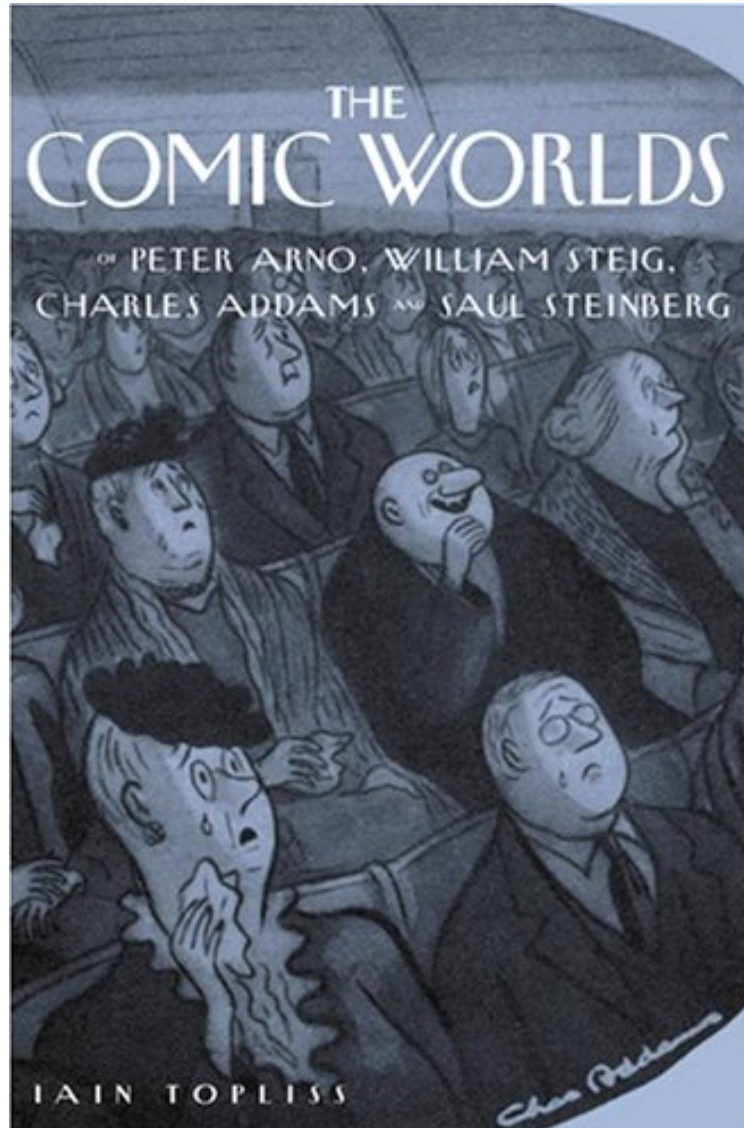


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The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg

Iain Topliss

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Iain Topliss : The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg:

8 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Ups and DownsBy Kevin KillianSomehow I always wind up first

