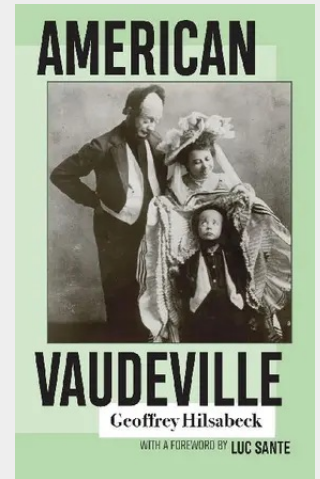


Geoffrey Hilsabeck is the author of the poetry collection *Riddles, Etc.* His poems and essays have appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Believer*, *Paris Review Daily*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He lives in Pittsburgh.

American Vaudeville

A dreamlike, evocative reckoning with a lost epoch in popular culture--and with old, weird America. At the heart of American Vaudeville is one strange, unsettling fact: for nearly fifty years, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, vaudeville was everywhere--then, suddenly, it was nowhere. This book tells the story of what was once the most popular form of entertainment in the country using lists, creation myths, thumbnail biographies, dreams, and obituaries. A lyric history--part social history, part song--American Vaudeville sits at the nexus between poetry, experimental nonfiction, and, because it includes historic images, art books. Geoffrey Hilsabeck's book grows out of extensive archival research. Rather than arranging that research--the remains of vaudeville--into a realistic picture or tidy narrative, Hilsabeck dreams vaudeville back into existence, drawing on photographs, letters, joke books, reviews, newspaper stories, anecdotes, and other material gathered from numerous archives, as well as from memoirs by vaudeville performers like Buster Keaton, Eva Tanguay, and Eddie Cantor. Some of this research is presented as-is, a letter from a now forgotten vaudeville performer to her booking agent, for example; some is worked up into brief scenes and biographies; and some is put to even more imaginative uses, finding new life in dialogues and prose poems. American Vaudeville pulls the past into the present and finds in the beauty and carnivalesque grotesqueness of vaudeville a fitting image of American life today.

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