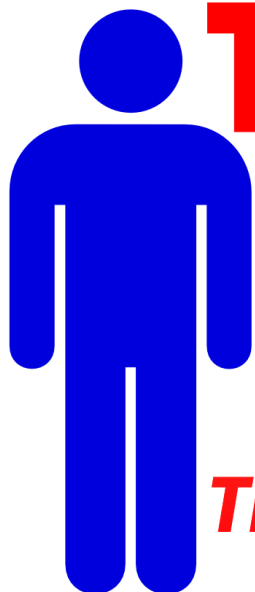
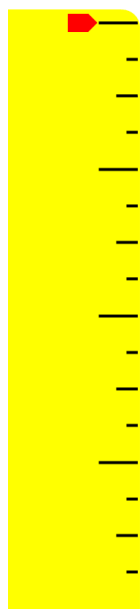


**YOU MUST
BE AT LEAST
THIS
TALL
TO READ**



*a Poetry
Chapbook
Thomas by
Whitson*

Biography

A biography is—a piece of paper
That lost its will to live
And slowly committed—ritual suicide
Saying:

My Name Is
My Age Is
I Like

A Brave Heart's Sonnet

I do not fear Poseidon's grasp
That I might share Polybotes' grave
Nor accept Dis Pater's clasp
For all his wealth become a slave

I would not bend the knee to Thor
Though Ragnarök were on the rise
I would not cower 'fore Israel's lore
Though Armageddon were in the skies

I do not fear unyielding gods
Oh, how much less then mortal men
I stand though demons run roughshod
Their evil hooves to pierce the skin

Yet at one thing still do I start
To find a maid and lose my heart



FRUIT CUP

I stole a fruit cup — to see if I was still alive
I won't lie, I don't lie
I couldn't hide the syrupy-sweet truth
of my fruit cup

The bits were right, but didn't excite me
They were soft yet firm
They weren't too small but weren't too large
Could I have chosen from
All the fruit cups in the world, These —
Are the bits I would have chosen

But perfection is consistent
"You can't perfect perfection."
Sometimes, less than perfect, is more

My girlfriend hides a razor in a book
Beneath her bed, where her parents won't find it
The pain and the imperfection
Trigger a chemical release
Free her from a false reality, Allow —
An escape to the true imagination that we
share

Her ticket is the throbbing, pulsing pain
Flowing from her razor

Mine, the repulsive, sticky joy
dripping sweetly
from a stolen fruit cup

That Last, terrified Moment

That last, terrified moment
Now *There's* a subject for casual conversation

[Imagination:]

"Hey New-Girl-In-The-Chi-Omega-Fleece,
Have you ever thought about that last terrified moment?"

"That moment where you *know* it's over?
That all your life, everything, this is all it is?
I've thought about it, and it scares the shit out of me
That I might *realize* — there's no time to say goodbye
That I might *know* — there isn't even time for my life to
flash before my eyes."

"It's a pretty terrible thing, to suffocate a mouse
For the good of science and all, but still pretty terrible
Even if I cure diabetes, or something great like that
The thought will still stay with me
Not that they go limp, But that they piss themselves
Not that they die, But that they're afraid of dying
Watching them in that last, terrified moment
Terrifies even me
And I'm on the outside of the bell jar"

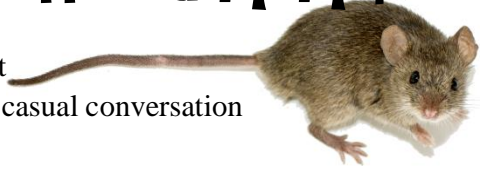
[Then I realize, to my fantasy self:]

She's pod-blocking me.

She hasn't heard a word I've said.

[The imaginary Chi-O looks up, removes an ear bud:]

"You're cute. Wanna go to lunch?"



The Search

I found the Earth to end in Sea
But twenty miles south of town
And though I would have ventured on
A boat for hire could not be found

I climbed the tallest hill to find
From there I saw one taller yet
I went and climbed up that hill, too
But 'twas the highest I could get

I followed a stream down to a cave
Descending through its darkened mouth
But the passage quickly narrowed
And I was forced to climb back out

Cecilia, in vain I have searched for thee
I pray my love, please come to me

FRACTURES

I'm afraid

of broken sidewalks
seeping water
freeze and thaw

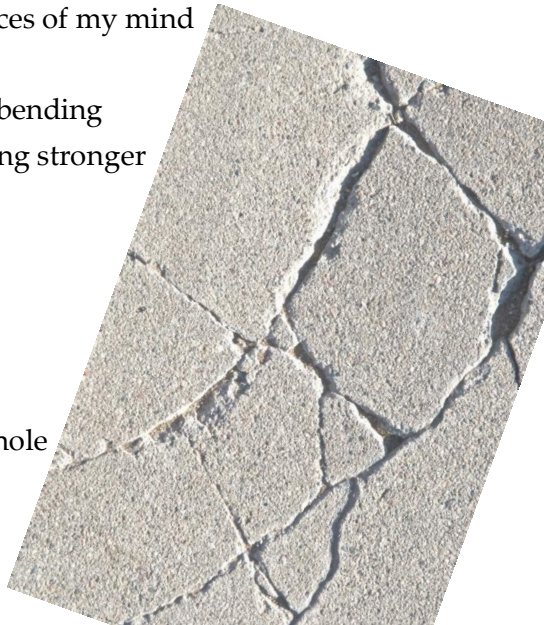
that deep inside me
the numbing slush
will find some fracture
or natal flaw

