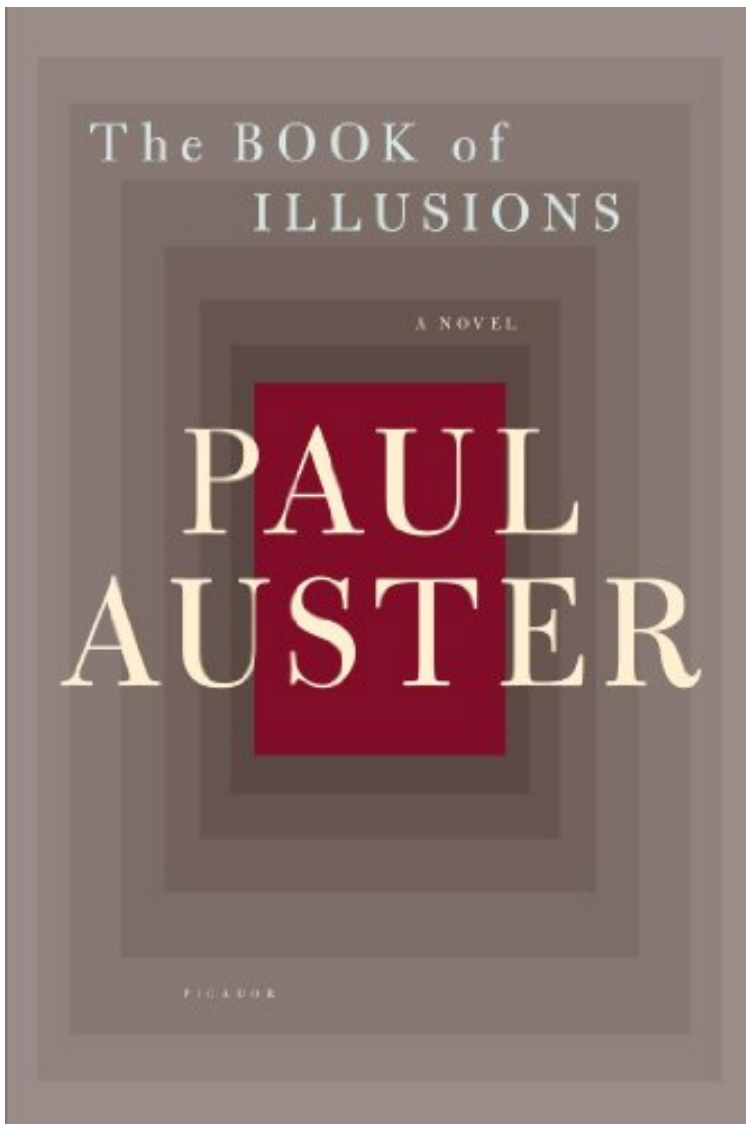


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The Book of Illusions: A Novel



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Description : Description du produitSix months after losing his wife and two young sons in an airplane crash, Vermont professor David Zimmer spends his waking hours mired in a blur of alcoholic grief and self-pity. Then, watching television one night, he stumbles upon a clip from a lost silent film by comedian Hector Mann. Zimmers interest is piqued, and he soon finds himself embarking on a journey around the world to research a book on this mysterious figure, who vanished from sight in 1929 and has been presumed dead for sixty years. When the book is published the following year, a letter turns up in Zimmers mailbox bearing a return address from a small town in New Mexicosupposedly written by Hectors wife. Hector has read your book and would like to meet you. Are you interested in paying us a visit? Is the letter a hoax, or is Hector Mann still alive? Torn between doubt and belief, Zimmer hesitates, until one night a strange woman appears on his doorstep and makes the decision for him, changing his life forever.This stunning novel plunges the reader into a universe in which the comic and the tragic, the real and the imagined, the violent and the tender

dissolve into one another. With *The Book of Illusions*, one of America's most powerful and original writers has written his richest, most emotionally charged work yet.

