

*California Tableaux:*  
Tableau I – “Songs, Stories, Prayers, and A Plate of Brass”  
Synopsis

To conclude the Overture, Sir Francis Drake enters the stage crooning a samba of "Immigrant Song" by Led Zeppelin. The lyrics hail the heavens for one having conquered distant lands, after which cultural misappropriation is to only follow suit. Thereafter, Drake begins to deliver an account of his visit with the indigenous coastal people, allegedly the California Miwoks. His monologue-aria is primarily accompanied by a string quartet mimicking consort music of the era, of which he did not go without while circumnavigating the globe. Drake is rapturously engrossed with his own feats, accomplishments and accolades. His intonations seem sensitive, pious, and reverent. His sentiments are echoed by a male choir that chants a prayer he penned himself, one that dreams of “wider seas,” “distant shores,” and witnessing “God’s mastery’, all set in Anglican psalmody. Yet the motifs in his consort and chorale are eerily bent, twisted, stuttered, and shunted. He is often interrupted by the galloping motifs of “Immigrant Song,” blasting him out of his revelatory anamnesis and reminding him of his duteous account. A strange radio broadcast from the future irregularly and rudely cuts in with fusion jazz as a metallurgist in the 1970s examines a brass plate found on the Marin coast in the 1930s, allegedly left by Drake. At several moments he is (and we are) haunted by Native California song recorded in the early 19th Century, creeping in like a ghostly fog from the past. In this aggregated musical pastiche and lyric montage, we witness Drake pervert the meaning of his fated and foreboding arrival. The megalomaniac finds ‘the temptation strong, like Christ’s, in that arid clime [sic.],’ as he is crowned “Hioh”, or king. Before departing, he audaciously infers that the indigenous people have bestowed their land to “HERR MAIESTY” [sic.]. In their juxtaposition and integration, the musical styles eddying around Drake are characters themselves. Contemporary and antiquated musical styles satirically rock us to and fro, ballastless, highlighting the visceral collision of cultures. They also serve as musical life preservers, pulling us back to the havens of the present. Yet, we are run aground, at the foot of stocks. As society sails into the future, Drake’s mentality is to be avoided: judging a foreign peoples’ way, ironically (here) an immigrant’s way of life or ethnicity as ‘other’ only allows our history of brutal scapegoating and mortal subjugation to repeat itself.

*California Tableaux*  
Tableau I – “Songs, Stories, Prayers, and A Plate of Brass”  
Libretto

**Overture & “Immigrant Song” (Sir Francis Drake):**

Ah, ah!  
We come from the land of the ice and snow,  
From the midnight sun where the hot springs blow.

The hammer of the gods will drive our ships to new land,  
To fight the horde, sing and cry: Valhalla, I am coming!  
On we sweep with threshing oar, Our only goal will be the western shore.

Ah, ah!  
We come from the land of the ice and snow,  
From the midnight sun where the hot springs blow.

How soft your fields so green, can whisper tales of gore,  
Of how we calmed the tides of war. We are young overlords.  
On we sweep with threshing oar, Our only goal will be the western shore.

(Trumpet solo)

So now you'd better stop and rebuild all your ruins,  
For peace and trust can win the day despite of all your losing.  
On we sweep with threshing oar, Our only goal will be the western shore.

**Drake (monologue):**

looking down from the ramparts of a hastily constructed title  
thought it best for that time to seek the land  
it pleased God to send us into a fair and good bay window  
in a sunny atrium  
in this we anchored

the people of the country sent a present to me  
an urgent, irregular verb tense:  
to be one of the liberators  
a voice from the homesick dead  
a lost ancestor or a god

their houses are digged round about with earth  
and have from the uttermost brims of the circle  
clifts of wood set upon them  
joining close together at the top like a spire steeple  
a natural religious symbol  
that liked us well  
and warmed us with echoes  
of our own distant pious shore

**Anglican Choir (psalmody of Drake's Prayer):**

Disturb us, O Lord,  
when we have arrived in safety  
because we have sailed too close to the shore.

**Drake:**

I courteously intreated them  
bestowed necessary things to cover their nakedness  
mistook their liberal nature for a sinful disposition  
I warned my men  
not to adopt their ways meanwhile

**Cyril Stanley Smith (metallurgist's report over radio waves from the future):**

Had the effect  
(which is rather pleasant in appearance)  
been desired for aesthetic reasons  
it would have been used more consistently.

**Henry Newbolt, "Drakes Drum" (verse 1):**

Drake: he's in his hammock an'a thousand mile away,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)  
Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.  
Yarnder lumes the island, yarnder lie the ships,  
Wi' sailor lads a-dancin' heel-an'-toe,  
An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide dashin'  
He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

**Drake**

they came to the top of the hill  
at the bottom whereof we had pitched our tents  
their worship motions confounded us  
we found ourselves deified  
and defied

**Anglican Choir:**

Disturb us, O Lord  
when we are too pleased with ourselves,  
when our dreams come true  
because we dream too little

**Drake:**

the women tormented themselves  
they were about a sacrifice  
unseen to ourselves  
but in utmost earnest

I with my company  
went to reading of the Scriptures  
they were attentive  
and seemed greatly to be affected with it  
we asked ourselves if they understood  
that our purpose was to show that God  
was up above  
not in ourselves

amongst them the king himself  
with many other tall and warlike men  
advanced before us

we in our fortress  
of pebbles  
waited  
grim and tremulous

they by signs requested me to send something by their hand  
a token that my coming might be in peace  
relieved of the necessity of battle  
I offered instead a King James Bible

**Smith:**

which is extended in one direction only  
and has a somewhat anisotropic texture  
both when cold worked  
and to a small degree  
in the recrystallized metal  
after annealing.

