



CALIFORNIA DREAMING:

Transatlantic Pilgrims

By Wayne Visser

I

Pilgrims

We set out for adventure
In the fabled land of the free
Where the eagle rules the skies
And the bear roams the forests

We are transatlantic pilgrims
Come to this brave new world
To walk ancient paths
In search of natural wonders

II

Expectations

We take our first steps
In a myth-laden landscape
Dreamed into being
By hallucinations of history and hearsay

We strain our ears listening
For lyrical echoes of sunshine and revolution
We scan the horizon looking
For glorious valleys of silicon and wine

III

Arrival

Our idyllic bubble quickly bursts
As we are spat out
From the airport's shiny cocoon
Onto tangled spaghetti highways





We pass beneath the shadow
Of sprawling industrial scree
And hungry grey asphalt plains
Below thirsty brown slopes

IV

In Transit

The beacons to our hotel
Are garish neon fast-food signs
Demarcating a red-light district
Of gaudy commercial prostitution

Underwhelmed by first impressions
Sedated by jetlag and traffic lullabies
In our drab-camouflaged cell block
Sleep tests our faith in dreams

V

San Francisco

Downtown rescues our shaken dreams
Rocked in the cradle of its blue crescent bay
Invigorated by the breath of its green lungs
Uplifted by the colours of its rainbow flag

The city's arched back bristles with concrete
As cable cars claw their way up déjà-vu hills
Bridge arms and quay fingers reach out
To its caged island heart of stone

VI

Tahoe

Near the rim of the world
Leopard-spotted hills and snake-winding roads
Accompany the lilt of Rocky Mountain High
And inspire crisp-aired alpine aspirations





The lake reflects a utopian vision
Of people carving out wholesome lives
Sensitive to the animation of trees
And the living presence of ancestors

VII

Yosemite

Possessed by the spirit of Moses
We gaze in awe at the cloven landscape
Enchanted by the crevasse-cracked horizon
Our faith in miracles restored

Diminutive beneath towering edifices of granite
Silent before thundering cliffs of water
Our passage through these elongated vistas
Shrinks our ego and stretches our soul

VIII

Waterfalls

In the distance we glimpse her shadowed face
With windswept hair cascading wildly
Her viridescent gown shapely pregnant
Her cool wet feet wriggling and toes trickling

We wend our way past bubbling cauldrons
Through thrashing splashing roaring ravines
Climbing ladders of stone and rungs of mist
To reach the tumultuous quenching source

IX

Sequoias

Worship comes naturally
Amidst the cathedral pillars and celestial spires
Of these millennial sentinels
Who serve as rope ladders for the gods





With elephantine feet, gnarled toes and charred ankles
Bulbous joints, fibrous skin and tufted heads
These gargantuan elders
Are the sacred guardians of earth's history

X

Los Angeles

The home of the stars shines only in the dark
Invention laboratory of smog and gridlock
This is where vanities are pumped up
And overexposed holograms hide

Beneath the enigmatic Hollywood sign
Master illusionists weave magic for the world
While their puppets submit to green incarceration
Under the spell of misplaced heroism

XI

Trees

Elastic trees stretch ever skyward
Roots wrestling for cool slaking tonic
Limbs sparring for ethereal radiant nectar
Plotting their escape from darkness into light

Supple saplings sprout eagerly
Sturdy giants endure patiently
Fallen comrades feed the living
Forests are the book of life

XII

Las Vegas

A luminescent oasis in the desert of blandness
The impersonation capital of the world
Draws hopefuls like a moth to a flame
Blinded by the harsh light of materialism





Yet beneath its gimcrack plastic veneer
Imagination and artistry give shape
To untold possibilities of creation
Unshackled by chains of gold

XIII
Grand Canyon

Stepping through the doors of time
Descending the stairs of history
We find ourselves in a colossal gallery
Displaying Nature's priceless masterpieces

Spilled palettes streak the rocky canvass
Sculpted steeples mark a halloed installation
Erosion-carved veins course brown and green
While ageless etched red faces look on wisely

XIV
Flight

Nimble bats and iridescent jays
Acrobatic swifts and circling raptors
Silhouetted gulls and ski-landing ducks
Our wish to fly is why we speak of heaven

As our shiny metal bird takes to the skies
Although our pilgrimage is at an end
We are forever uplifted
On the wings of our California dreaming

copyright 2004

