

# PEOPLE OF THE MEGABUS



Photograph: “Bench” by Alisa Golden (neverbook.com). “People of the Megabus” was written by Justin Barisich (littlewritingman.com) for *Rattle’s* Ekphrastic Challenge, June 2015, and selected by Golden as the Artist’s Choice winner.

by Justin Barisich

The plump, elderly woman beside me  
sleeps with chin to her distended chest.  
She rouses from a road bump,  
spots me reading a book of poems,  
and assumes me to be educated.

She asks me to help her spell “shepherd”  
for the bible verse she's looking up on her smartphone.  
After three tries, we finally get it right,  
and with the fine letters of the good word  
arranged properly once again,  
she's back to letting herself  
be herded by the good lord.

We make a brief stop  
to exchange westward passengers.  
A man squatting on the bench  
flicks his half-smoked cigarette at me,  
the orange butt kicking my shoe  
instead of searing my aimed-for shin.

I refrain from questioning,  
having learned from hands both first and second  
of the baggage we all carry—  
that his might be loaded  
with something I don't know how to unpack.

The bus rarely undergoes a shortage of characters,  
but if it can take almost any with reservation  
and all without judgment,  
then who am I to do any different.

