

# THEY WENT TO THE BEACH TO PLAY



Wendy Taylor Carlisle

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Locofo Chaps

Chicago 2017

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Locofo Chaps is dedicated to publishing politically-oriented poetry.

Chicago, USA, 2017

## **They Went To The Beach To Play**

CNN July 17, 2014

:late heat, the sea, the edge of August  
under a waning gibbous moon,

the stage for you, eleven,  
to practice-kick before the school term

begins and books take you out  
of childhood into that new state

so unlike this of cousins shouting  
on a beach in Gaza. Block, Run,

kick, until the fisherman's hut  
explodes and the four of you sprint

for cover. O Mohamed, stay  
a boy forever, passing a ball,

on a beach, in summer.



## **A Plague on Both Your Houses**

Piles of dead bodies steam. Cremation reeks like an all-day bar-b-que. We shift disease from one mouth to another, one penis, one vagina to another. We are ill all over from the atmosphere, from the water. Our

food's irradiate. We wait for epidemics to pass—Zika, insane cows, the bloody spume of Ebola and terrorism. Contagion will be the end of us, although the CDC insists the plagues will wane. New drugs emerge, just

just out of budgetary reach in the first days of the celebrity Republic, cajole us with hope. We must believe medicine or the administration will lessen the lesions, the tension of being a high risk population under the politics of dying.

## Making America

They're handing it out—whatever it is.  
And we're taking it—exile, house arrest,  
a wall, mass deportations, the molded,  
melded, stretched and excised truth.

I hear some are taking it and buying the hat.  
We might as well paint the country alizarin.

Other names for alizarin are Mordant Red  
and Turkey Red. We should certainly paint  
the country alizarin. Eventually,  
we will want to get back to forming our

days with our hands. We will be unable  
to move our fingers. Then we will want  
to hear the new lies, the small stories  
of the worms' triumph. It will be too late.

I tell myself, "don't borrow trouble. We  
still have months." I tell myself "you  
can move. A month is an *augenblick*,"  
I tell myself "it can't be that bad."

I say "not here, it can't happen here."  
I wonder where to live next. Taut faces  
surround me. In every group, a mother who says,  
"hush," a mother who says "everything is fine."

Around me, children are blown to mush.  
I am a mother. Don't we say silly stuff?

## Seven Plots

There are only seven plots, we're told,  
and blunder is this world's first and second.  
The desire for triumph shoulders at  
the mother-belly of moral  
vacuity although,  
mercifully, not quite  
hard enough to squeeze out  
yet. My  
friends who are  
conscientious  
objectors

or Buddhist, my friends who are in the intellectual  
closet,  
even my apathetic friends are all  
on Short Pierre Street waiting  
to see  
what happens.  
Because it has been so  
unbearable,  
we have borne  
it for 18 months—

the N words sprayed on one of our two city busses,  
the theories of corruption, actual corruption.  
And now,  
after arguing and lamentations, we  
are a chorus  
of the damaged, counting  
their wounds, storing up  
experience for a later  
excuse to whine, *Cabo, Toronto* with stark survival  
on our minds.

## **Propaganda**

Of language, politics  
was my last. I didn't trust  
the vocabulary for a moment

but I drank it anyway, the wine  
of words, goblets drained  
into meaning, clear drams

sipped across an afternoon  
trickling into alignment.  
I drank it anyway, those cups

emptied of meaning, their  
sense guzzled into consent.

## **Tatters**

Fall tatters the body of summer  
with endless flaking, leaves drifting

like dandruff, eyelash, fingernail,  
the replicable cells, dura, cambium,

petals on the stem in August and  
in the culvert beside the freeway

by November. Fall picks us clean,  
sends us naked into winter.

