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SATURDAY LIVE: Meet the Poet

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Saturday 09:00 - 10:00.

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Matt Harvey



Poet, columnist, enemy of all that's difficult and upsetting, Matt performs up and down the country at festivals, cabarets, conferences and colleges and shares his thoughts with the world on his [Wondermentalist](#) blog.

The Guardian described him (accidentally) as "one of Britain's leading poets", the Dorset Echo as "fabulously understated", and the Times as "a word-based organism from Devon." The Independent called him "a pale man in a suit". His latest book is *The Hole in the Sum of my Parts* "It's a tiny treasure - not only funny, but tender and true" (William Cook, The Guardian).

5 May 2008

When Anger Management Wears Off

Louis Vitton designer policemen
Escort Naomi down from the plane
Which takes off soon after, without her
Cos she's flown off the handle again

In an airport in middle America
Straight-backed, and lonely as hell
There's some unclaimed emotional baggage
Going round a carousel

Sonnet celebrating the elegance, ingenuity and sheer cerebral power of Darren Crowdy's creative use of Schottky Groups to complete the Schwarz-Christoffel formula so that it works with irregular shapes and

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those with holes.

You're clever, you. Far out. You're *way out there*
 Beyond the bozone layer where we reside
 You plot the line fantastic in the air
 Where Ancient Greek and Modern Geek collide

You do Jazz Geometry – it can't be taught –
 Express yourself in dancing neuro-glyphs
 Placing in brackets things that can't be taught
 Then multiplying by their absent widths

You're out there where the holy grail or chalice is
 Where mathmatics like me can hardly breathe
 Then with applied complex analysis
 You bring it down to Earth – just for a wheeze

You're far out. So far out. And so, so clever
 Yet when you say *Eureka!* we say *Whatever...*

1 March 2008**10,000 Cracks in Market Rasen, Lincolnshire**

A thundery under-grumble
 Spoke of doom and melodramas
 Made dream-steeped people stumble
 To the street in their pyjamas
 Perplexed, bewildered, lost
 In the February frost.

A magnitude of 5.3
 An aftershock of 1.8
 Enough to spill a cup of tea
 To make cake crumble on its plate
 It would have done - but it was late

And midnight lovers in the throes
 Of passion and distress
 Said, 'You know that question that you pose...
 ...well tonight the answer's Yes!'

Ultra Lite Verse

To travel unencumbered
 Liberated, unimpeded
 Not impoverished nor lumbered
 With kit you never needed
 Tripping lightly cross the tundra
 With an ultra sense of wonder
 Feeling far closer to nature
 Than you did when you were younger
 And you forked out for the clobber
 And it really used to costure

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Meanwhile your backpack-lacking back
 Has a relaxed and upright posture
 As you leap from tuft to tussock
 With the contours of each buttock
 Silhouetted in the sunset
 Cos there's nothing in your pocket

Travel lightly, travel sprightly
 With so very little outlay
 To carry nothing hefty
 Cock a snook at health and safety

To the uber ultra-liter outlay's outré

But I'm not an ultra vulture, I don't go for ultra culture
 Ultra-this that or the other – I like staying under cover
 A quilt cover with some weight in,
 That a man might hibernate in
 with a serious tog-rating

If I'm looking for adventure And I'm feeling pretty hardy
 I'll pop down the shopping centre In a thin acrylic cardy
 Okay, I'm fat and pasty But I like my health and safety
 But if, for you, it's obsolete –
 Then go ahead –
 You have nothing to lose but your body-heat...

2 February 2008

The price is right

Okay, suspend him from the Commons
 Then there's money to repay
 And of course now he won't be standing
 Come re-election day

But it's what Dave Cameron did that's worst
 That's the highest price to pay
 Because it really hurts a Tory
 When you take their whip away...

