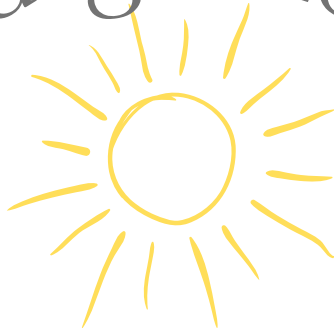


DOG DAZE

summer poems 2022

dog daze



you rasp
in the morning that summer
dries your throat and so does shouting
at the sunsets

because everything is changing so fast
and you need one thing
to hold steady

even if it spit-roasts the lot of us —
hang on!
you want to say.
hold still!

like you're sweating waiting for a long-exposure
photograph and afraid of lines
blurring

you call this heat, you ask?
you call this burning?

in another life you died
as a hot-car dog

and you were born panting
like an engine.

every suffocation feels the same;
july is reliable
for her mangy bite

and sharp-toothed clarity,
tearing your sundress on the trees,

dog

scratching yourself red from the bug bites
and wanting to open yourself like a present
to see what's inside

did you know they're called the dog days
because of the heatstroke sickness
when the sun meets sirius
and when they both go down itching
with fire and fleas

we can't help but howl
at the hole the moon left
and tear out our smoke detectors
like hardly-healed scabs

so that we'll all go down together
the next time the flames lick our walls
with thirst and summer-lust

and when the ceiling collapses in
we'll see the sun again — lovely
and redder for the wildfires

daze

big like a god
barking like a dog

rely is julyable, you'll say
as we tumble into the god days

wondering what sky we'll wake up to,
if indeed it still changes at all

or if it's all been the same
rabbit-chasing dream

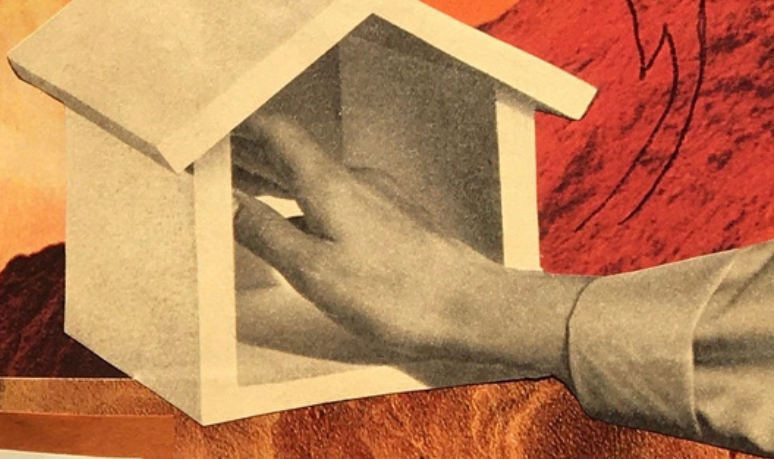


van
rou
t la
Croyet
entre se



Are you too selfish?





Think Think
Think Think
Think Think
Think Think
Thi ink
T ink
T ink



Think ink
Think Think
Think Think
Think Think
Think Thanks



Too close for comfort?

She's made from nothing: dust, prayer,
apple skins, and she asks to be buried
in the desert.

Our lady's clothes are stiff with sand,
so she lets me remove them for cleaning,
one by one. Meanwhile, we talk.

Her necklace is first, pearls
turned brown from the wind. I fiddle with the clasp
until it breaks, pretend
not to feel her skin on mine
cold like cream.

She says, I shouldn't be saying this,
and her voice trails off like a shallow stream.
I rub the beads with my thumb until
they shine, and then a little more,
and try not to look her in the eyes.
I say, what?


What she tells me goes missing
in the drone of a passing truck,
one headlight dim like a bad eye.

I ask her to repeat herself
and take off her shoes, soft and close-toed.
She says, it's a sin of mine, jealousy,
but they buried everything holy
with him.

(Christ is some yards down the road,
the last of the sand
being pulled over his cruciform
like a woolen sheet.)