whenever I get a book that I'm sure dozens of other reviewers would be all over, like white on rice! This book, a serious and academic study of four New Yorker cartoonists, I would have thought would be a natural. Maybe people got turned off by the cover, a particularly grisly Charles Addams sketch in a drab, battleship gray color. And yet, the sketch itself, a crowded movie theater packed with weeping, intensely uncomfortable viewers, in the middle of which you see one of Addams' trademark characters watching whatever is happening on the screen (a death?) and chuckling happily--yes, the sketch itself encapsulates some of Topliss' thoughts about the position of spectatorship vis-a-vis the New Yorker artists he covers. We see ourselves in Uncle Fester's grin, for we feel we too are different than the rest of the crowd, and that we have a privileged and superior position to what is being displayed on the screen. How these four artists managed to animate their own, very different sense of the "unique," is Topliss' subject. He won't make you want to read much more about Peter Arno, the aristocratic playboy for whom comics were decidedly slumming. Of William Steig, Topliss shows us how first Karen Horney and then Wilhelm Reich animated his thinking about creativity and the act of drawing. His was a fascinating life, but again, I'm not so sure he was so utterly a genius at his art. Addams and Steinberg come off the best, although Topliss' "fame" angle on Steinberg made him sound a little like those celebrities who complain about the paparazzi even when they're courting press attention. Topliss sees US culture, New Yorker division, through the distant, cold eyes of an Australian. Sometimes the onlooker sees more of the game, and there's a sense in which one of our better academics might be the best candidate to write about the classic Australian cartoonists of the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. Turnabout is fair play, and in the writing game, objectivity is nearly everything. He has a rousing salute to Melbourne at the end of his introduction, in which he also explains why he seems to ignore the contributions of two other excellent cartoonists from the same period and venue, namely, Thurber and Hokinson. His salute to his hometown is worth the price of the book, though it's a little odd. Perhaps he could write another book about the "tall poppy syndrome" and why people in Melbourne are both proud of, and dismissive of, their celebrated comic muse, the one and only Kylie Minogue. 7 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Reads like a dry dissertation. By major music head. To take the insightful, culture-shaping cartoons of these four gentleman and produce an analysis as bloodless and boring as this must have taken Mr. Topliss many hours and drafts. I trudged through it because I spent the money to buy it, but I found the voice of the author so obvious and his opinions so strident that I actually grew angry at times. My recommendation is to skip this book and review your Arno, Steig, Addams and Steinberg cartoons instead. It's far more satisfying.

For many aficionados of the New Yorker magazine, the drawings of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg epitomize its sophisticated wit and disarming humor. In *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg*, the first full-scale scholarly study of the subject, Iain Topliss considers the work of each artist, traces the development of his art, and recalls the cultural and social context in which it was created. Topliss delves into the nature of humor and the elements that make successful cartoons funny, paying special attention to matters of style and technique. He draws particular attention to the ways in which these four artists mocked the status quo without alienating the magazine's readers. Indeed, argues Topliss, the New Yorker's cartoons helped define American consciousness in the mid-twentieth century. Illustrated with more than fifty drawings from the artists published in the magazine between 1925 and 1975, *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg* recognizes the achievements of these talented artists and their distinctive contribution to American culture.

Delight, mixed with criticism, is apparent throughout. (Nina C. Ayoub *Chronicle of Higher Education* 2005-01-00) A major study of a minor but vital mirror to our society. (Library Journal 2005-01-00) Very intelligent... A good collection of notable cartoons. (American Journalism 2005-01-00) Soundly argued, meticulously researched, gorgeously illustrated and utterly fun reading... writes with satisfying authority and pleurably crisp prose. 'Academic' this book may be, but don't let that stop you from letting Topliss guide you through every conceivable aspect of all these brilliantly twisted artists and their larger contexts. (New York *Newsday* 2005-01-00) Ambitious study of four of the New Yorker magazine's most notable cartoonists. (American Historical 2006-01-00) If you like the New Yorker magazine, you'll love this book. If you aren't yet an aficionado, you probably will be by the time you've dipped into a chapter or two. (International Journal of Comic Art 2006-01-00) Thorough, often brilliant, portraits of these artists. (Modernism/Modernity 2006-01-00) The author gives us a look at art central to the first fifty years of *The New Yorker*, art that might at first seem peripheral to American culture of the time, but feels absolutely central after reading this insightful and perceptive study. (Melus 2007-01-00) Superlative. (James Wolcott's Blog, *Vanity Fair* 2008-01-00) From the Back Cover For many readers of the New Yorker magazine, the drawings of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg epitomize its sophisticated wit and disarming humor. In *The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg*, Iain Topliss considers the work of each artist, traces its development, and recalls the cultural and social context in which it was created. About the Author Iain Topliss is Senior Lecturer in the English Program in the School of Communication, Arts, and Critical Inquiry at La Trobe University,

Melbourne, Australia.