**Trio House Press**

**Poetry Now**

**Lesson Plan**

***Topic:*** Twists and Turns a Lyric Poem Can Achieve through Narrative Leaps and Unexpected Comparisons

***Lesson Title:*** “Sometimes a Banana Is a Stepping Stone” for the Readers of Matt Mauch

***Level:*** Secondary School or College

***Lesson Duration:*** N/A

***Lesson Objectives:***

Examine how a poet can use narrative leaps and unexpected comparisons to move a lyric poem in directions that provide unusual and fresh insights.

***Summary of Tasks/ Actions:***

* First read Matt Mauch’s “It’s one thing to want one’s life to be fulfilling, another to want it to be very long” (p. 40)
  + Are there narrative scene-shifts in this poem? If so, where? Are the shifts surreal, or can they be understood and have possible explanations in everyday life? How do these shifts function in the poem? What do they add to the poem?
  + Are there narrative surprises, i.e., developments or statements for which you were unprepared, based on what had come before? If so, what exactly are those surprises? Why do they surprise you? Where in the poem do they occur? Do you think that where they occur in the poem’s narrative arc has significance?
  + Does the title relate to the rest of the poem? How? Is that relationship obvious, or did you have to dig to identify it? Do you prefer titles that have a straightforward relationship to their poems, or titles that puzzle you and make you wonder?
  + What do we know about the speaker? What do we know about the speaker’s relationship to “you”? Are there any implied comparisons in the poem? How much is clear and how much remains ambiguous in our understanding of the relationship between the speaker and “you”?
* Now, read Matt Mauch’s “Globule by globule the world” (p. 37-38) at least twice. There is a lot going on in this complex poem!
  + This poem contains a number of metaphors—both overt similes and implied comparisons. Where are the similes? Do any of them tell us something about the speaker, especially in terms of his/her self-concept?
  + This poem is held together by a network of metaphors. Some are expressed through positive statements (“god is like a mean, thoughtless jerk of a guy”) and some through implied negative comparisons. How many can you identify? Are any of them connected to each other, and if so, how? For example, how do the various liquids mentioned in the poem relate to each other and to the poem’s themes?
  + What comparison is being made in the first line, and how does it function in setting up the poem in terms of theme and tone?
  + Upon first reading, did you find any of the comparisons in this poem far-flung, unexpected, or jarring? Has your sense of them changed upon further examination?
  + Twice in the poem the speaker introduces a neologism, introducing them by the statement “I call….” How does the speaker’s need or impulse to create and express new combinations of words to describe his/her experience relate to the themes of the poem?
  + Is this a spiritual poem? If so, how?

***Materials/ Equipment:***

**Matt Mauch’s *If You’re Lucky Is a Theory of Mine***(available from Trio House Press)

***Further Reading/ Take-Home Tasks:***

* Suggested reading: Adrienne Rich’s “Ghazals: Homage to Ghalib,” in her book *Leaflets.* For an introduction, one of the ghazals from this series and a brief discussion of this poetic form by John Drury is freely available online: <<http://www.newpoetspress.com/ghazal.html>>. Compare the leaps in content that the ghazal’s independent couplets make possible with those leaps that Mauch achieves within the more linear arc of his lyric poems.
* Suggested reading: Tess Gallagher’s essay, “Again: Some Thoughts on the Narrative Impulse in Contemporary Poetry,” in her book of essays titled *A Concert of Tenses* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1986).