The Company of Leeks

Down through the generations
 We've been venerating leeks
 We've not won *all* the prizes
 But we've had our winning streaks
 Won enough to furnish houses –
 We've had fewer troughs than peaks
 In the company of leeks

Rosettes, I've had a few

And then some honourable mentions
 To see a leek you, yourself, grew
 Receiving plaudits and attentions...
 When that leek in peak condition
 Wins a Best Leek Competition
 You feel so cock-a-hoop
 It calls for cock-a-leekie soup
 Although it isn't Mum's leek pudding
 ...It'll do

For what is a leek – what is it like?
 Let's sneak a peek – let's take a look
 A cylinder of bundled sheafs
 Tortilla wrap of Welsh motifs
 A spring onion on steroids
 Upside down Olympic flame
 Close relation of the onion
 They are Garlic's kissing cousin
 They're en eco-party-popper in freeze-frame
 Or pagan Barbie
 A little bit ineffable
 A heavy metal daffodil
 It makes me feels so affable
 The company of leeks

So you can keep your Spanish beach
 I'll stay where leeks are within reach
 The tasty part of vichyssoise...
 Beneath the undemanding stars
 While the world around me sleeps
 I'll keep company with leeks

19 January 2008

Magpie Messiah

In factories and offices
 there's talk of Geordie prophecies
 the king who it is said would come
 then go again
 and then come back
 then go again
 And then, a third time
 come again, yes, here he is
 the Magpie Messiah
 to kindle their fire
 to love them
 to lead them
 so high up the league
 and redeem them
 King Keegan
 has come
 as prophesied
 and I have seen the banners say:
 we're going all the way
 – to Wembley, to Europe and to Heaven

so there you go
no pressure, Kevin

Quantum poem

The wondermental things apply
as quirky quantum time goes by

it's quirky *and* it's quarky
and it's kind of like a doorkey
to a world so charmed and murky
only physicists can visit it
and handle its vicissitudes

it is a most absorbing thing
to watch electrons orbiting
to sit there and imagine them
without a hope of catching them
the fundamental particles
like toilet rolls and smarticles

they're smaller than bacteria
but in no way inferior
though they occupy less area
they're infinitely eerier
and scarier

so much that even physicists
can hardly grasp that they exist

they have 'non-local' properties
exist as probabilities
as possibles and parallels
as parables and dizzy spells
a neo-nano-nothingness
attention-seeking emptiness
an absence with an aftertaste
a ripple in a state of grace

for some the sub-atomic's
both a riddle and a tonic

east of reason, shy of rhyme
the quantum world confirms that time
is circular and cyclical

on top of that it speaks of why
the wondermental things apply
as quarky quantum time goes by...

22 December 2007

Merry Christmas Everybody

You can keep your bah humbugs
 I'm not playing Scrooge
 Don't wince at my tinsel
 I'm not in the mood

Because no man is an island
 No woman is an isthmus
 And people are people wherever you go
 So have a Merry Christmus

I Prefer Ibupfen

Life is so much easier with effective analgesia

The purpose of pain is to say to the brain:
 Ow! Houston we've got a problem...
 But once we've got the message we don't need it again
 and again...

What do we want? Symptom Relief!
 When do we want it? Now!

When you've had enough of it there's just no need to
 suffer it
 Just pop a little caplet and Ibuprofen will buffer it

I've had a go with Aspirin, Codeine and Paracetamol
 With Solpadeine, Co-codamol, with Anadin and Ultramol
 I love them all, I really do, but I prefer Ibuprofen

There are other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
 around
 Your NSAID's these days are quite thick on the ground
 There's Naproxen, there's Nabumetone
 and, of course, there's Indomethacin
 Each with much to offer us. But I prefer Ibuprofen

I love the way the compound sticks its cheeky little hand
 in
 The way it blocks the enzyme that creates the
 prostaglandin

Reducing fever, inflammation, and mild to moderate pain

Yes I know it isn't curative, in anyway preventative
 But to dwell on what it doesn't do is anally retentative
 I *know* it doesn't treat the cause, the cause will still be
 there
 But it lends a hand, it puts the 'pal' back into palliative
 care.

