.

T. Texas surveyed the scene:

the java jockeys who knew they were cool,
the kid staring at the table top
like it was his navel and he might fall in,

and Miss Spike in her tattoo shawl
wearing a dog collar and tonguing her foam
like a kitten testing a saucer of milk.

These he sorta understood.

It was the foursome at the middle table
he couldn't figure out:
their bowed heads bobbing as if to each other

and their fingers mumbling
like they were nuns txtng their beads,
praying to be heard.

In Which T. Texas Twiddle Goes
All Texas Troubadour

When it come to music,
T. Texas was deep into Ernest Tubb,
"Waltzing Across Texas"
and "I Hate to See You Go."

Now, true, he could make room for Bob Wills
and "Panhandle Rag."
And "San Antonio Rose" and "Roly Poly"
were the real stuff.

But Bob was a dance hall kinda guy—
all kick up your heels and YEE HA
hip flask and sweaty smile.
It was Ernest who knew

the pine planks of "Walking the Floor
Over You" with the wind doing steel guitar
through the barn loft
and the empty fields waiting for dawn

as if that would mean
Something.
Ah, Billy Byrd, pick one.
Pick it pretty.

Why T. Texas Wasn't NRA

Now, T. Tex did admire John Wayne—
That stand your ground slow to anger
High Noon of draw only when you must,
shoot once, and walk away.

And Roy Rogers, too, 'cause Roy could sing a
pretty lead
to the Sons of the Pioneers doing harmony,
yet still draw quick if rustler Russ
wouldn't blend his voice around the campfire.

So, yes, T. was a Second Amendment kinda guy.
Out on the trail, ya needed a Colt on your hip
or better a Winchester for that rattlesnake
that might spook the herd;

or that stray deer fan dancing some mesquite,
flashing a little thigh and calling "Hey,
Big Guy, Wouldn't I
roast up nice for dinner?"

But T. Texas wasn't that down with Dirty Harry
or Rambo either. Too many bullets
spoiled the meat, and he liked to hear
the boys singing "Home, Home on the Range"

dipping their sourdough in a little redeye,
and between the songs you could hear the stars
like they was violins on the soundtrack.

T. Texas Runs an Errand

T. Texas was in need of a calendar,
so he moseyed on down to Otto's Auto Parts
for this year's twelve-part harmony

of Miss Honey and Miss Heather and all
their demure friends.

He was, truly, a connoisseur

of all the ways a young lady could caress
a carefully angled shock absorber
and how the light and lens

gleamed each chassis as if chamois-shined.

Ah! T. Texas could almost agree
that what mattered was pure form—

the Platonic ideal more real than the real.
But much as he loved the contemplative life
and took a scholar's pleasure in the multiple

possibilities of spark plugs and pistons and the
infinite

array of positions—he was, in fact,
more deeply committed

to the materialism of dialectical interplay.

T. Texas Twiddle Attempts Ontology
by Way of Epistemology

Consciousness is Ptolemaic. Reality?
Copernican. But Truth?

Well, that's somethin' else again:

out there somewhere
beyond your Stetson's brim

and framed by that cell phone
camera lens

into those metered snips
of light

on the film strips
crisscrossing your private darkroom

clothes pinned and dangling
from the runs of twine

and too the stacks of contact sheets
of thumbnailed images

as you page through,
searching

for a way
into the being of being.

T. Texas Twiddle Reflects
Upon His First Roundup

The corral, a tent of dust—
the hooves of the young steers
scrabbling for footing

as the cowboys held them down
and the hot iron szzzed through the hair,
charring the flank's blank page.

Leaning on the rail, T. Texas could see
the brown eyes roll, the lolling tongues and
 ropy spit,
as the rancher's wife slipped her knife again

and again through the sack's slack skin—
a glint of light, then dark blood
as she tossed the oysters into a pan,

promising the cowboys she'd share
if they held on tight.

T. Texas wasn't old enough

to understand that look in her eyes,
but already he knew
you didn't want to be the rancher.

T. Texas Joins The Party

Where T. Tex lived wacky weed
was still illegal,
even if your bunions ached.

So he thought he'd join the Tea Party
and bought him some rolling papers,
zipped his Zippo and went off to find the rally,

all ready to be a true In-dee-vis-ible
Indyvidyouall
declaring his Liberty and Death

opposition to guvmint,
hand outs and hand jobs,
because he was for damn sure tired

a being jerked around
and ready to stand his ground,
and he was sure someone there

would tell him just where
that ground
could be found

and whether to flick his Bic
and wave it over his head
or wave his middle finger instead.

