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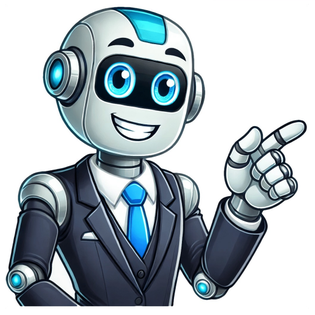

Matthew lippman poet

It's one thing to be thankful for Lucy, the Starbucks lady who's still fuming over my excessive questions about my phone app. It's another story altogether to be thankful for my wife's creative pancake-batter-based discipline for missing the bus. I tried to muster gratitude for my eyes this morning, despite one being filled with pus and the other with marigold juice – a mythical elixir born from prayer and imagination. Marigold juice is what you imagine flows when you rub your palms in reverence, even if nothing tangible comes out. It's the unseen essence of thankfulness that can't be perceived when we're not actively grateful. I attempt to be thankful for my lethargy, a manifestation of my laziness, and for my friend who's as lonely as me despite having a family of his own. We sometimes take leisurely strolls to the pier in Red Hook, spending hours basking in our shared loneliness and contemplating what it would be like to hold hands – a poignant, quiet romance that could have been. I'll admit, I'm grateful for Justin Timberlake's musical prowess, which somehow eclipses Beethoven's in my eyes, as well as my friend Aaron who spent years living in the woods with an axe but never used it. My goal is to forget love, to abandon it, so that one day I can genuinely feel it. Until then, I'm thankful for Lucy's imagined ire and her tutelage on how to expertly operate a coffee machine – a skill that has my fingers dancing like stars in the darkness of a mocha latte. Matthew Lippman is an author who's penned American Chew (Burnside Review Books, 2013). He teaches at Beaver Country Day School and resides in Roslindale, Massachusetts. Born in New York, he's the creative force behind . His work is part of a new collection inspired by On Being Jewish Now: Reflections of Authors and Advocates – an anthology that has sparked his latest endeavors. If you'd like to contribute, you can find instructions here. To stay updated on his work, subscribe here.Photo by menachem weinreb on Unsplash Given article text here John Coltrane's "Kol Nidre" has been a spiritual experience for many listeners over the years. But what if Led Zeppelin were to play this piece? How would it change the dynamics and emotions of the performance? The idea of John Paul Jones on mandolin, Robert Plant singing with his big lungs, and Jimmy Page's lute work alongside Bonham's drums would likely create a unique sound. The music might take listeners on a journey of self-reflection and introspection. It could be seen as a form of atonement for past wrongs, a way to find forgiveness and healing. The shofar's haunting sound would serve as a reminder of the importance of listening to our inner voice. Matthew Lippman's poetry collection, We Are All Sleeping With Our Sneakers On, is influenced by the thoughts and quotes of others on the meaning of crying. His work has been featured in The American Poetry Review, with four poems from this collection appearing in the January/February 2024 issue. As the author of six poetry collections, Lippman's latest work is published by Four Way Books, following his previous collection Mesmerizingly Sadly Beautiful, which received the 2018 Levis Prize. When congratulated on his new collection, Lippman was asked to discuss the significance of childhood memories in his poems, which often evoke a sense of joy, angst, and discovery. He reflected on a memory from his childhood, where his grandfather, who was not a nice man, criticized his early poems for being too explosive. This experience led Lippman to embrace tenderness and kindness in his work as a pushback against the negativity he faced. With love at the center of everything he does, Lippman draws from his rich emotional childhood, filled with love and great friendships, to inspire his writing. He began writing poetry at a young age, and when asked what drew him to it, he recalled being fourteen and already having written many poems, which were criticized by his grandfather, but ultimately fueled his passion for writing. I used to claim that Alan Dugan said something profound about poetry being his sanctuary, where he found a voice that resonated with the world and people around him. But that was just a convenient answer – not the truth. For me, it's a mystery, a natural part of who I am, like playing guitar or falling in love. It's something I've always done, since kindergarten, and I couldn't imagine life without it. I poke fun at pop culture because I find the tension between vulnerability and self-protection fascinating. My poems are irreverent, yet compassionate, and they call out our resistance to being genuine. Writing is my playground – where I have fun, even when tackling dark topics. It's not just about staying young or youthful; it's about music, which speaks deeply to me. DG: One of the many things I love about your poems is the tension between the fear-based need we use to protect ourselves and our deep desire to be vulnerable. You often poke fun at pop culture, starting with the very first and very delicious poem in the collection “As Natural as Finland.” How even in a naked exhibition of performance art, we still find ourselves longing to be naked: “We are not exhibitionists or performers, we just want this to be Finland / the way people in Finland / get naked and get in the sauna / like they take the dog out for a walk.” Your poems are funny and irreverent, I've got two daughters who are into different things - my younger one is obsessed with Taylor Swift and loves music from bands like The 1975 and singer-songwriters like Sufjan