It does exactly what you'd expect it to say it would do if it
 came in a tin

1 December 2007**Evel Knieval**

Showman, frontman, stunning stuntman
In a tight white leather jumpsuit

Celebrated, sequinned, scarred
Evel flew, and landed, hard

He knew triumph and disaster
He knew bandages and plaster

So rev the revs, the engine roars
Knieval leaps, Knieval soars

Let's leave him freeze-framed in the air
His name synonymous with Dare

They called him 'Elvis on a motorbike'
Ladies and gentlemen, Evel has left the building

The Kipper

Lying there like leatherwear, eyes glazed just like a teddy
bear
Familiar, yet foreign, like a smooth, flat, smelly sporrán

You can serve yourself a kipper on a tasteful brekky
platter
You can mash it in a paté you can serve with toast and
butter
With a little bit of pepper it's the perfect kind of tucker
Put a little bit of kipper on the corner of a cracker...
...You can call it kipper canapés
Mmmmmm

And should you come a cropper, slip or trip and drop your
kipper
There's no need to agonise about the kipper's injury
Mix it up with egg'n'rice and call it kipper kedgeriee

It's got such versatility; DHA oil; Omega 3
In parts of middle England kippers qualify as currency

A kipper in a jiffy bag can liven up a postal strike
Or pop one in the pannier of a diplomatic motorbike

If you're feeling moody
You can happy-slap a foody

When they hang like golden ladies they are aromatic
bunting
They can lay false trails for hounds so you can sabotage
the hunting

[Which is where the term 'red herring' originally comes from]

They enrich the English language
And they're quite nice in a sandwich

So let's make a bumper sticker that will stick up for the kipper
And say: "A kipper is for life – not just for breakfast"

17 November 2007

St Pancras

We've all been where you're standing, we've stood there,
St Pancras
Stood empty and friendless, neglected and thankless

And you've stood forlorn as the powers-that-be scorned
you
Both persons of rank and us ordinary punters
How you must have hungered and hankered, St Pancras

For the life you have now for arrivals, departures
For lovers to linger beneath your grand arches

But now you're emerging, refurbished, resurgent
Your platforms buffed up and washed down with detergent

And you welcome us all, from near and from far
To your cathedral grandeur, your new champagne bar

St Pancras – you know what you are
You're a star.

Magical Memories – a regrettably forgettable yet unforgettable love poem

I remember the dress that you wore when we met
The dress with the dots – how could I forget
Two hundred and four – none exactly the same
I counted them all as you came through the door
...I gave each one a name

We walked out together, beneath a lumpy grey sky
I see it so clearly now in my mind's eye,
The pavement, the drizzle, the cars grumbling by...
Ford Mondeo, blue, N76 RBT
Toyota Corolla, white, C213 XPL
Citroen Picasso, red S79 YAE

You kissed me. I missed one. But I didn't mind.
We were young. We had time.

The restaurant. We held hands. Once more we kissed.
 And whispered sweet nothings - well, you did,
 I whispered the whole set menu and wine list...
 [And what's really nice is:
 I can still recite it, including the prices]

And then back to your place, your face stuck to my face
 While my eyes memorised your cd's
 I noticed a book there beside the computer
 The abridged Kama Sutra (for the hurried lover)
 And took a quick look – in two minutes, I'd read it – from
 cover to cover
 You said, Hey do you seriously think that kind of thing can
 impress me?
 And I closed the book, and my eyes, and said, Test me.

20 October 2007

England Expects...

The scrum, the ruck
 The pack, the maul
 Bulkied up bodies
 A misshapen ball
 A red rose
 On a blood-stained shirt
 Oggi... Oi! Oggi... Oi!
 Oggi Oggi Oggi – Ow! That *really* hurt!

If I said you had a bit of a problem would you hold it against me?

