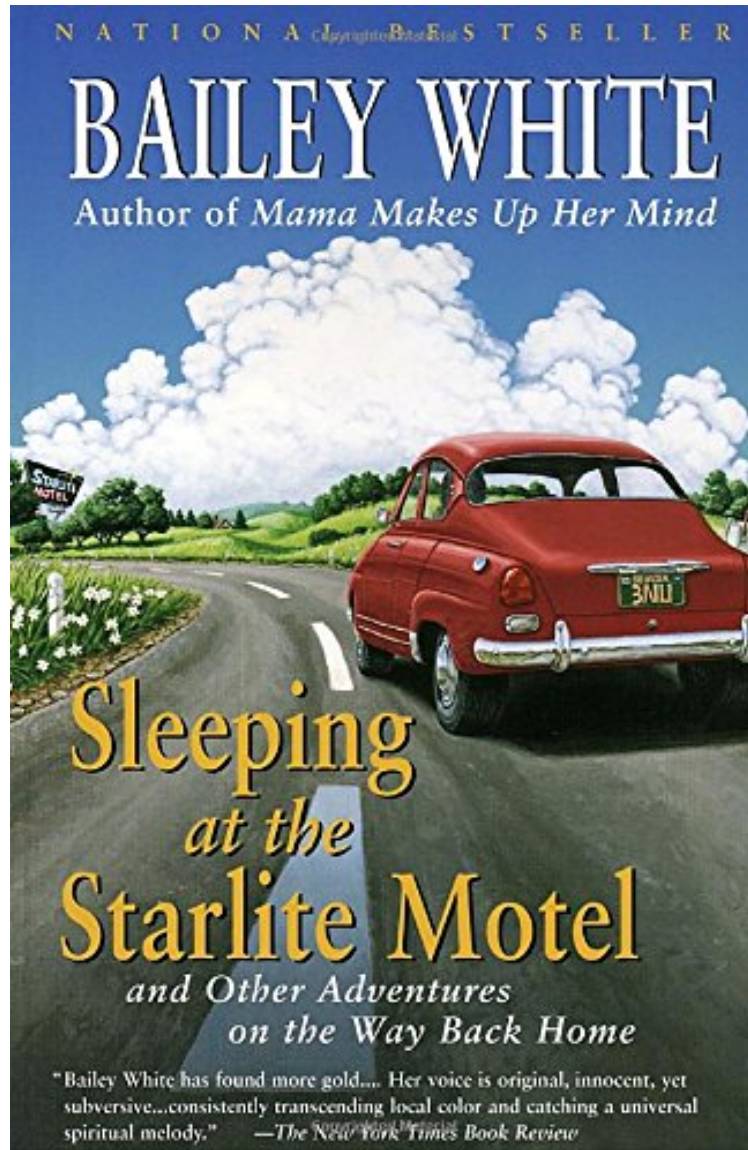


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## **Sleeping at the Starlite Motel: and Other Adventures on the Way Back Home**

*Bailey White*

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**Bailey White : *Sleeping at the Starlite Motel: and Other Adventures on the Way Back Home*** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Sleeping at the Starlite Motel: and Other Adventures on the Way Back Home*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not one of White's brightest By Pseudonym White's talent is still