Stevens. It keeps me young and fun, as getting old isn’t great. My older daughter listens to jazz, which I appreciate because it’s a good way to stay in touch with your emotions. One of the things that drives my poetry is making pop culture relatable to everyone. I try to connect with people who know what's going on and have something to say about it. My poems cover some heavy topics like racism, but also try to be accessible and generous. For example, there are poems about Adam Toledo and Jackie Robinson, as well as the segregation machine that we've all been a part of. But I also want to talk about how complicated everything is, how we're not just one thing. Hanif Abdurraqib's A Little Devil in America was an influence on my poem "We Are All Sleeping with Our Sneakers On," which tries to figure out the rules around race and language. The idea of saying your prayer at the wrong time of day stuck with me, as did trying to talk to people before we can really understand each other. It's all so confusing right now, especially with DEI and white privilege conversations happening in schools and homes. My default is that everyone can find a space born out of kindness and acceptance. I once called a friend who told me she thought I was racist. I shared what I was feeling, and she said everything was okay, so that's real. Growing up in the '70s, there was tension between Black kids and Jewish kids, but nothing much can be said about it except it's a mess. Anyone with a heart is trying to do their best. Writing a poem called it fun. DG: I love Chaka Khan and your references to her song in the poem. What's good in this? ML: There has to be some good. I don't write much about race anymore. A friend told me writing is discovery, like when you find something new through poetry. I want to get along with people, so it takes work. DG: Your poems have tension and chaos, but also discipline. You let your mind wander then bring it back in. Like "Fuck Poems," which starts with a rejection letter. Then your mind takes off, imagining all the reasons you weren't good enough for that editor. What brings you back to the poem is thinking about your daughter who had an allergic reaction and was scared her throat would close up. Your poems about daughters are full of love and tenderness. You juxtapose the chaos with the body's reality and love. Poetry is such a profound mental exercise, yet it can also leave an indelible mark on one's body. When crafting a poem, I'm reminded to tap into my wild and unpredictable side while acknowledging the physical realm that fuels creativity. My feline companion Sammy, currently lounging beside me, serves as a constant reminder of this balance between the cerebral and the corporeal. Every poem I write is, in essence, an ode to the sensual and the unknown, a celebration of life's raw beauty. To create something truly remarkable, one must be willing to make unexpected leaps and take risks – both as a writer and a reader. The ultimate goal is for my words to resonate deeply within you, perhaps evoking laughter or tears, or even prompting you to crave a satisfying snack. You see, I firmly believe that readers should feel the stirrings of something profound within their very being when engaging with my poetry. And so, as a writer, it's essential to surrender to this creative process and allow the words to flow freely – much like the carefree moments I experience during a baseball game, where my friend Michael Morse and I often take short naps amidst the action. Baseball itself embodies the perfect fusion of mental and physical prowess. The downtime between pitches creates an opportunity for introspection, allowing one to recharge and connect with their surroundings on a deeper level – much like the moments I've shared with Sammy by my side. As for my childhood aspirations, though I may not have become a professional musician or baseball player, my poetry allows me to transcend those limitations and channel my creativity in ways both poetic and adventurous. Regarding your poignant observation about the collection capturing the "dark / beautiful spirit of humanity," I must confess that it's an honor to be acknowledged for such a theme. One of the poems that resonated deeply with you is "There Is a World Outside That Wants to Go Up in Flames." This piece, born from my own desire to be a firefighter as a child, speaks to the universal longing to be good and brave in the face of adversity. In these turbulent times, I hold onto hope – though it may seem fragile. Yet, I firmly believe that deep within each individual lies the capacity for bravery, kindness, and selflessness. Perhaps this innate desire to make a positive impact is what keeps us from succumbing to darkness, and instead, drives us towards a brighter future. I reflect on the past a lot lately, having grown up during a tumultuous time in history - the late '60s and early '70s. My family's involvement in various social movements shaped my perspective, exposing me to protest songs by Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. As I entered adolescence, my friends and I were deeply invested in anti-nuclear activism and divestment efforts. Despite the progress made by these pioneers, it seems that we're still grappling with similar issues today. What troubles me is that our collective efforts haven't led to a significant improvement in the world; instead, things appear to be worse than they were decades ago. However, I remain optimistic about individuals and their capacity for goodness. This hope sustains me, driving me towards nurturing loving, kind, and decent spaces.

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