Alcohol. It's magical. It works its hocus pocus
 Makes all of us attractive, turns the shy ones into jokers

It's the precipice poured from a bottle
 The gateway to heaven and hell
 It's the portal that leads to a chortle
 And a few other places as well

But while it makes the sour sweet it turns the sweet
 things sour
 And ask yourself who's really smiling during Happy Hour?

Because there's
 Hinge-drinking - oils the social levers, eases you out of
 your shell
 Binge drinking – leaves the shell well behind, heaves you
 out of your skull
 Whinge-drinking – downing measures of wine at your
 pitious condition
 Cringe-drinking – throwing out the baby of dignity with
 the bathwater of inhibition

Is one of these you?

Don't be like the sopping wet pharaoh who said with a smile
"I just like a drink. I am not in denial..."

It's a soft, slow slide down a slippery slope
And no, you can't have ice with that
I mean the sort of slope it'll take twelve long, hard steps
to climb back up...

Sometimes the Path of Least Resistance
Leads to the Place of Least Existence...

Don't let excessive moderation grind you down
But think before you drink before you drown

22 September 2007

(Doing the) Northern Rock

you put your savings in
you take your savings out
in
out
your high anxiety account
you're not okey-dokey
you are insecure
even though they reckon they've bailed it out
Oi!

You're not okey-dokey
You're not okey-dokey
You're not okey-dokey

pointy finger
blame blame blame

Portrait Poem

Hold still.
I'm going to paint you.
Yes, with words.
A 'poetrait' – very good, I see what you did there.

Clothes on is fine.
I won't be doing unflattered flesh, mauves pinks and blues
Depict your body as a kind of bruise

Just arty similes – word art
So, sitting comfortably? Hold still. I'll start...

*Her forehead is a wide beach at low tide
Eyebrows two Swedish forwards way offside*

*Prosthetic crab claw fingers clutch her cardy
Their nails glimpses of ice cubes in Bacardi*

*Her eyes pools – No, wells – No, open invitations (yes!)
To be accepted without guilt or shame – good
Tch! you moved!
um...her eyes are invitations to a booth
to openly review a recent claim*

*Her breasts are... glad thought bubbles... that insist they
be expressed...
You moved again! You did! I've lost my thread!
...breasts....um ...coastguards in souwesters – no! tch!*

Okay, touch up the eyes:
*....eyes two blank forms each yet to be filled in
her jaw a door on a post-war public building (great)*

That's it. Yes, have a look. Don't be annoyed.
I know I'm not Lucian Freud – or Beryl Cook
I beg your pardon – what did you say?
"I don't know much about art but I know what I weigh?"
Don't be like that! Anyway it's not about you –
It's about challenge, technique, form and composition.
And also you kept changing your position.
I didn't take you for a philistine.
Oh, can't talk now – got Sotheby's on the line...

Self-Made Man

He picks his palette up, and starts to paint
Invests the canvas with expressive oils
The tight off-white stretched cloth absorbs the daubs
And out of dull chaos a face takes shape
It's recognisable, sharp and severe
His brush fulfils its brief, portrays the traits
The early random-looking lines cohere
By increments an image constellates

My father's mother, as once drawn by him
In brown felt tip when I was in my teens
Beneath today's still life the play of genes
Beneath the leaf - the twig, the branch, the limb

He's traced me back, revealed the family tree
The embedded dna in dynasty

Next session's strokes will see this overlaid
With features I can claim as just my own
The part of me that passes for self-made
Fresh-grown from seeds so very long since sown
In quiet fields which never quite lay fallow
Which never quite wake up, nor ever sleep

Perhaps the me that's me is just skin deep
 I hope he doesn't make me look too shallow

14 July 2007

Our Queen is *not* a Drama Queen

That apology from the BBC:
 We're sorry Ma'am – we meant no harm
 One did not flounce out
 Nor did one pout
 And someone's chances of a knighthood
 Are seriously up the spout...