and freeze there
and thaw
and freeze there
and thaw

driving apart the pieces of my mind
like concrete
pushing, squeezing, bending
rock against something stronger
more subtle

a crack
a pop
and something fails

and I'm no longer whole



A BODY AND A SOUL

A body and a soul

A body and a soul

The angles in hell work endlessly

For the Prison Industry Authority

Assembling human beings

Like furniture or license plates

The difference—

When the body and soul meet

Discover, slowly, that they are bound for life

And like the demons who assembled them

They try to understand their confinement

Three-day Romance

Our love is like the time
We walked down Taylor Beach
And I cut my foot on a sand dollar

Our love is like the time
We went off-road to Seeger Point
And I ruined my transmission

Our love is like the time
You got too drunk at Ryan's party
And you vomited on my shirt

Our love, like fish,
began to smell after three days





Unbelief

If manna fell from Heaven
To feed the hungry mob
If Joshua bid the sun stand still
And it did stay above

If Gideon did find his fleece
Impervious to dew
If Elijah watched the widow's son die
Then gave him life anew

If the Jordan was divided
And it cleansed the enemy's head
If an iron ax did float
And Elisha's bones revived the dead

Then I would be compelled that Grace
Could save a wretch like me
But Joshua never stopped the sun
And I do not believe

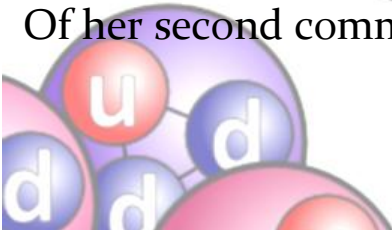
VIOLATION

They act against the natural will
Those who desire to sort and sterilize
This site to hide its peculiarities
And remove its random-strewn-ness

Ripping water, H from O,
Rehanging powerlines fallen
Like innocence teenagers lost
Inevitable

Forces, fast and unstoppable
With arrogance to challenge the sun
Retaining its energy
In metal hydride cages

They never once see their error
That nature's order is her disorder
And that they are in violation
Of her second commandment



FULL HATEFUL WORDS

*Full hateful words could never stand as tall
As form and beauty sprung from love's address
Rough turns of spite cannot compare at all
To verse composed inspired by love's caress*

*To see the virtue of a noble heart
In deed as it finds room for more than self
Inspires man to rise and play his part
And fight for right and peace and hope and health*

*Yet love alone cannot always restart
Or cause the hardened heart to wake and melt
A different actor needed in this part
Requires a hope less keenly thought than felt*

*Another passion moves the heart of stone
Not touched by love but hate alone*



My Divided/ Conscious(ness)

"We like to think that we are one, but we are not." ~ Carl Jung

I live as a divided conscious(ness)
Even my divisions are split
Half turned inside
Sensing, feeling
Half peering outward,
"Are you the same as me?"