I nod — a nonbeliever,
or something like it, it is not
my place. Our four hands
unbutton her blue dress, slowly.

burying
alive
somewhere



We pull it off in silence,
and I push it into the basin -- in, out, in again
until the clear water is speckled with earth
like a sky flecked with dying stars. I do not ask her
what heaven is like. I take her socks,
and hang them to dry. I do not ask

why we are here, in the land
of in-betweens, nor how the Father
has been, nor the sun, whose place has been taken
by a hollow and inauspicious crescent.
I do not ask

the virgin mary
by a highway
in california

why she herself is so fragile,
so vulnerable, why she doesn't bid me
to wash her land-caked hair,
why I am here at all.

Whether it would be so unholy
to kiss her quiet lips, or to drive away
in a blind and broken-down car.

Instead, we let the dry air do as it will.
Her clothes, fluttering on the line,
bloom from dark to light,
and we do not exchange a word
as I dress her again.

When I have finished,
she says, Bless you. She means,
Thank you. I do not say,
I love you.

She lies down in her Sunday best,
and I begin to push sand
until she is gone from the Earth again.

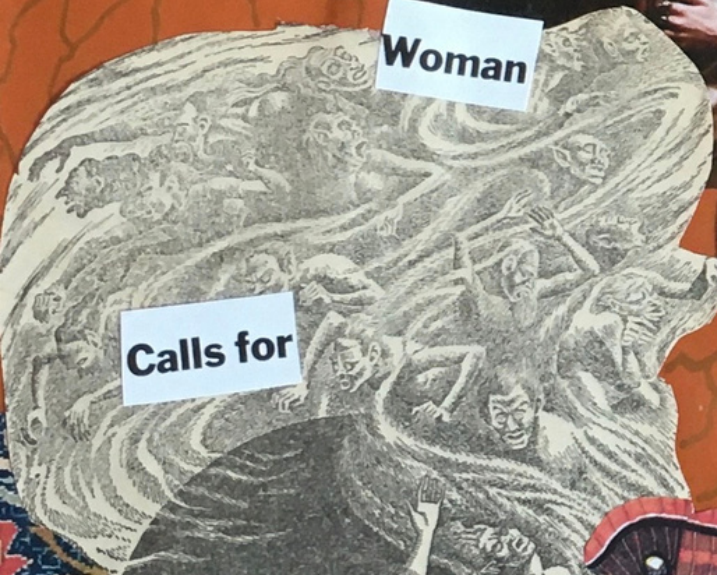
DANCE FEVER

A Remarkable

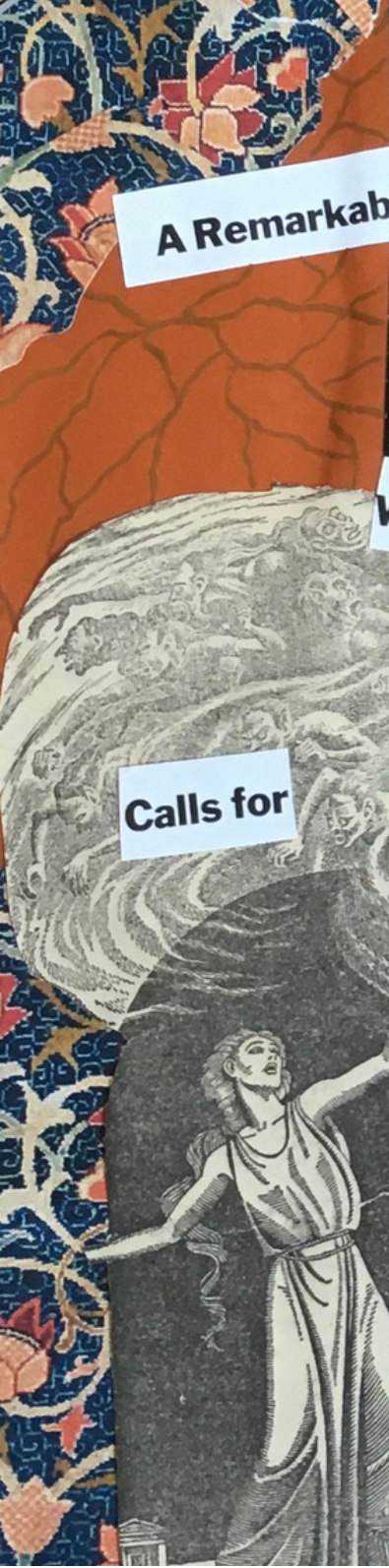
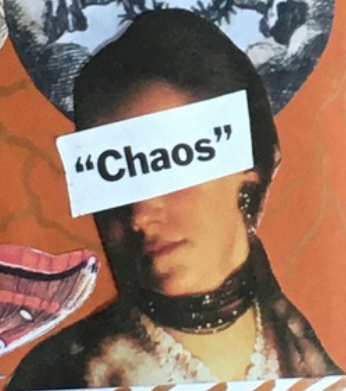