Poem Inspired by the Wearing of Bees

Today Philip McCabe is wearing an all-over apiary
 ensemble
 That offers that warm swarm feel
 With the fuzzy feudal buzz of clinging bee
 – Combines high tog-rating with ease of sloughing off –

Elsewhere in the Entomological Eco-Outfitters Catalogue:
 Why not try our Exoskeletal Erotica?
 There's the Ladybird Lingerie line
 – When they feel the flames of passion they fly away
 home -
 Or Stag Beetle Boxers – They're perfectly safe,
 though they might nip a little and some say they chafe –

We have a range of symbiotic styles to fit every level of
 integration and intimacy

Evening wear:
 The Lepidopteral Lounge Suit
 Sharp as Moss Bros, cut from Moth Cloth
 It's not made-to-measure but it settles to fit
 Gets a little fluttery under the streetlamps
 But it's lovely and rustly when they're sleepy
 Though some will say it's creepy, we say:
 Hey, it's also crawly

So sleep tight, mind the bugs don't bite (really)
 And remember:
 Never mind the quality, feel the itch...

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)

He stands the far wrong side of safety's door,
 Must pick the lock to be allowed back in.
 For him the minefield is no metaphor –
 Breathe in. Breathe out. Hold still. Now, breathe again.

Here is the warrior with the gentle touch,
 A soldier's courage and a surgeon's care.
 Adrenalin enough, but not too much.
 Fear is a friend. But still he has to dare.

Each movement is an act of conservation,
 The moment's taut meniscus can't be broken.
 Forced calm of concentrated concentration –
 The demon in the box must not be woken.

Cells brace against the latent darkening blast,
 The first mistake you make will be your last.
 Move slowly. Look. Inbreath. Feel. Prod. Outbreath.
 Rising relief... ..Not today, Mr Death

16 June 2007

Feral Beast

Darling? What's that snarling? Oh, that'll be the media
 I don't know, I think it just gets nastier and seedier
 It's out there prowling, scavenging scurrilous scraps on
 which to feast
 At least Saturday Live shows the sensitive side of this
 ravenous feral beast..

Let's Hang

They hang in the air with the greatest of ease
 Those aesthetically pleasing and relaxed young women on
 their stationary trapeze-i

They hang there like bats do in caves or in trees
 With gorgeous red welts on the backs of their knees

Without stars or spangles or greasepaint or glitter
 They dangle at angles and slowly get fitter
 (It's not true 'you only slim when you're swinging'...)

But though plainly as gainly as those in tight clothes
 Who swing to and fro for the punters below

They will never be caught by a muscle-bound boy
 Like some lycra-clad sequinned executive toy

They hang there asserting a cool independence
 Like calm hanging baskets, post-feminist pendants

They hang there quite humbly, not seeking applause
 On their stationary bar not too far from the floor

They strike graceful poses though no-one can tell
 Which herbivore's that- it's quite like a gazelle...

They dream of being super-heroes – Batgirl, or Catwoman
 In fact any one will do so long as it doesn't turn out to be

Splatwoman...

Ballad of the Tropical Systematic Botanist

He's a plucker, he's a picker
He's a cutter, he's a snipper
He knows too much about ginger and when given room to roam
He gathers great big armfuls of brand new botanic samples
And he presses them and logs them and he brings them all back home

It's the only form of logging ecologically acceptable
He doesn't care if each new leaf's disgusting or delectable
Toxic, psychotropic, soporific or medicinal
His quest is non-judgmental and completely unconditional

When he turns over a new leaf it's always pretty literal
"Ooh, not seen that one before..."

With his eyes on the horizon and his hand around a rhizome
You'll see him bleed but you won't hear him moan
With his ankles cut by switchgrass, far from home and Alan Titchmarsh
He's a foliage-focused Indiana Jones

Yeah he's a mild-mannered tropical systematic botanist
But at the end of the day
He's a pretty determined-looking mild-mannered tropical systematic botanist
So don't get in his way

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