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# Drawing on the Bus

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January 1, 1982.  
*New Year*

Bright sun, 10 A.M. The F bus up Solano; one other rider (shotgun) Chicano (?) with large tattoo. Few stops. "I'm goin' up to get me some records."

Impetus, impulse. Begin again.

At one point some years ago, my car needing a new engine and the mechanic, though good, being also very slow, I found myself a pedestrian, on the street, at the mercy of public transit. I had to ride the bus.

Having grown up in California, where driving is close to an involuntary reflex, my first reaction was dismay and frustration. What an inconvenience! However, what had seemed a burden

soon proved a delight. Let me explain.

The doors swing open, you lift your foot high to catch the first step, a muscular gesture, one which takes a certain energy. You enter the chamber.

Initial confusion; the correct change; is there a seat? The machine lurches off.

After a few rides, one gets the hang of this, develops a certain panache. Experienced riders flash transit passes, swing into their seats. Only the novice fumbles, or the occasional exhibitionist who plants himself firmly at the driver's side and calls out down the aisle, "Anyone have change?"

Women with small children are a special case, for they have to deposit the youngsters first, an acceptable indiscretion, then return to pay the fare. Older riders mount slowly, their backs bent, one hand always on the railing. If they're lucky, younger ones move over to make room up front.

Asian women with strong voices, language unknown, chat across the aisle. A band of elderly Russian emigrés off to church on Sunday morning, sitting as a foursome, on two seats, looking at each other, speak in voices low. A high school student, full makeup, fashion review. And once behind me, two women speaking in

animated tones, strained, intelligent: "Those doctors don't know anything. They just give us drugs." Veterans of Napa, the state mental hospital.

Three young black men, claiming the back seat, sweatshirts with hoods up and caps on top, slouched, stretching out their legs. The drivers vary, too. Some are talkers, with their favorite routes. "Yeah, the Union Pacific stopped me for a while, but we'll make it up by Ashby and Adeline." They have their effects: a jacket, carefully draped over the back of a seat, a particular leather bag. Their gray serge trousers seem to be made in one size only, loose or pulling tight over the thighs. Blacks and Chicanos, people without cars, off to work, going home, some of them just riding.

I have my place in all this, second row behind the driver, a bit of privacy and yet a clear view of the front. Paper ready, I learn to gauge the length of a ride: how one person sits leaning forward a little, slightly tense, watching the street for familiar signs, ready to get off—don't draw! Or another, turned inward, more contained, set for a long haul. Aha!

Each route has its particular character; a kind of litmus test of the city, of people's lives. Take the 72 bus, for example. Running the length of San Pablo Avenue, the

original wagon road and later a streetcar line, from downtown Oakland up through Emeryville, Berkeley, Albany, and on to the outer reaches of Richmond, the blocks unroll like geology, core sample layers both subtle and clear. In Albany, a foreign couple, young, sitting close together, bound for the WWII-vintage married students' housing; in North Oakland a man with a heavily bandaged foot and worn hands; a group of boys, on excursion, wild, retarded, accompanied by a pair of middle-aged women, placid but firm.

El Greco drew madmen, the inmates of asylums; Goya, too. For Degas it was the café, the racetrack, the dance. Delacroix journeyed to North Africa, while Toulouse-Lautrec revelled in the denizens of Montmartre. John Sloan and Raphael Soyer brought us the streets of New York, and Walker Evans rode the subway, his camera hidden.

For me it's the bus. People reading, reflecting, gazing out the windows or at each other, sitting without looking at all—distracted, perhaps, or lulled by the ride. These are moments in between events, gaps in the give and take of everyday life. Joyce's epiphany, instants of freedom. Here we are riders together, as if independent of time, yet immersed in history, and in our own stories.

1 July 87  
FBms - Pm.



10. IX. 85



1. VII. 85



6 May 1979

To Oscar. To assist  
a history of composition  
in painting. I know  
the concept. Deanna  
Gryd is here.  
Yakima - little  
from Brown seminar.  
I should have  
discussed this...



23. VII. 85  
22. 8. 85



10.11.86  
P.O. - PABLO  
ISAC en 3ème meuble  
à la table de la...



7.08.86



3. may 89  
72 km.



3. mai 86



28.VIII.96  
72 Bm