Prsentation de l'diteurA man's obsession with a silent-film star sends him on a journey into a shadow world of lies, illusions, and unexpected love Six months after losing his wife and two young sons in an airplane crash, Vermont professor David Zimmer spends his waking hours mired in a blur of alcoholic grief and self-pity. Then, watching television one night, he stumbles upon a clip from a lost silent film by comedian Hector Mann. Zimmer's interest is piqued, and he soon finds himself embarking on a journey around the world to research a book on this mysterious figure, who vanished from sight in 1929 and has been presumed dead for sixty years. When the book is published the following year, a letter turns up in Zimmer's mailbox bearing a return address from a small town in New Mexico--supposedly written by Hector's wife. "Hector has read your book and would like to meet you. Are you interested in paying us a visit?" Is the letter a hoax, or is Hector Mann still alive? Torn between doubt and belief, Zimmer hesitates, until one night a strange woman appears on his doorstep and makes the decision for him, changing his life forever. This stunning novel plunges the reader into a universe in which the comic and the tragic, the real and the imagined, the violent and the tender dissolve into one another. With *The Book of Illusions*, one of America's most powerful and original writers has written his richest, most emotionally charged work yet.

comVermont professor David Zimmer is a broken man. The protagonist of Paul Auster's 10th novel, *The Book of Illusions*, hits a period in which life seemed to be working aggressively against him. After his wife and sons are killed in an airplane crash, Zimmer becomes an alcoholic recluse, fond of emptying his bottle of sleeping pills into his palm, contemplating his next move. But one night, while watching a television documentary, Zimmer's attention is caught by the silent-film comedian Hector Mann, who had disappeared without a trace in 1929 and who was considered long-dead. Soon, Zimmer begins work on a book about Mann's newly discovered films (copies of which had been sent, anonymously, to film archives around the world). The spirit of Hector Mann keeps David Zimmer alive for a year. When a letter arrives from someone claiming to be Hector Mann's wife, announcing that Mann had read Zimmer's book and would like to meet him, it is as if fate has tossed Zimmer from one hand to the other: from grief and loss to desire and confusion. Although film images are technically "illusions," this deft and layered novel is not so much about conscious illusion or trickery as about the traces we leave behind us: words, images, memories. Children are one obvious trace, but in this book, they are not allowed to carry their parents forward. They die early: Hector Mann losing his 3-year-old son to a bee sting just as David Zimmer has lost his two sons in the crash. The second half of *The Book of Illusions* is given over to a love affair, and to Zimmer's attempt to save something of Hector Mann, and of the others he has loved. In the end, what really survives of us on earth--what flickering immortality we are permitted--is left to the reader to surmise. --Regina Marler

From Publishers WeeklyDavid Zimmer, an English professor in Vermont, is trying to rebuild his life--after his family perishes in an airplane crash--by researching the work of Hector Mann, a minor figure from the era of silent movies, in this enigmatic, elliptical 10th novel, one of Auster's best. As in much of the writer's fiction, the narrative revolves around coincidence, fate and odd resonances. Mann's world, like Zimmer's, collapses in a single instant, and Mann, like Zimmer, embarks on self-imposed exile as a way to deal with his grief and do penance. Mann disappeared at the height of his career in 1929, but when Zimmer's book about him is published in the 1980s, it elicits a mysterious invitation: would Zimmer like to meet Mann, who is alive and has been working in secret as actor/director Hector Spelling? The skeptical scholar is lured from Vermont by Alma Grund, who grew up around Mann and is writing his biography. As Grund and Zimmer fall in love, she fills in the decades-long gap in Mann's life--a strange American odyssey that culminated on a ranch in New Mexico where he made movies he refused to screen for anyone. As in previous novels, Auster here makes the unbelievable completely credible, and his overall themes are very much of a piece with those of earlier works: the "mutinous unpredictability of matter" and the way storytellers shape and organize unpredictability. A darker and more somber mood shadows this book; Mann and Zimmer both are tragic figures--even melodramatic--and their stories are compelling. Auster is a novelist of ideas who hasn't forgotten that his first duty is to tell a good story.

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