

Petalshower and Windfall

Poems by Matthew Pullar 2006-2012

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Pilgrim

Pilgrim, pilgrim, where do you go?

To find the answer; to find my home.

Pilgrim, pilgrim, why walk the whole way?

For the answer's in footsteps as in the travail.

But pilgrim, why tread so soft on the ground?

That I may walk and not make a sound.

And why tread so quickly – with such nimble grace?

Why, so that my footsteps will not leave a trace.

Why keep so silent, as you walk on your way?

So my voice won't disturb the trees as they pray.

Yet why do you cover your mouth as you breathe?

So I might keep hidden the bad air as it leaves.

Pilgrim, pilgrim, why are you here?

That's the answer I seek, the truth that I fear.

The Leap

The long-jump pit's just a child's sandpit with a slipshod dirt track leading up to it, no lines or markings and we've no tape measure to check, with precision, their success, or (case may be) failure. Haphazard though the whole deal, the school-boys switch between stern concentration and flippancy: pointedly avoiding the moment of effort, the jump. All it takes is one or two jokers who make a show of not trying and the rest follow - though not entirely. For three or four, this is a time not for jokes but to prove what? Strength? Ability? Determination? The looks on their faces vary. But these few move with strategy (though not always shrewdly; there's more than a few cries of "Foul!" as they miss the line at the pivotal point). Some land unwisely, falling headfirst into the dirt bank. There's no easy way to fall in this pit, but that is not on their minds when they reach the line (carved in the cracked ground with a stick). They think not of soft landings or where their glasses will fly. They only think of their defiant feet trampolining from rock-hard soil, and the unexplained need to rise, however briefly, to the sky.

Will I let the dewdrops fall?

Will I let the dewdrops fall?
Will I let them fall?
Will I let them greet the morn,
make fresh and lovely all
and waken up all on the ground,
make fresh and lovely all?

I won't let the dewdrops fall.
I won't let them fall.
I will keep them in my eyes.
I will keep them hid behind coping smiles and stoic lies.
I will keep them mine.

Will I let the raindrops fall?
Will I let them fall?
Will I let them fall upon
the ground and wash the soil?
Will I let the raindrops fall
or will I keep them all?

I will keep them waiting for a drier time; I'll keep them all. I won't let the raindrops fall. I will keep them in the skies, in the skies and in my eyes. I will keep them all.

You'll not tell them, not at all, that I have kept the raindrops here. You'll not tell them I am hiding rain and dew drops in my eyes. You'll not tell dry ground or flowers. Don't tell them I am lying.

"A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea"

We see it brewing first in the clouds: a heavy, heaving blackness above the mountains and the palm trees. It comes to us with its thick, rich voice singing: *Prepare the way. Prepare the way.*

Next comes its lightning trumpet: first in distant, vast sheets across the plains of the sky; next in short, sharp stabs of electric white, vibrating on the rhythm boards of the air: *Prepare the way. Prepare the way.*Oh, prepare you the way.

We hear its groaning and rumbling, a cry of pain and proclamation: the victor's herald riding before the horses of the triumphant. At the flanks of the army, the horizon-haze of hope: *Prepare the way. Prepare the way.*Yes, prepare you all the way.

Then the victory song erupts, in full orchestral splendour: Open up the ground, open the hills.
Open your mouths and drink.
Open your windows and dance in the breeze.
Open your hearts and praise.
Prepare you all the way. Yes, prepare the way.

Conqueror

Watch him do it! There's none like him! Those Romans thought they had him...but shows how much they know, the fools. Think they've got the reins of death and life tight in their hands; how wrong.

And look too at those lawyers there, the ones who had it in for him.

They think their carbon-copied forms and weighty tomes have the last word; Not with this guy, that's for sure.

Look at that stone: that heavy stone. Watch that stone get rolled away. Look at those clothes; those deathly robes: see him shake them off like rags!

Watch him do it! He said he could! We're only sad we doubted him. Watch him do it! Surely he's a righteous man, or something else big – yessiree!

I always said it, didn't I? (And if I didn't, I meant to once or twice at lunch when we played dice. I always said it, in my heart.)

Look, here he is. Let's see if he remembers us! Let's hope he does. We're not Romans. We're not lawyers. We'll be fine. Yep, what a guy!