**Anglican Choir:**

Disturb us, O Lord  
when with the abundance of the things we possess,  
we have lost our thirst for the water of life

**Drake:**

they strove to behave with comeliness  
their women were silent and quaintly cautious

a man of a goodly personage  
bare the sceptre before the king  
whereupon hanged two crowns  
with three chains of marvellous length  
emblems of servitude and fealty  
to the unknown sovereignty  
we represented in sounds and gestures

after them followed the naked common sort  
every one having his face painted  
in a most demonic manner  
concealing the better side of their humanity  
and leaving unconcealed the worser

**Anglican Choir:**

Disturb us, O Lord,  
when having fallen in love with time,  
we have ceased to dream of eternity,

**Drake:**

I gathered my men together  
and marched within my fenced place  
making against their approaching  
a very warlike show a theatre of threatening power

**Smith:**

as well as other local environmental accidents  
produce large differences in corrosive attack  
over long periods of time: the absence

of any such spots on the present plate  
is highly suspicious.

**Drake:**

which had been bootless bravery  
had they not been well disposed  
through some miracle of providence

**Smith:**

the sailor who cut the plate  
was not necessarily literate  
and may simply  
have not been copying something  
he could not read.  
Its style cannot properly be compared  
with that of

**Drake:**

the sceptre-bearer began a song  
observing his measures in a dance  
and that with a stately countenance  
like the tedious courtiers known to us  
for their affectations of erudition

**Newbolt, verse 2:**

Drake: he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),  
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe,  
"Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,  
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;  
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,  
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed  
them long ago."

**Drake:**

I permitted them to enter within our bulwark  
they made several supplications  
that I would take their kingdom into my hand  
I found the strange temptation strong  
like Christ's in that harsh arid clime

**Anglican Choir:**

Kyrie eleison!

**Smith:**

evidence might come from  
an examination of the details  
of the inscription in order to deduce  
the form of the tools used  
to make the letters.  
They were traced (impressed)  
not engraved or cut..

**Drake:**

they did set the crown upon my head

**Anglican Choir:**

Christe eleison

**Drake:**

and enriched my neck with all their chains

**Smith:**

Yet no curved punches were used

**Drake:**

and honoured me by the name of High

**Anglican Choir:**

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison

**Drake:**

I took the scepter into my hands  
wishing that the riches and treasure thereof  
might so conveniently be transported  
to the enriching of her kingdom at home  
as it aboundeth in the same  
robbing the poor and obscure of the one thing  
they could have claimed  
their liberty

**Smith:**

Not a trace of such local effects were noted,  
neither was any massive rust to be seen  
in the notches cut for the spikes.

**Anglican Choir:**

When...in our efforts to build the new earth,  
we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to grow dim.

**Drake:**

taking a diligent view of every person  
they enclosed them about  
scratching and tearing their flesh from their faces  
as if striving to reveal  
the hidden likeness beneath the veil  
of mortal flesh  
to link the soul  
to its cage of bones  
for once and for all

but we used signs of disliking this  
and stayed their hands from force and  
directed them upwards to the living God

**Anglican Choir:**  
Deus!

**Drake:**  
whom only they ought to worship

**Anglican Choir:**  
Deus!

**Drake:**  
not the heavens or the stars

**Anglican Choir:**  
Deus!  
Deus!

**Drake:**  
but Heaven, the Star of Bethlehem

**Anglican Choir:**  
Stir us, O Lord,  
to dare more boldly  
to venture on wider seas  
where storms shall show they mastery

**Drake (monologue):**  
I called this country Nova Albion  
in respect of the white banks and cliffs  
which lie towards the sea  
and because it might have some affinity  
with our country  
which sometime was so called  
the native candor of those shores  
might else one day vanish from the earth  
yet live on here  
at the edge of the world  
beside this vast unpeaceful ocean

**Anglican Choir:**  
Stir us, O Lord,  
when losing sight of land,  
we shall find the stars.

**Drake (monologue):**  
at our departure hence  
I set up a monument of our being there  
namely a plate nailed upon a fair great post  
with her Highness' picture and arms  
"and a piece of six pence  
a pocket full of rye  
four-and-twenty Indians  
baked in a pie"

**Smith:**

It should be borne in mind  
that the sailor who cut the plate  
was not necessarily literate  
and may simply have...

**Anglican Choir:**

In the Name of Him  
who pushed back the horizons of our hopes  
and invited the brave to follow,  
even the name of Christ Jesus,  
our Lord.”

**Newbolt, verse 3:**

Drake: he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),  
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe,  
“Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,  
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;  
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,  
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed  
them long ago.”

**THE PLATE SUNG BY ALL:**

BEE IT KNOWNE VNTO ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS IVNE 17 1579  
BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND IN THE NAME OF HERR MAIESTY QVEEN ELIZABETH OF ENGLAND  
AND HERR SUCCESSORS FOREVER I TAKE POSSESSION OF THIS KINGDOME WHOSE KING AND  
PEOPLE FREELY RESIGNE THEIR RIGHT AND TITLE IN THE WHOLE LAND VNTO HERR MAIESTIES  
KEEPEING NOW NAMED BY ME AN TO BEE KNOWNE VNTO ALL MEN AS NOVA ALBION

FRANCIS DRAKE

(curtain)