



I'm a Stranger Here Myself: Notes on Returning to America After 20 Years Away

By Bill Bryson

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A CLASSIC FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *ONE SUMMER*

After living in Britain for two decades, Bill Bryson recently moved back to the United States with his English wife and four children (he had read somewhere that nearly 3 million Americans believed they had been abducted by aliens—as he later put it, "it was clear my people needed me"). They were greeted by a new and improved America that boasts microwave pancakes, twenty-four-hour dental-floss hotlines, and the staunch conviction that ice is not a luxury item.

Delivering the brilliant comic musings that are a Bryson hallmark, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* recounts his sometimes disconcerting reunion with the land of his birth. The result is a book filled with hysterical scenes of one man's attempt to reacquaint himself with his own country, but it is also an extended if at times bemused love letter to the homeland he has returned to after twenty years away.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In the world of contemporary travel writing, Bill Bryson, the bestselling author of *A Walk in the Woods*, often emerges as a major contender for King of Crankiness. Granted, he complains well and humorously, but between every line of his travel books you can almost hear the tinny echo: "I wanna go home, I miss my wife."

Happily, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* unleashes a new Bryson, more contemplative and less likely to toss daggers. After two decades in England, he's relocated to Hanover, New Hampshire. In this collection (drawn from dispatches for London's *Night & Day* magazine), he's writing from home, in close proximity to wife and family. We find a happy marriage between humor and reflection as he assesses life both in New England and in the contemporary United States. With the telescopic perspective of one who's stepped out of the American mainstream and come back after 20 years, Bryson aptly holds the mirror up to U.S. culture, capturing its absurdities--such as hotlines for dental floss, the cult of the lawsuit, and strange American injuries such as those sustained from pillows and beds. "In the time it takes you to read this," he writes, "four of my fellow citizens will somehow manage to be wounded by their bedding."

The book also reflects the sweet side of small-town USA, with columns about post-office parties, dining at diners, and Thanksgiving--when the only goal is to "get your stomach into the approximate shape of a beach ball" and be grateful. And grateful we are that the previously peripatetic Bryson has returned to the U.S., turning his eye to this land--while living at home and near his wife. Under her benevolent influence, he entertains through thoughtful insights, not sarcastic stabs. --*Melissa Rossi*

From Publishers Weekly

Ex-expatriate Bryson, who chronicled one effort at American reentry in his bestselling *A Walk in the Woods*, collects another: the whimsical columns on America he wrote weekly, while living in New Hampshire in the mid-to-late 1990s, for a British Sunday newspaper. Although he happily describes himself as dazzled by American ease, friendliness and abundance, Bryson has no trouble finding comic targets, among them fast food, computer efficiency and, ironically, American friendliness and putative convenience. As he edges into Dave Barry-style hyperbole, Bryson sometimes strains for yuks, but he's deft when he compares the two cultures, as in their different treatment of Christmas, pointing out how the British "pack all their festive excesses" into that single holiday. Bryson also nudges into domestic territory with regular references to his own British wife, the resolutely sensible Mrs. B. In a few columns, Bryson adopts a sentimental tone, writing about his family and his new hometown of Hanover. In others, he's more sober, criticizing anti-immigration activists, environmental depredation and drug laws (though he draws out the humor in these as well). Not all the columns hit their mark, and they are best read in small groupings, but this collection should sell well enough, although not likely to the heights of *A Walk in the Woods*. Agent, Jed Mattes. Author tour; BDD audio.

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From Library Journal

Getting reacquainted with America.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Randy Scott:

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