



Disquiet, Please!: More Humor Writing from The New Yorker

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The *New Yorker* is, of course, a bastion of superb essays, influential investigative journalism, and insightful arts criticism. But for eighty years, it's also been a hoot. In fact, when Harold Ross founded the legendary magazine in 1925, he called it "a comic weekly," and while it has grown into much more, it has also remained true to its original mission. Now an uproarious sampling of its funny writings can be found in a hilarious new collection, one as satirical and witty, misanthropic and menacing, as the first, *Fierce Pajamas*. From the 1920s onward—but with a special focus on the latest generation—here are the humorists who set the pace and stirred the pot, pulled the leg and pinched the behind of America.

S. J. Perelman unearths the furious letters of a foreign correspondent in India to the laundry he insists on using in Paris ("Who charges six francs to wash a cummerbund?"). Woody Allen recalls the "Whore of Mensa," who excites her customers by reading Proust (or, if you want, two girls will explain Noam Chomsky). Steve Martin's pill bottle warns us of side effects ranging from hair that smells of burning tires to teeth receiving radio broadcasts. Andy Borowitz provides his version of theater-lobby notices ("In Act III, there is full frontal nudity, but not involving the actor you would like to see naked"). David Owen's rules for dating his ex-wife start out magnanimous and swiftly disintegrate into sarcasm, self-loathing, and rage, and Noah Baumbach unfolds a history of his last relationship in the form of Zagat reviews.

Meanwhile, off in a remote "village" in Normandy, David Sedaris is drowning a mouse ("This was for the best, whether the mouse realized it or not").

Plus asides, fancies, rebukes, and musings from Patty Marx, Calvin Trillin, Bruce McCall, Garrison Keillor, Veronica Geng, Ian Frazier, Roy Blount, Jr., and many others.

If laughter is the best medicine, *Disquiet, Please* is truly a wonder drug.

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Steve says

A mixed bag, with highlights from Steve Martin, Woody Allen, James Thurber and a hilarious review of STAR WARS: EPISODE III - REVENGE OF THE SITH. A few real yawners, though, like the thoughts of a film producer trying to make a movie of ULYSSES told in Joycean stream of consciousness.

Aparna Kapur says

I recommend buying the book so that you can keep it by your bed and read a few stories whenever you want a laugh. I borrowed it from my library, tried (in vain) to read it fast, started to view it as a nemesis that I had to best. That's probably why I enjoyed it less than I otherwise would have.

Heather says

I've just started this, but it is literally a laugh-out-loud compendium of the New Yorker's funniest short pieces. I would buy it for all of you if I could. Definitely get it immediately.

Elisha Condie says

Truthfully, I have read about 3/4 of this book, not the whole thing. Because it's an anthology of essays from the New Yorker magazine, you can kind of skip around.

There are some VERY funny laugh out loud pieces, the two I keep remembering and laughing about at odd times are "The Living Dead" by David Sedaris and a short one called "Ideas for Paintings" by Jack Handey - the "Deep Thoughts" guy from SNL.

Here is one of my favorite ideas for a painting, from Jack Handey:

"Stampede of Nudes"

The trouble with most paintings of nudes is that there isn't enough nudity. It's usually just one woman lying there, and you're looking around going, "Aren't there any more nudes?" This idea solves that.

What has frightened these nudes? Is it the lightning in the background? Or did one of the nudes just spook? You don't know, and this creates tension.

Originally I gave this 3 stars, but now I find myself thinking about the essays often or telling someone about them, and I realize that this was a 4-star book for me. I know this is a really gripping topic for whoever reads this. (Hi, Mom).

....aaaannd I just changed my mind. I keep telling people about this book and I re-reading it. It really is a 4-star

Jays says

Some very funny selections tempered by some very not funny selections.

Teresa Raetz says

It was...meh. It's writing from The New Yorker, so there wasn't a bad story there but there were some uninteresting ones I skipped. It was way too long, so the story selection should have been tighter and there was not one single "laugh out loud" moment in the entire 755 page book. Not one. There were many stories that were amusing or witty (David Sedaris is always worth reading) but there were too many that were self-consciously clever and precious. Again, there's some good writing in many of the pieces but no hilarity -- is that just too gauche for The New Yorker? -- and hilarity is kind of the point, for me at least.

Jocelyn says

He he ha ha. keep on laughing.

Malbadeen says

Some people read the New Yorker for it's commitment to quality journalism, smart reviews and noteworthy literature.

Some people open it, quickly scan it for any and all cartoons, move on to "Shouts and Murmurs" before checking out the movie reviews and calling it day.

Some people are so base as to use the New Yorker as an intellectual guise. Placing it conveniently on the top of their stacks of more smutty magazines (People, US, etc) as they board an airplane.

Let's just say that I fall somewhere in the middle with a more than slight leaning towards the cartoon seekers, which is why Sarah is such a great friend for recognizing (not judging, just recognizing) this and gifting it to me this Christmas.

yay, Sarah!

*Consider that your thank you card, Sarah.

Kim Olson says

This is the second anthology of humor writing from The New Yorker, and humor being subjective, this review should certainly be taken with a grain of salt. Some of the pieces were a bit too wacky for my taste and a few others rambled off-topic, but there are some delicious nuggets to be found.

I loved Paul Simms' "Four Short Crushes" and E.B. White's "How to Tell a Major Poet from a Minor Poet," and Peter de Vries' "Intruder in the Dusk" (in which he relays a child's antics, in Faulkner-esque prose) is definitely worth a read. My other top picks are Paul Rudnick's "My Living Will" (okay, that one is a bit wacky), Larry Doyle's "May We tell You Our Specials This Evening" (a rift on foodie pretension), and David Brooks' "Conscientious Consumption" (a must-have guide for the reluctant Yuppie).

T

Nette says

I've been having those middle-of-the-night panic attacks where you wake up sweaty and convinced you're dying of something, and can't go back to sleep. No better distraction than reading a short, hilarious New Yorker essay! I preferred the newer authors, especially Paul Rudnick and Ian Frazier, but it was fun to revisit Thurber and Parker. I've ordered a copy of the first collection to keep by my bedside. I guess when I finish that, I'll have to replace it with a pint of Popov.

Sanjay says

Dorothy Parker. Robert Benchley. James Thurber. E.B. White. Woody Allen. Steve Martin. George Saunders. And too many more to enumerate. An absolute treat.

Amber Hyun Jung Kim says

I am so happy I stumbled upon this book at a used bookstore. I so very am.

Rhlibrary says

I loved the first collection, *Fierce Pajamas*, in which I discovered humorist S.J. Perelman (whose pieces I obsessed over and photocopied and forced on people in college), and in this collection I discovered the brilliance of Simon Rich, Jack Handey, and Paul Rudnick while enjoying my old favorites Perelman, Woody Allen, George Saunders and David Sedaris. Don't miss this one, just for laughs.

David Kamioner says

great! you gotta read this you guys...

Jill Sansone says

A great prescription if you are finding daily news reports or other ills overwhelming. We all need laughter..... I still love the first piece by Thurber about what inspired a couple's (surprising) divorce.....
