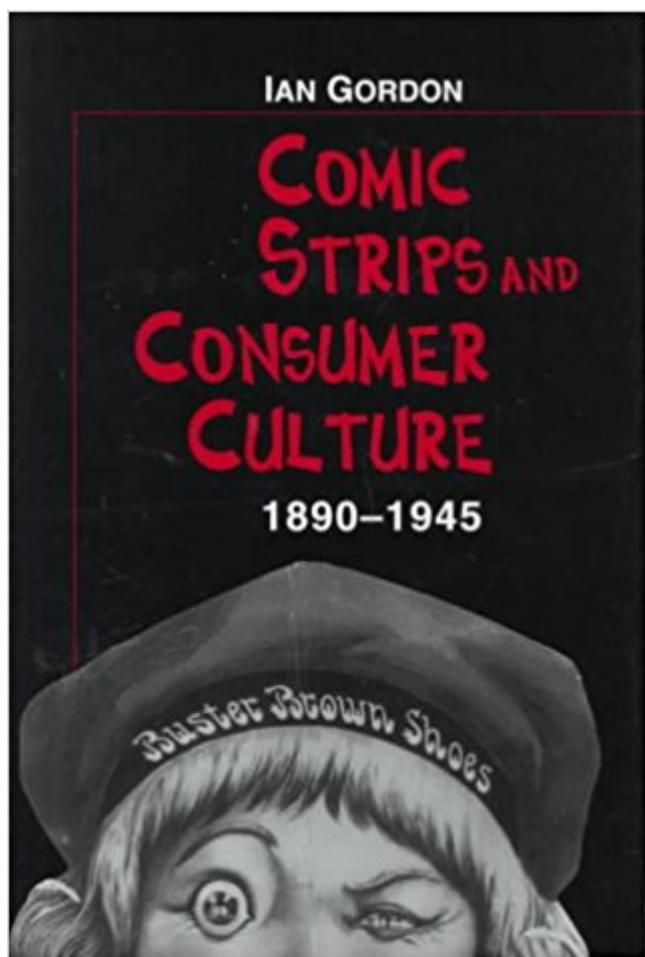


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Comic Strips And Consumer Culture, 1890-1945



Synopsis

Book by Ian Gordon

Book Information

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Australian academic Gordon covers 19th-century comic strips and humor magazines (such as Puck), WWII comic books, film adaptations, modern licensing and cyber strips to show the links between comics and consumer culture. In 1903, a Happy Hooligan strip was used to sell a cast-iron toy, but Buster Brown was the first strip licensed widely as a brand name (on shoes, dolls, watches, harmonicas, coffee, a touring musical show). Gordon looks at two strips that "envisioned consumer lifestyles." Through Frank King's Gasoline Alley, Gordon details the shifting depiction of a middle-class consumer family "from gags about male fixation on automobiles to more socially oriented humor about the ways and means to consume commodities." And in an analysis of Martin Branner's Winnie Winkle, Gordon shows how "lampoons of Winnie's attempts to break into a higher class counterpoised effete, richly commodified, middle-class lives with working-class lives." After 1930s Gallup surveys showed comic strips were read more than newspaper front pages, ads in strip format began appearing in Sunday comics. Gordon, however, takes only a limited look at the N.W. Ayer ad agency and ignores the important role of Johnstone & Cushing, the pivotal art studio that employed Dik Browne (Hi and Lois) and other major talents to create trademark characters (e.g., Chiquita Banana), custom comic books and Sunday section "story continuities" (illustrating everything from flashlight batteries to breakfast cereals). Although technically Gordon's cutoff date is

1945, there is a superficial skim of subsequent years that is more frustrating than helpful. 57 illustrations. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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