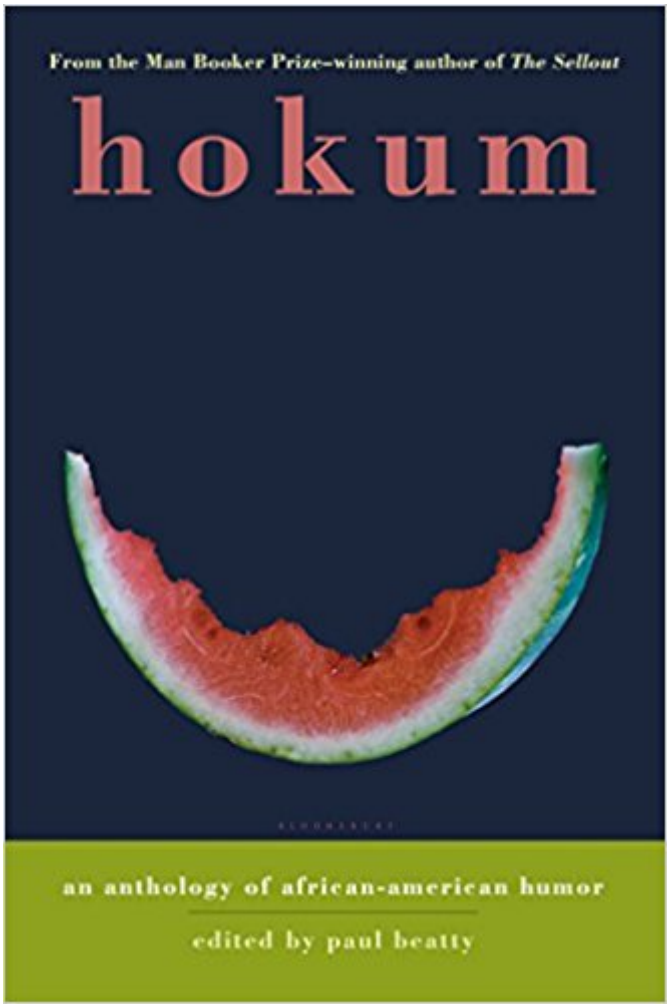
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Hokum: An Anthology Of African-American Humor



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Synopsis

Edited by the author of The Sellout, winner of the 2016 Man Booker Prize, Hokum is a liberating, eccentric, savagely comic anthology of the funniest writing by black Americans. This book is less a comprehensive collection than it is a mix-tape narrative dubbed by a trusted friendÃ¢â ¬â ¢a sampler of underground classics, rare grooves, and timeless summer jams, poetry and prose juxtaposed with the blues, hip-hop, political speeches, and the world's funniest radio sermon. The subtle musings of Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas, and Harryette Mullen are bracketed by the profane and often loud ruminations of Langston Hughes, Darius James, Wanda Coleman, Tish Benson, Steve Cannon, and Hattie Gossett. Some of the funniest writers don't write, so included are selections from well-known yet unpublished wits Lightnin' Hopkins, Mike Tyson, and the Reverend Al Sharpton. Selections also come from public figures and authors whose humor, although incisive and profound, is often overlooked: Malcolm X, Suzan-Lori Parks, Zora Neale Hurston, Sojourner Truth, and W.E.B. Dubois. Groundbreaking, fierce, and hilarious, this is a necessary anthology for any fan or student of American writing, with a huge range and a smart, political grasp of the uses of humor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Acclaimed novelist Beatty (Tuff; White Boy Shuffle) models this controversial anthology on a "mix-tape narrative dubbed by a trusted... friend." Like a mix-tape, the collection is intensely personal: its encompassing feature is the bright, plaintive, scathingly ironic voice that introduces the