there, but her magic is mostly gone. In *Mama Makes Up Her Mind* (1994), White wrote mostly of hope and life. In *Sleeping at the Starlite Motel* (1995), she writes mostly of lost hope and death. The difference is as depressing as it is disappointing. The descriptions are still magnificent. The characters are still eccentric, even, at times, grotesque. The sympathy in which White once drew her portraits of her family, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances has been replaced, in *Starlite*, with a more distant and impersonal attitude, which, I fear, she mistakes for irony, if not honesty. "Ashes" is about death, as are, each in its own way, "Red The Rat Man," "The Language of Flowers," "Forbidden Things," "Saltville," "Fish Camp," "A Matter of Time," and others. Several that are not about death and dying are, instead, about debility, disease, or other types of decline: "A Hot Night in '31," "Blood and Water," "Mr. Bonzonio," "Rocks," "Folk Art." Others of White's stories have no apparent meaning; sadly empty, they seem to be told simply for the sake of the telling: "Native Air," "Something Old, Something New," "Large and Deep," "The Wedding Guest." White is within her rights, of course, to take any view of her subjects she pleases, but, after the good-natured, poignant vignettes of *Mama*, her darker, stranger view of the sideshow of human oddities she presents in *Starlite* make them a curious and puzzling assortment of tales, indeed. What made White turn from depicting hope and life to portraying decline and death? Her mother died the year that *Mama* appeared in print; a year later, *Starlite* was published. Coincidence? Three years later, her only novel *Quite a Year for Plums*, debuted, and, the year following its release, White quit teaching to focus on a writing career. It wasn't for another decade, however, that her last book, *Nothing with Strings*, went on sale. Perhaps White owed more to her mother (and her muse), Rosalie, than White herself may have realized. In any case, those who know of White because of her wry, often touching *Mama* will hardly recognize her in *Starlite*.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not memorable. By Connie White Bailey White certainly has a way with words. The turn of a phrase was mind-catching. Unfortunately, for me, when the book was finished, there was little that remembered itself to me. As interesting as the stories were, I would not read it a second time.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I thought Bailey White was an older lady but was pleasantly surprised to find that she is younger than me and quite nice looking. By J. Green Bailey White's humor and style might not play well outside the South, but who cares? Her references to things only a Southerner could understand make me nod my head and smile. She has an oddly wicked sense of humor and much of the funniest stuff is what goes unsaid. For years, I thought Bailey White was an older lady but was pleasantly surprised to find that she is younger than me and quite nice looking at that. If you like stories that are funny but touching at the same time, then by all means get yourself some Bailey White.

Anyone who has read her bestseller *Mama Makes Up Her Mind*--or who has heard her on National Public Radio--knows that Bailey White is one of the keenest observers of Southern eccentricity since Mark Twain. *Sleeping at the Starlite Motel* revives White's reputation as a master storyteller, Southern division, as it catalogs the oddities of the Georgia town she knows so well.

From Publishers Weekly NPR commentator and first-grade teacher White (*Mama Makes Up Her Mind*) here explores the many quirks of the human psyche and the richness and variety of American landscapes. A series of sketches, originals and reprints from *Smithsonian* and other magazines, recounts her experiences in Virginia, Vermont, Los Angeles and elsewhere but mostly focuses on people and places in and around her native Thomasville, Georgia. There the lives and personalities of local "characters" reflect the intersection of tradition and change in the small-town South. From the 1931 Rose Queen, who still feels that her title gives her the prerogative to pick flowers out of municipal rose beds, to the upstanding Baptist schoolteacher who drags White with her when playing hooky from her computer training course to attend dog races, to the rural folk artist whose hauntingly lovely statues sit in White's yard, White brings to life a host of often odd but always engaging personalities. Her vignettes illuminate the complexities of human relationships and the immense satisfaction that can be derived from an appreciation of nature. Author tour. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* In the South, someone is called an "embroiderer" if they tend to tell true stories with more than a little poetic license. In White's earlier collection (*Bailey White: An Interesting Life*, Audio s, LJ 2/15/93) it was hard to tell where the truth left off and the embroidery began. Some of the stories in *Sleeping at the Starlite Motel*, however, have visible if lovely stitches. Still, White's Austenesque observations remain clear-eyed and dead on the mark. As before, her everyday characters are extraordinarily memorable. There's Nockerd Sockett, whose cheerful triumph over earlier tragedies crumbles under the weight of false accusation. There's the fruit-tree man, Red the rat man, and Great-Great Aunt Rose and her exquisite shroud. This gem of a collection, ably read by the author, is sure to have wide appeal and should absolutely be in every library collection. Reilly Reagan, Putnam Cty. Lib., Cookeville, Tenn. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* Those who made *Mama Makes Up Her Mind* (1993) a surprise best-seller will be happy to know that the alligator Aunt Belle trained to bellow for a treat returns in this book. Not many of the other real-life characters from *Mama* do, though, not even indomitable *Mama* herself. Maybe that's because White's sketches this time report excursions about town, region, nation, even the world: in the very first piece, she reveals that she regularly whisks over to Paris to visit a friend, then adds that her earliest memory is of seeing in a Pompeii museum (Pompeii, Italy) a

dog that was turned into charcoal by Vesuvius. The little lady's been around. But she refracts her experiences through the prism of her own bemused, wry, warmly human humor. She's rather a classical humorist: she vividly renders the peculiar temperament of each person she writes about--she gives the unique "feel" of a character in a particular situation rather than a rounded characterization--and sometimes the effect of her humor is other than funny. But always, like a good surrealist painting, a Bailey White sketch makes an indelible impression, and usually it is funny to boot. Montezuma Re{,}vanche