

Bus (and More)

by [Rupert Rushbrooke](#) (April 2025)



'Tudor Cars' and the Rail Bridge at the Foot of the Station Approach, Bromley (Stephen Chaplin, 1994)

Bus

The good thing about South East London bus drivers is you don't want to stop at a red light, and what you find is

they don't either. People don't talk much on buses, and that's good as well. They just want to get home.

Next bus, there was a hold-up as we boarded. Something seemed to have happened. An argument starting?

People were looking at me, though I'd only just got on. Only two people, I saw, but by then I'd pushed through.

A very old man, grey-white hair, elongated hand reaching out to shake mine. A blessing offered.

And a woman in her thirties, quite sane, happy to be with him. Well, I'd gone before I'd sized it up.

I didn't want to waste my time with mad people. A bloke in a T-shirt got on, was offered the blessing also.

Politely, he refused. He sat across the aisle. I said, "You don't want a blessing, then?" "Not today",

he smiled. "Nor me", I said, "but I'm not sure why". He didn't reply. I wouldn't have either, I don't suppose.

The old man offered his blessing to some kids. They shook his hand, embarrassed a bit, but still.

I envied them, could see, now, the love he felt. I wondered how near to death he was, how he could be so happy,

at his or any age. I understood why the woman liked to be with him. She didn't mind him blessing strangers,

if they let him. I nearly shook his hand before I left, but would have felt a fool. Afterwards, I wondered if

he was Christ. I dare say not, but dare not say his soul wasn't half in heaven, only half in this world still.

Bloodlines

While the world sleeps, the future comes.
The apprentice has taken the gardener's place.
I am a drummer, beating a distant drum.

This woman by the fire with her infant son
Sees no recognition in his face.
While the world sleeps, the future comes.

From their earliest breath each child is undone,
Cut off from the families they cannot trace.
I am a drummer, beating a distant drum.

At midnight the dreams of every one
Are of parents asleep in each other's embrace.
While the world sleeps, the future comes.

Old women whose lives are almost run
Play Happy Families as their last disgrace.
I am a drummer, beating a distant drum.

The apprentice is at work in the winter sun,
Severing the roots of the human race.
While the world sleeps, the future comes.
I am a drummer, beating a distant drum.

A Postmodernist takes off his Socks

Within this interior landscape is a deference to the norms
That are required for visible phenomenal forms,
Expressed by this concrete, cousined artefact
That mimics the first effulgent cosmic act.

At this many veined, limnetic exhalation of the day,
Affected by the penumbra, or just affected anyway,
I feel like a republic with promontories everywhere,
With uncertainties arising at the coastline of my chair.

And within this epidermis in which I possibly exist
I extend my lukewarm hand (in close proximity to my wrist),
With which I also log every tedious thing I feel
(Ensuring that my emotions sound abnormal and unreal),

And remove these enclosures, freeing (I think) those shores,
As the benevolent removal of grammar from the poor
Would free them from the fascism of the structured word
And the elitist implications of being clearly heard.

Suffused with the ecstasy of my political stance,
I jump out of my trousers and my underpants
And commentate, 'as Marx did to the Arbeiterschaft,
As I do, with what I call my "writer's craft",

To dislocate the tyranny of undisputed sense,
To avoid all forms of music, to be weirdly intense,
Miasma portmanteau inert loosestrife',
(Despite a glance of utter fucking boredom from my wife)

'I reach out, careless of the density of night,
To interrupt now the portage of light',
And contemplate the genius that even I cannot explain,
Sourced in the Prosperian synapses of my brain.

Eating Out

To start with, nothing fancy. Vegetable soup
Perhaps, or a slice of Ted Hughes and toast.
Then the main course, which might be

Roast beef, or David Jones, or just some
Larkin glum as usual on a train. Just so long
As there's gravy and not too many vegetables.

Occasionally something from abroad – exotic
Like Akhmatova, or over-rich like Baudelaire.
Either way, I like the menu to be in English.

I'm not sure about vegetarian food. I admit
I had an excellent Stevie Smith salad once
At a place in Hammersmith – with a sausage

It would have been perfect. Afterwards,
Anything colourful and meringuey (perhaps
A few of Edward Lear's little fancy-cakes)

Or a thin, plain chocolate epigram by Goethe.
I prefer white wine, or a love poem by Graves.
I've never drunk much Keats. I hate the way

People quote him and then spit him out.
Every so often I like a few pints of Kipling
With friends of a like mind, and some grass

Or a tab of Wallace Stevens. On getting home
I guard against a brainstorm with an aspirin
Dissolved with critics' talent in a glass.

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Rupert Rushbrooke is an English poet. He lives in the south of England and is currently completing an unfashionably literary novel called "Milo Plays the Blues," about a young man who wants to be a professional blues pianist. He has previously had poems in *New English Review* (2020), and also in *Encounter*, *The Listener*, *The Bridport Anthology* and *The Dark Horse*.

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