And either way was sure he'd be One
with the Founding Fathers
who fer damn sure

didn't believe in Guvmint
'cause every Revolution
is every man with a gun

telling The Man
what to stick
and where to stick it.

T. Texas, Contemplating His Brethren Portraying
His Brethren, Avers That There Is Indeed a
Difference Between Corn Pone and Corn Ball

Though Jeff Foxworthy
(who knows better but pretends he don't)
can tell the difference 'tween "ya'all"
and a yachter's "yawl,"

and knows a Tuxedo ain't a napkin under your
chin
(as in "tucks les eat, oh"), and too
that a daisy chain in a double wide
ain't a redneck rondo,

there's money in Bubba-dom:

as in Bubba-dumb, and true some
Bubbas are pretty damn dumb,
but as T. Tex knew, there's a difference
'tween corn pone and corn ball:

One you et cause you were poor
and hadta. The other?
Oh, it's all Cracker Jack
and always at the bottom

a two-bit piece a shit plastic toy
stuck to that sugar-coated peanut
just to make you feel like Fate
done flashed ya a beaver shot,

then flipped you off
as she walked away,
leaving you with your hand full
a that empty foil package.

In which T. Texas Twiddle Is Not Thinking of The
Snow Man or the Coke Dealer on the Corner or How
He'd Been Snow Jobbed at Wally's Wonder World of
Used Cars (aka To Signify or Not to Signify,
That Is the Question)

T. Texas had heard that Cousin Jimmy Joe's
nephew

Billy Bob, who lots of folks called the Bobber
for no good reason he could think of,
was telling folks there was a differ'nce

'tween something called a signifier
and the signified
and that this meant that words
didn't mean nothin'.

Now you could, he thought, see this as a reason
not to let the young ones go off to school,
but being young was a time to fool around,
then ya had to marry and settle down—

too much gun play and someone's daddy
would take that shotgun off the wall
("Shoulda, Boy, kept the safety on
or better left it in the holster")—

all this, of course, in a manner of speaking.

Anyway, T. Texas sure as shit knew that words
meant something.

When you stepped in it and muttered "Shit.
That's Shit," what could be plainer than that—

as folks did say, it happens,
and if'n it don't, goose grease
was a sure-fire load lightener.
Such silly words.

In spite of himself, T. Tex found himself
wondering if he was a signified
or a signifier. Or maybe he was just
signifying.

He'd heard LeRoy down at the feedstore say
"Don't you be signifyin'"
and maybe LeRoy'd set him straight.
He sure as shit wasn't going to ask the Bobber,

who already thought he didn't know nuthin'
but didn't know enough to know
that nuthin's already
a lot to know.

T. Texas Twiddle Declares Independence from
the Lamestream Media (with Apologies to
Randy Newman)

We're lib'rals lib'rals
Cain't tell our ass
From a hole in the ground.
We're lib'rals lib'rals
Keepin' the Rednecks down.

When T. Tex heard that song on K-HCK radio,
he did give the words some thought,
then paid 'em no mind.

Rednecks he knew didn't need
no one keepin' 'em down.
They mostly did that on their own.

So he cashed his Social Security check,
fished his MasterCard outta the sock drawer,
and headed for Best Buy
to check out them new 3-D TVs.

That hole 'tween the windows
in the front room of the double-wide
sure needed something.

T. Tex Shops the Swap Meet for T-Shirt Wisdom

Long haul, real beats image.

Short haul

image can do real good.

*

When you're riding hard up hill

on the bicycle of love,

wear a cup.

Sometimes the chain breaks.

*

Learning's not

the same thing

as changin'.

*

Just 'cause something's real

don't make it true.

*

If ya hafta think twice,

shouldn't'a thunk once.

*

Ya can't tell a book by looking at the cover.

And ya can't tell a man

by looking at the buckle.

Sometimes big and shiny is
just big and shiny.

*

There's always light
at the end of the tunnel,
unless it's a really dark night.
Then it's all what you believe in.

*

Don't count on the radio.
There's no station out there
playin' Ernest Tubb.
And if your haul's 'cross Texas,
there's times you gotta hear
something real.

Tim Hunt is the author of Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction, The Textuality of Soulwork: Jack Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose, and the five volumes of The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers. Hunt has also published six collections of poetry: Fault Lines, The Tao of Twang, Poem's Poems & Other Poems, Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes (winner of the 2018 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award), Voice to Voice in the Dark, and Western Where, received five Pushcart Prize nominations, and been awarded the Chester H. Jones National Poetry Prize for the poem "Lake County Elegy."