



## Things I Like About America: Personal Narratives

*Poe Ballantine*

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### Things I Like About America: Personal Narratives Poe Ballantine

Begin with a modern day Jack Kerouac, add a dash of David Sedaris, a pinch of Barbara Ehrenreich and a bit of Scott Carrier, and you have the formula for a compelling collection of personal essays by Poe Ballantine. These true stories of odd jobs, eccentric characters, boarding houses, buses, and beer chronicle a nomad in search of a mythic America that exists only in his own mind. Ballantine takes us along as he rides the Greyhound bus from small town to small town as he struggles to exist on minimum wage while trying to find time to write. Written with piercing intimacy and self-effacing humor, Ballantine's stories provide entertainment, social commentary, and poignant slices of life.

*Description from inside jacket*

### Things I Like About America: Personal Narratives Details

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Author : Poe Ballantine

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## From Reader Review Things I Like About America: Personal Narratives for online ebook

### Geeta says

Things I like about this book:

1. It's well written. The writing is deceptively simple. No tricks, nothing fancy (except the list in the title story).
  2. It surprised me. Ballantine is a drifter, a drinker, and kind of a loser. At first I thought this would be a book for young men who want to be writers. And to some degree, there is something romantic about the life he leads. If I'd known people were comparing him to Charles Bukowski and Jack Kerouac, I would not have read the book. But Ballantine's acute and empathetic observations about other people and his lack of sentimentality won me over.
  3. Ballantine's resourcefulness. He works menial jobs, saves his money, quits and then moves to another town, where he finds another menial job. With his savings, he moves to Mexico for a few months and writes. Then the cycle starts again.
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### Rachel says

Poe Ballantine is a very good writer, and he does a great job of blending wordsmithery with grit, the strong reminder that the world is full of people who are just trying to make rent, often moving from town to town, traveling light, searching the want ads for work and a roof. His essays are very good.

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### Stephen Naish says

This is where I started with Poe Ballantine, and I keep coming back to this title. Its a stunning collection of essay's that tell a sweet story of life on the road, and in small town America.

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### Praxedes says

I have been a fan of Poe Ballantine's prose since my first encounter with his work in The Sun magazine. His stories and essays are honest, witty, and educational. This particular collection is alright, but not his best work. It is an entertaining read for sure, but I suspect some of his more recent work is better.

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### Daniel Polansky says

For a long time I held as my life's ambition to be lost, to look at unfamiliar scenery and strange people, a

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very tiny thing carried onward by the wind, counting each mile and footstep. It's not at all a rare preoccupation, and Poe Ballantine, and the fellow who gave me this Poe Ballantine book, are likewise devotees of this smiling, silent god. These are a collection of shorts about being on busses and working shitty jobs so that you have the money to get on other busses. They are well enough written but mostly I can't say I found myself stopping in awe at the prose. Ballantine's hook is that he is/was a real no shit legitimate vagabond, not a put on, and I respect that even if I can't do it anymore. Anyway, I liked this fine. Will I Keep It: Yeah, but only because it a friend's favorite book.

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### **Katrina says**

Picked this up on a whim and so glad I did, really enjoyed this book. Ballantine writes well without relying on any bells and whistles within his prose; the text is very simple, powerfully so, and the stories will stay with you for a long time afterward.

Most certainly going to look out his other works now.

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### **Aaron Ritchey says**

I first read many of these essays in The Sun Magazine and years later, were still haunted by their desperation and deep feeling. I was so glad to revisit them in a collection by my favorite literary author. Poe Ballantine writes with his head and hands on fire and he's never better than when he is chronicling his journey across America. I would highly recommend this to everyone.

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### **Meagan says**

I hate to break it to you, but the great Beat writer on-the-road adventure may be just as full of numbing mindless cycles as your fine upstanding 9-to-5. Don't worry, kids - Uncle Poe will let you down easy. You know all those book reviews that say "hilarious and heartbreaking"? This book actually is both hilarious and heartbreaking. The title essay will tear your heart out and stomp that sucker flat and then you will probably move to Mexico. And why not? This book actually made me laugh out loud on the bus. And then I almost cried.

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### **M.R. Dowsing says**

This is brilliant. Poe Ballantine spent many years of his life travelling around America from one shithole town and dead end job to another whilst struggling to become a writer. This book is basically a series of non-fiction short stories about his experiences. It's funny, moving, brutally honest and very perceptive. He's also a blackbelt with a simile. It's similar to Bukowski but, dare one say it - better! Despite the title, the book seems more like a portrait of everything that's wrong with America, although it's not without hope. I think I've found my new favourite author, and I will definitely be reading all of his other books very soon.

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## Michael Werner says

Grade A.

Dear Poe Ballantine:

I have a man-crush on you, dude! I could read what you write all day and all night long. You write like you've been there -- oh wait, you have. How you do what you do -- dead-end jobs, no-name places, oddball friends -- I don't know, but I relish how you write about your experiences. You're funny, sad, poignant, and weird all rolled into one and I've just ordered two more of your books.

Keep going, sir... you're a national/international treasure!

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## Emily Macrander says

This book is probably one of the best pieces of writing I've come across lately. His writing made me feel good about reading. It's like food for the soul. I'm really thinking I want to read more of his works.

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## Alex says

I have little to say about Poe Ballantine except that he's brilliant. He's got the heart of a beat, but avoids their unreadable pretension. He can turn a phrase that is aching or hilarious, but it will always come out beautiful.

The title of this book is misleading. True, most of it takes place in America, as Poe bounces from one one-horse-town to the next, but even in the vignette the book is named for, there is but a superficial list at best. It's more about the crushing nature of what America has become, the sameness of Everycity, USA, and yet as beat down as his lifestyle keeps him, there's still something grand about his nomadic life... of course, that could be in part due to knowing that could never be me... I could never be so diligent, so dedicated, so free. Still, for anyone realistic, I can't recommend this author enough.

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## Laura says

This collection of essays held some real truths for me. I really liked the one where he travels around the country trying to find a place that feels like "home" - I admire his willingness to look, even if he never finds it. He is obviously depressed a lot of the time, and in the depths of his despair I wish I knew him so I could invite him over for a nice dinner and show him it's not all bad news and assholes. Overall a worthwhile read.

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## Terry says

I actually fell in love with Poe Ballantine based on his 'contributor's note' in one of the anthologies in which he appeared (I think it was Best American Essays of...some year). Love him! (I also ordered this from a small press in Oregon, Hawthorn Press. Excellent customer service and price.) Eagerly waiting to see if I get

'501 Minutes to Christ' for Christmas.

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## **John Spiri says**

Poe Ballantine is a professional wanderer, adrift in middle America (but sometimes wanders down to Mexico), writing brilliantly about the people he meets, finding yet another cheap apartment or hotel room, traveling on Greyhound bus rides, small town life, and shitty jobs. His observations can quickly swing from extremely funny to poignant. Most of all you get a sense of his honesty as a writer, often sharply self-critical (at times when characters seem bizarre to the extreme I wonder, 'Is he making this stuff up?' but it doesn't really matter). Altho not intended to be about anything at all, mostly his books are about alienation, and in particular the alienation of life in middle America (the book's title is irony). I strongly recommend this book of essays.

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