volume and its various sections. Beatty, who "was the butt of the first joke [he'd] ever heard," mines two centuries of African-American culture for speeches, poems, fiction, comics and screenplays that mirror his own glass-cutting wit and satisfy, in places, his taste for "unintentional comedy." (To wit, "The Wit and Wisdom of Mike Tyson.") Apart from usual suspects like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, a Norton anthology this is not. Selections from Fran Ross and Prophet Omega dizzy readers in their logical funhouses. Hattie Gossett's "80s Version of the Dozens" leads them through sewer pipes of lyrical imagination. The volume's general tenor is wild, winking and explosive. As such, it picks up where Chappelle's Show left offÃ¢â ¬â •gouging the government, lampooning cultures black and white, leaving no sacred cow unslaughtered. Even the smiling watermelon on the book's front cover has been retained despite sniffs by national media outlets. "This is black humor," Beatty writes, "and I don't mean African-American black." Indeed, at timesÃ¢â ¬â •as when John Farris's schoolchildren blithely gun down pedestriansÃ¢â ¬â •you may need night-vision goggles to find the joke. (Jan.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Paul Beatty is author of four novels, Slumberland, Tuff, The White Boy Shuffle, and The Sellout, which won the 2016 Man Booker Prize. He has also written two books of poetry: Big Bank Take Little Bank and Joker, Joker, Deuce. He lives in New York City.

Paul Beatty is one of my favorite writers. The intro is hilarious & thoughtful. The short pieces in this book are also very funny. You will enjoy this.

My 80 year old mother loves it.

African-American, yes. Humorous, no. Only some of it purported to be humorous.

While this book is not his best work, it is definitely worth reading. Paul Beatty is one of the best writers I have ever read. I would NOT say he is one the most entertaining, just one of the best. There are some writers who write books that you can't put down and finish in one sitting because the story is so compelling and the writing just captures your imagination. Mr. Beatty's writing demands that you stop and think about what you are reading. It makes demands on the thinking person to...well, think I guess.Thanks for writing everything that you have written, sir. I look forward to each chance I have to read them.

451 pages, no laughs. Not one.

the anthology;s breadth is stunning, insofar as what counts as black, what counts as funny. in the forward Beatty says, if memory is true, that it’s like a mixtape--reading the bits compiled on the ’playlist’ give you a feeling of what informs Beatty’s writing. Another bonus is almost none of this stuff is canonical; this publication is a treasure--from negritude to you!

Just wondering. As a (typically?) paranoid Anglo-American, I may not "get" the secret messages in many of the selections that may or may not be there for an African-American reader, but I found most of the selections in this anthology hilarious. If it inspires anyone of any hyphenation to read complete works by Ishmael Reed or Chester Himes, it will have more than served its purpose.

Another 1-star review said "451 pages, no laughs. Not one."Well, there were a few, but so very few, it makes me wonder at the book’s title. "Humor?" What humor?Signed out of our public library after reading "The Sellout," a book I admired a lot, written by the same Paul Beatty, I am unable to see what he was attempting to give us with "Hokum." It certainly wasn’t to make us laugh.He does succeed in making me think American blacks are filled with self-hatred, and obsessed with skin color far more than us whites. Verbal cleverness seems to be highly prized. (The abominable rap comes to mind.) Morals seem not to be, nor much respect for the law. Not my opinion, but what any objective reader would conclude reading this book.Yes, I know: slavery, then Jim Crow.Was it the length of time these awful conditions existed that’s at the root of the problem? Because other people who came to America also had terrible suffering in their history -- arguably worse than slavery -- without becoming so broken. We look at that peculiar game, the dozens, where one’s mothers are obscenely insulted (mothers!), and wonder why this "game" doesn’t exist among any other group.OK, I’m rambling, going nowhere, and it doesn’t really matter if you’re considering buying the book, so let’s talk about that.A few pages were enjoyable, a few were brilliant (a poem by John Rodriguez especially).A few pages had the explicit descriptions of sex (Steve Cannon) that I used to hope to find as a teenager over 50 years ago, but that weren’t at all funny and were included in this book for reasons that escape me.A number of pages were included only, it seems, for their historical quality, not their humor. Al Sharpton and H. Rap Brown were political, not funny, and both individuals reprehensible in my eyes. Why give us the crudity, the stupidity of Brown but not the brilliance of Eldridge Cleaver, both in the same period of American history?Kyle Baker’s cartoons

were mostly about white characters. Was Baker included just because he is part black? Which is a ridiculous reason, of course, but then, why? Beatty is clearly no fool; what is he trying to tell us by including Baker?I think of the brilliant monologues Richard Pryor did on network TV in the 1970s. They made us feel the pain of thrown-away members of society, and yet they were also funny. In this book we get the pain, not the laughter. Pryor showed us how to have both.This book is subtitled "An Anthology of African-American Humor." If this is humor, pass me the poison. Almost none of this book is funny. Could that be Beatty's point? That the black experience in America is so tragic that very little humor can be found in it?

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