Pilgrim 2: Follow on through the mountains

Follow on through the mountains, the hills
As they lead you. Don't look to the right,
Don't look to the left. Climb, fall and scramble
Through the bush, through it all. Though
The drops and the rises may shake up your heart
Let it be a sweet journey in your mind's dim perception.
Let the shake and the knock make a joyful foot-gallop
As, pilgrim you are, you go God-knows- where.

Watch the wall of these hills gently ambush your flight; Watch the trees form a net for your feet:
A net so silk-soft that you, enchanted, cannot
Resent the intrusion. Let the song of the tree-birds
Lull you to sleep; they won't bite you, these birds,
Nor cause you to dash your life-boat upon rocks –
No, they will just make you sleep, though there's no
time now for sleep, for, pilgrim-swift, you

Must go where you go. Where was it again? It seems To have escaped me. No fear; this is such A nice route to take, for a day-trip or four. May the road fall to lead you astray With such gentle persuasion that you Will love to obey. Let the sun's rays misguide you. This is the way to enjoy the day's journey. Go where you wish, you must lose your way.

Ancient Paths (for Robert Frost)

If two roads diverged and you, one traveller in a million, stood, and considered which to choose. would you see tufts of grass bursting from one path and feel yourself impelled towards its untouched, untampered charm? Or, the fiery vigour of a pioneer in your heart, would you see in this path something a little too staid, too clear-cut, and be pulled instead to the miles of vast, wondrous wood, to the paths not yet forged? Would you cut through these glades, past these trees, and on down through leaf-corridors to lands undiscovered, to islands of spice and wonders untapped? Would you long to plant flags in soil and say, "Here! This was my square inch of unchartered land"?

And if, getting there, you found others had beaten you to the punch, would you sit by this tree and, head in your knees, cry at the thought of your lost settler glory? Or, courage in heart, would you rise once again, and find another glade, another tree – better still, one whole other wood! – all in order to say, "I did that – yes, me"?

Yes, that would be nice, and good luck, I suppose, to you

and the others who walk their own way.

Yet don't be surprised if each path you take leads you, more or less, in the end back to Here, back to this tree where you wept, and, yes, back to this sweet, sultry divergence of paths; and don't be surprised if other travellers find your self-assured trail-blazing schtick just a little bit too "Burke and Wills" for their liking: these are the prices that pioneers pay.

But I, dull as I'm sure it must seem to you – I will not mind if I find, at the end, that I'm walking where others before me have walked, and know, thanks to them, that it is the right way, if not – shock, gasp, horror – the one with the most bush to bash through. No, I will not mind, for I will care more where I finish than how many trails I blaze on the way.

Leaves Like Flowers: Spring Petals

1. I am small, am enclosed, but I think I feel petals forming around me.

The sun beckons; my green home receives the message: The sun, it says, "Come",

and I think that I'll come in a moment or two.

I'm bursting, I think: bursting forth and I think – how long will I wait? – 'til it's safe? Not too soon; I'm afraid, but I'm ready and not, and I'm waiting and pouncing; and knowing that seasons each come once a year, and I'll be out, for a time, then I'll wilt, and I'll go, and I know this is true, and I don't want to go,

And the sun's saying "Come: now is your time", and I'm waiting and wanting, not wanting to come, and this is the time, the strange half-way time; and I'm budding, and busting; and this is my time, and I'm waiting, and writhing, and THIS IS THE TIME

2.
In ev'rything (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (Turn, turn, turn)
And in each season (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a reason (Turn, turn, turn)
And within each reason (Turn, turn, turn)

There is a question Why that old reason Should apply anymore. (Turn, turn, turn) (Turn, turn, turn)

A time for having; a time for not A time for a little; a time for a lot

A time for loving; a time for hating A time for owning; a time for replacing

A time for crashing; a time for booming A time for shrinking; a time for blooming

A time for health; a time for being ill A time of youth; of being over the hill

A time for growth; a time for wilting A time for re-growth? A time for re-wilting!

And so now I ask you, (Turn, turn, turn)
Whatever this Time is (Turn, turn, turn)
I know there's a reason (Turn, turn, turn)
And I know it's a Season (Turn, turn, turn)

But I've got just one question:

Why must this season Come back same time next year?

3. But here I am, bursting, and here I am, bud in

prime spot for the opening...

