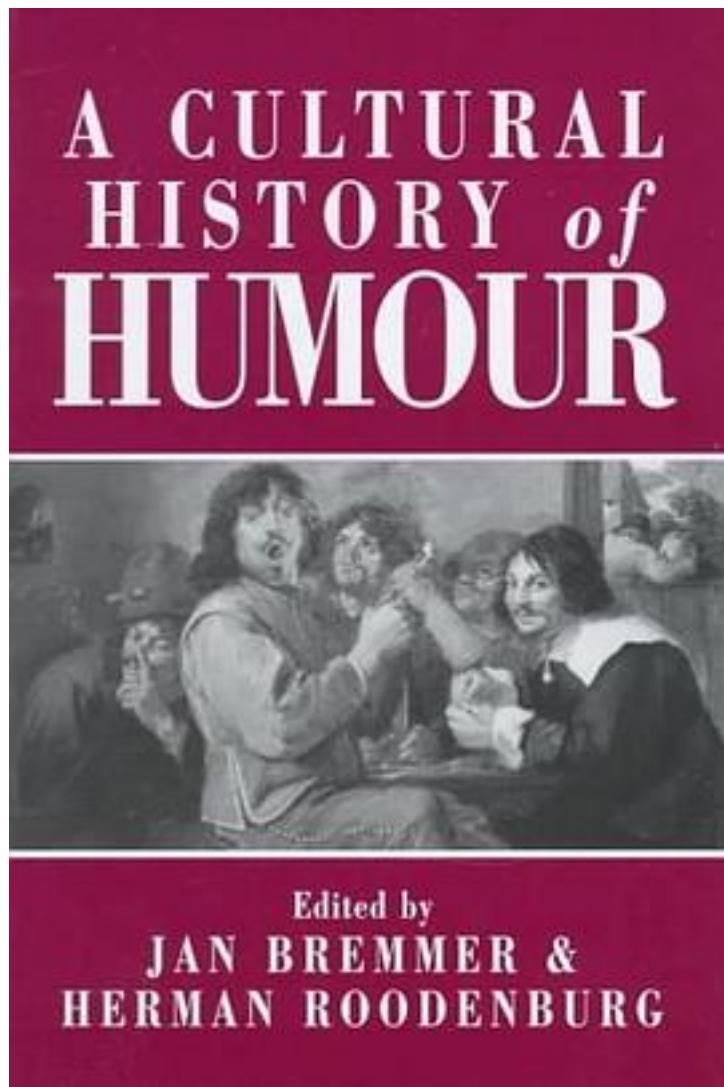


A Cultural History of Humour



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著者:

出版者:

出版时间:1997-7

装帧:

isbn:9780745615356

Humour is without doubt a vital element of the human condition but it has rarely been the subject of serious historical research. Yet a closer look at jokes and other comic phenomena shows us that the nature of humour changes from one period to another, and that these changes can provide us with important insights into the social and cultural developments of the past. This important and highly original book sets out to explore the terra incognita of humour through the ages - from jokes and stage humour in Greece and Rome to the jestbooks of early modern Europe, from practical jokes in Renaissance Italy to comic painting during the Dutch Golden Age, from Bakhtin's conception of laughter to the joking relationships of anthropologists. These innovative accounts move humour into the centre of social and cultural history and throw an unexpected light on life and manners through the ages.

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