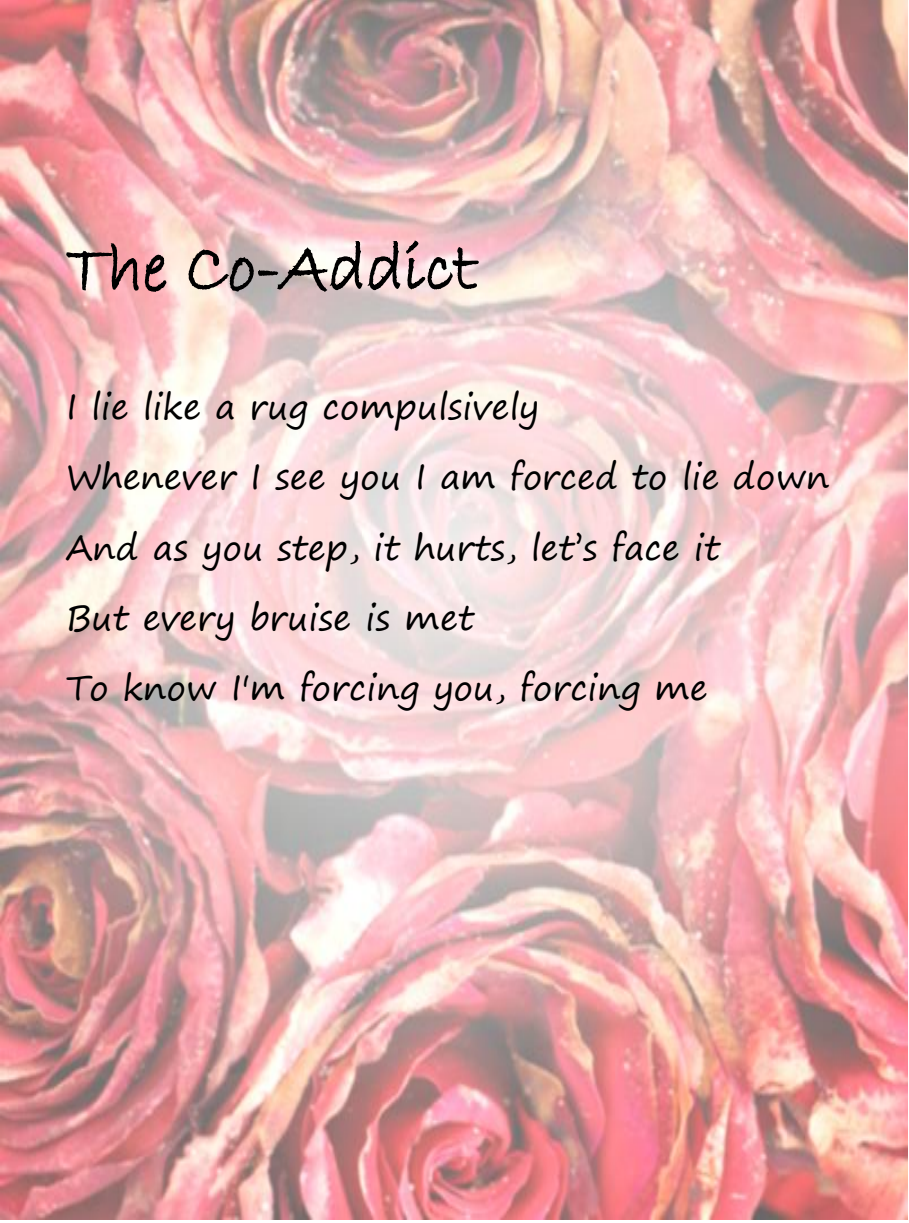
I listen to the lecture
Pass notes
Study the upholstery
Grapple with the day's reality
Fight off the thought that this is just a dream

It all happens separately, independently,
As if my left hand simply doesn't care what Righty is doing

They call it "hyper-threading"
If a computer thinks four thinks at once
It's better, stronger
But not me
I'm just crazy
I need drugs

I know why they say those things
I can't tell
It's a secret
But you can (may) read my thoughts
Some of them

*They're all jealous
They wanna slow me down*



The Co-Addict

*I lie like a rug compulsively
Whenever I see you I am forced to lie down
And as you step, it hurts, let's face it
But every bruise is met
To know I'm forcing you, forcing me*



With Thoughts Wide Frozen

**Fingers drunk with cold a million times
heat impaled on icicles dead like
the devil probably just pretending but
damn it hurts to me looking up at walls
a million times higher than my hope
saved yet trapped by forces that
entangle the numbed dendritic threads
extending from my psychic awareness.**

On the Language and Culture of Dying, Kansas

Dying Township, Neosho County, Kansas

Regional speech samples include:

“There’s a cougar in them woods. Grandpa and I heard him
screamin’.”

“Joe, stop scaring yer nephew.”

“There’s wooves, too!”

“Gimme that horshradish over here.”

“Sally, do you got any of that Christmas jelly?”

“Laura’s salsa would’ve won first place at the fair...”

“It’s not really a fair anymore. More like a carnival.”

“They stopped having the pumpkin contest. Nobody grows
pumpkins ‘round here anymore.”

“They still have the horse-pull. Did ya see the team from Erie?”

“Did ya see the girls dancing? None of ‘em were over fifteen!”

“Did ya hear the music they were dancing to? No one over
fifteen could stand it.”

“If they consolidate again, Chris and Becca will have to ride two
and a half hours to school.”

“It’s only ‘cuz the bus makes stops all over the damn county.
We could get there in 30 minutes.”

“You know your father needs the truck, and if I want to keep my
job in town...”

“Madison Clay got knocked-up after homecoming. Everyone
was talking about it at the fair.”

“Good Lord! Don’t children your age have anything better to
talk about?”

“Guess she ain’t going to NC3 this fall.”

“You shouldn’t be talking ‘bout somebody can’t go to college.”

“Neosho County ain’t college, mom. I’m gettin’ outta here.”

A Simple Man's Prayer

Lord my God,

 Please bless me this day

Show me each choice

 How to walk in Your way

Give me Your truth

 With others to share

Take me and use me

 This is my prayer

Bury me deep

 In fathomless love

Remind me my treasure's

 Not here, but above

Bend me and mold me

 Make me just right

Watch over my bed

 As I sleep for the night

And when my life brings me

 That sleep that endures

Remind me that I

 Am eternally Yours

Bring me to Heaven

 Love's vict'ry to share

Forever with Jesus

 Lord, this is my prayer