And I'm waiting, and hearing the sun saying, "Come", and I think that I'll come, but does this mean NOW?

And I think that I'm waiting, and buds are in waiting for a time that is now, but also not yet.

And the sun's saying, "Come", and the sky's saying, "Come", and the ground is in groans and writhes with a child,

And the son's saying, "Come!" -

But we must wait for the time when all seasons spring forth, and we're all in the Son.

I will walk beside you

I will walk beside you.
You will swing your hand
next to mine,
but they will not touch.
Our hands will never touch.
I will walk beside you,
not with you,
and I will watch you walk.

I will talk beside you.

I will talk with you
and share my thoughts,
your thoughts, and yet
your thoughts will not be mine.
Your thoughts cannot be mine.

I will watch, will talk and walk, as petals open 'round your head. I will watch the petals grow. You will grow the petals.

I will dance beside you,
and you will dance, but
not with me.
You cannot dance with me.
Your dance is not my dance, and
your thoughts are not my thoughts.
You will dance your thoughts,
and I will watch you dance.

And one day we, my dear, shall walk,

(I shall walk, and you shall walk) and we will watch the petals grow, grown, not by us: by you, by me, grown side by side, as we walked, and danced, and talked, and shared, and let these petals grow.

Death of a Star

It's getting worse, he says, I see less every day.
When I squint, I can just make out a blur of you.

That's alright, I say,
I'm not worth seeing anyway.

But when I look at the sun, he says, it's not as frightening as it was – just a haze of light. Is the sun, he asks, as strong as it used to be?

The sun's growing old, I say. Just like you, just like me. We're growing old now, you and me.

I'm not afraid, he says, to see the sun grow old. I thought when it died it'd be unbearably bright.

Not at all, I say. The sun, when it dies, will be an old man in a chair.

And the earth? he asks. Will the earth get cold to have the old sun shrivel in its corner of the sky?

Of course, I say, it will be cold. But you and I can take a cup of tea and watch, with blankets, you and me, as the sun (and all this) goes and dies.

Limit to Infinity

We cannot choose the way things go. We cannot change the tides, reverse The orbits of the spheres and moons. We cannot halt the pulse of time. We cannot change the reason why. We may not like it, this is true, But these are things we cannot do.

One day we may be able to Select the day that we will die.

We may then find ourselves equipped To rearrange the trees and sky We may live to see the heavens rent Apart by our great strength. It's true. These are, my friends, some things That one day maybe we'll all do.

Yet we still cannot decide the way
The laws of entropy will take
Our choices, balance out the cost,
And how they will apportion blame.
Nor can we go right back and see
The Singularity and say, "There!
That's how it worked. Let's harness that."
There are, my dear, some things that we
Will never do, and may not see.

It will not hurt, then, if we should feel
So inclined to sit, one night, underneath
The stars and ask the one who saw
It all, who ordered how the motions
And the laws would go, and ask
To see the hand working all this,
To take our lives and hold them
Firm. That would my brothers,
Sisters, be a thing of wisdom great indeed.

Those Who Have Heard

I sing, and the sky sings with the majesty of harps and of lyres – no, more majestic than that: with songs played on heartstrings and aches and deep twinges; songs played in places where no song's been played – and, as the songs play, the slaves and the labourers cry for this is the day that they can just sing for the work's put away and here there is music, and here they can dance.

So they dance, though their joints, unaccustomed to this, mumble and murmur, say, "Steady on there!" But the hills say, "No, dance! Dance, though you ache; Dance, though your fear makes you quake, for those days are over. Now is for dancing." The slaves look through the hills for their masters on horses galloping to tell them to "get back to work", and they see there no masters, only hills in their singing, so they join with the hills, and they sing, their ears ringing, and clambering to hear. And the creeks moan the moan of captives in longing but the mountains can clap for they can see what the clouds will try to obscure.

And I, on the mountain can see now, and know what the valleys don't know.

So I cry to the valleys, "You can sing, It's alright; you can all sing tonight"; Do they listen? Do they hear? "You can sing!" I cry out.

And, though the creeks grumble, I will not grumble, for the land's not yet seen what the mountains have seen.

And when I climb down, back to the ground, I still must not grumble, I still must not groan, but must still tell the creeks to sing, and to hear the songs from those who have heard.