## **After The Election**

These are the things I didn't know I knew—  
that some hands can't be turned away  
but clutch, sharp as bird-feet, with clammy  
ruined fingers, restless and atop,  
that there is skin that doesn't sweat or bleed,  
that I would take my soreness to the stump,  
take revelation to my breast and know  
what happened next as if I always knew

## **Karma**

Morning and I've already prayed and spilled coffee on the rug from the Caucuses, already read the scary headlines, cursed the cat, considered death—my own and also the death of my enemies which cannot come too soon. I've been good three-person god so batter them, not me with your myriad plagues and pogroms and pestilences, your genocides and holocausts your terrorists and big foot monsters and giant birds swooping down from the top of the Eiffel Tower. "Its karma," says the Texas starlet, a leggy Redkin Level 4 blonde who swears the Lord will "smite journalists that misquote and misrepresent" her. So we all have our troubles, don't you see, and not all of them are politics although with scum Senators heading for the altar beside the creepy Executive, it's difficult to see straight about the future in which we all of us will die along with our enemies, whether we're smitten or not.

## **This Winter**

This winter I wept. I watched or didn't  
watch the news. I marched.

When I marched I was questioned about  
slogans & safety pins & pink hats.

I answered the questions politely,  
although good manners are not in my nature.

I answer respectfully because I was taught  
young to 'mam &' sir & 'hush.

I don't snarl or jostle, try not to be afraid.  
This winter, I hear my ill-feelings must

be buried under the sand of oil-rich nations  
our POTUS has urged us to plunder



## **The Farewell Speech**

In the dream of the president's Farewell speech, someone says 'he's finished,' his mother-in-law faints and I put up a Valentine's tree, a narrow one, decorated with red velvet hearts. Afterward, I step in and out of low-slung cars while a handsome man takes one for the team. Nothing shocks me since November. Not the iron taste of blood from inside a slapped cheek, not the sound the chest makes when a boot connects with a rib, not the sight of arm and hand separated, bleeding for each other. After that first shock, it's the clatter of glass on tile, the body's flop, the bile taste, after that it's all wait and see.

## **Singing**

This morning some passerines are singing like crazy in the back pasture and promising much more than the day can deliver. I like crows. Less hopefulness. Hopeless crows. Their cawwwl makes sense, responds to carrion or a stranger. The songbirds' wild abandon just makes me tired. What, I ask? Can't you see what's going on? Can't you hear the howl down the corridor? Haven't you been watching the Walking Dead? Haven't you seen us walking? Foolish songbirds, overhead, dipping and spinning, larking another morning into night in this eerie space between one declared war and another.

## Partisanship

You and I, as we,  
disappear, no more a couple,  
a pair and are absolved.

“You have done all /you can do”  
s/he said.

“Lovers must be of one mind/ so blast off.”

In the dream of flames:  
friendship combusts this hillside

feeds on aluminum, feeds on pine straw  
Dead wood flames like Japanese  
paper boats

Everywhere in the neighborhood  
the windows spit flame like abandoned /eye-  
holes leaking little red tongues

## **Striigidae**

*“...the nights were soft/ with owls” Rbt. Hass.*

With what inner need do we forget  
the hawk-beak, meat-hunger  
of the reclusive dark lover?  
Why favor instead the seductive

call, the whoo and oooh of owl hymn,  
the logic of silent flight and heavy  
feather? Why delight in fixed hoop-eye  
and swivel gaze or embrace a cartoon

torso and forget the rip and wrest,  
the chipmunk swallowed whole, reduced  
to pellets? How to condone a bleak essence,  
the skill in every talon's slash?

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

With thanks to the editors: Jonathan Penton of Unlikely Stories, James Penha of New Verse News, Rodrick Bates of Rat's Ass Review: Such an Ugly Time, and the editors of Forage Poetry Journal in which some of these poems in one form or another were published.

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[www.moriapoetry.com](http://www.moriapoetry.com).

## Locofo Chaps

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Illustrated by *John Stapp*

Published by *Locofo Press*

Locofo Press, Inc.

1000 Locofo Lane

Locofo, California 94501

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Fax: (415) 555-5678

E-mail: [info@locofo.com](mailto:info@locofo.com)

Web: [www.locofo.com](http://www.locofo.com)

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Printed in the USA

ISBN 0-9612345-6-7

0-9612345-6-7

0-9612345-6-7

0-9612345-6-7

0-9612345-6-7

0-9612345-6-7

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