

MAD

WORLD,

MAD

KINGS,

MAD

COMPOSITION

LISA

FISHMAN

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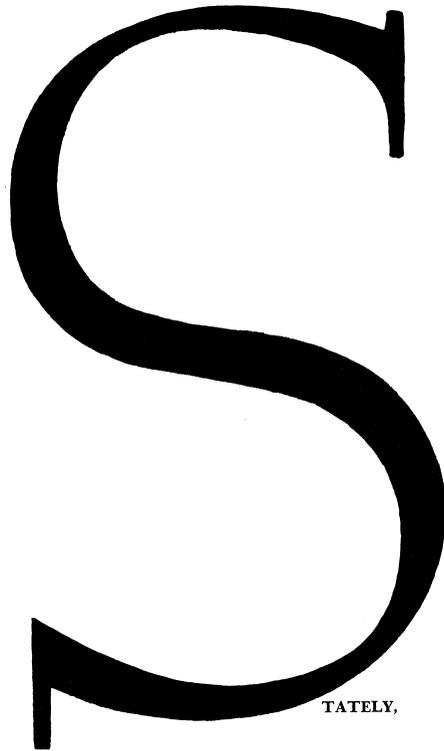
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the oversized S, the giant comma, at least in my mind

What reading's remembering, and what's new

It seems July & August are here again, not at the same time but somehow together

~

Winter

Cut sumac again so the fir has light

*

Fall

The earwig was not in the Northern Spy—
it was in the crevice between apple-top and stem

*

Summer

Bedbugs turned out to be bat bugs. Bat bugs are forced out of old houses' attics in extreme heat. Bats abandon the attics because they're too hot, then the bat bugs travel down through the walls into the house. Bat bugs are indistinguishable from bedbugs except through a microscope, which the Rock County Health Department does not possess, or did not use, when I brought in my bug in a jar.

We threw away our beds and much else.

Climbed up the sides of the dumpster three days later and dragged the mattresses back out.

*

Spring

The book is not chronology. The book is a mess
“which became the research of where things go.”

*

No memory

copying out of Calvino
“The world must be read backward.”

~

Cilento

Examine likewise . . . Whether there be a water above the sky? Besides, whether the earth is animated? And that every star in heaven hath a soul, angel, or intelligence, to animate or move it, &c

Robert Burton

At Velia the Eleatic School, not the Ecstatic School as I first mis-heard, was started by Parmenides walking on olives all over the paths down to the sea. Announcing PIT! each time he removed one from his mouth and put it in the sand, the baby ate thousands of olives. A person singing we heard floating from stone houses stacked in the twelfth century on top of each other and around each other, hugging the cliffs against the shore. Brenda wrote: “The lover enters the place / where we couldn’t love our mother.” I have been thinking about that a long time.

~

Swiftwriting

Between days that inch off into heaven, some paradox seems sadder—so dilated, hugely toothed, hardly-drawn into tempests. Is writing eating? Feeling handsome, find rising above Portia’s head. Can’t buy two bloody herrings, Christmas bathing takes sides. Hello farewell hey Charlie bring tomatoes, get today’s old humming-bird-feeder by the garage again to sing. Shyly, have it sing a song. But maybe a happiness hears under heaven’s wild heart to flee a ~~dear dear~~ different scene—it’s true. Really oh please. Until home by other places see, see, no faking time—taste oranges; speak, person, child, say hello.

~

Swift 2

It acted cat-like or pressed into summer. Elegant handsome and nothing mattered.
 Testing intentions for going anywhere Sincinatti Ostuni Ithaca Terza Galactica
 Salem Istanbul Feeling all careful like premonitions.

~

You have a noon face ten times outside
 We can where the sun holds new
 What is the moon you are allowed to say—hi bye
 heave/oh if you read the
 paper you will
 grieve and know why
 are you thinking now
 at the letter's edge
 bent shadow at the laughed
 bed

If is the key we said
 if the poem hands
 have if in them

If thou tremante

~

There were broken birds in the trigonometry, and a mud turtle in the road. Did you pick that flower? Yes, in time. On the avenue you followed through the Capitol, someone asked you for a brick. You did not say carry it with both hands.

~

I notice my heart seems to come up closer to the surface of my chest and to beat really hard and fast while the rest of my body seems to contract and exist less, because the racing heartbeat of my heart has become so loud and hard as to occupy the entire space formerly taken up by my body as if the rest of me has disappeared.

Nervous
polis

nervous system

A merica strikes again, ending as
Roman Empire.

l Ratman try to walk, foot
over toe, on Dante
on Blitzen o darling
old vixen the twelfth
knight's counting angels
of plate
tectonics—thus
harm now
angles crabwise

~

Again no mother was
 intuiting rest dream weather
 reason loss Los Angeles Laos Louisiana
 and thoroughly going where she weeps,
 talk very frightening, actually talking you
 call matter to error, measure
 terror, eat ardor, by itself young
 with mandate like tears. Something
 takes women outside dearly
 toward a lost message failure
 to thrive.

~

Sweet Go Go Lime
 Sweet Spring Grass

There are nine words and a triangle
 somebody brought to school

Barbault—Washing-Day
 On Education
 Godwin—Enquiry Concerning Political Justice
 Blake—There Is No Natural Religion a & b
 MW—from A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Writing

Small wooden ladders hook onto the truck.
The child plays House On Fire
for the pleasure of making the siren sound
for the pleasure of unhooking ladders
& leaning them against the burning house.

The cousin-doll, a wooden peg,
races up the ladder on her peg body
to spray water with her no-hands, no-arms.

Also, there is no house
just the start of a wood project:
a paper shredder we call the house.

Often the cousin-doll gets lost
and the child both grieves and stores the grief.
The wooden peg appears
as randomly as disappears.

I see that the bark at the base of the hickory
has green in it and blue, and I remember
trying to write about that.

~

Lisa Fishman has lived and farmed in Orfordville, Wisconsin, since 1999 and is also Canadian. She serves as the Director of Graduate Programs in English and Creative Writing at Columbia College Chicago. *Mad World, Mad Kings, Mad Composition* is her seventh book; an earlier collection, *24 Pages and other poems*, was published by Wave in 2015. She is currently writing stories.



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