Woman

Calls for



"Chaos"





LIFE

IS

FOR

THE

LIVING

megafauna eulogy

A moment of silence
for that king of beasts who once
held the world on its back,
speared through by lonely Orion
and his Sagittarian contemporaries;
from it spawned the mammoths,
and the wood-apes, the star-walkers
of Audhumla and the netherworld likes
of Cerberus, the first Jurassic earthlings
before rock blocked out the sun,
the great wolves of end times
and the earth buffalo that remembers
the beginning, when everything,
even being, was young,
and it was not so strange
to be so vast and unending
you could hold the whole of creation
as though it were nothing at all.

i'm in the kitchen slicing tomatoes
and i have to wonder whether you are here,
or if anyone is.
a cloud of moths on the back porch might be a man
if i switched the light on,
or if time turned back and lifted
a zombie-movie hand from the earth.
but it isn't, though — i think.
this is the piece i can never digest,
like an appleseed stuck in the stomach
until it grows. sometimes,
there is no one standing there,
not even a shadow,
or the ghost of one. why, then, do i feel the eyes?
with whom do i hold audience,
for how long?

junetime
voyeur

i have always felt watched;
when i was younger i thought it was god,
and now i know it is cameras. the constant companionship
of surveillance. i am thankful for my witnesses —
without them, i worry i would forget myself
and dissolve, like tissue in water.
like sliced fruit, rotting on the counter.
the tomato will only last so long as i remember the taste,
and already i ache with hunger
and memory.
what i mean is, it's why i'm here, i think;
to be dissected, so long as the taste of me lingers.
what i mean is, i am made real
by a handful of appleseeds.

mushroom poem

It means something of significance,
to grow and to grow strange.
The earth-spirits spring up
in the most dreamlike of shapes,
speaking in tones that are voiceless,
breathless, and yet deeper
than the roots grow, more earth-moving
than the steady tough love
of a gravitational pull.
They speak in subtle frequencies,
the buzz of machines, or cicadas,
or something somewhere between.
They say this:

*Are you fulfilled?
Do you hunger?
Are you perfectly imperfect?
Do you hear it, the call
of all that could speak to you?
Have you resigned yourself to living
in a way that defies loneliness?
Lifelessness?
Can you hear it?
Listen —
Can you hear it?*



speaking to the storm

she used to crack me open every night
and I'd take weeks to heal,

and here we are, talking again —
like old friends turned strangers —

and she's speaking in a baritone,
hot-headed and lovely as a half-crazed

lioness. I'm biting my tongue
to hold back from telling her I missed her,

despite it all; what I say instead it,
I forgive you. my mouth

tastes like smoke, hers like static.
she weeps on my shirt

and then the next moment laughs,
louder than a god.


she asks me, what changed?
she's purple-blue like a bruise,

and here I am, smaller even
than the trees she splits

in her rage.
I tell her, I did. you did, too.

cleo lockhart

follow my things!

 : @clock.hart - *social*
@deer.hart - *writing*

website: cleolockhart.com