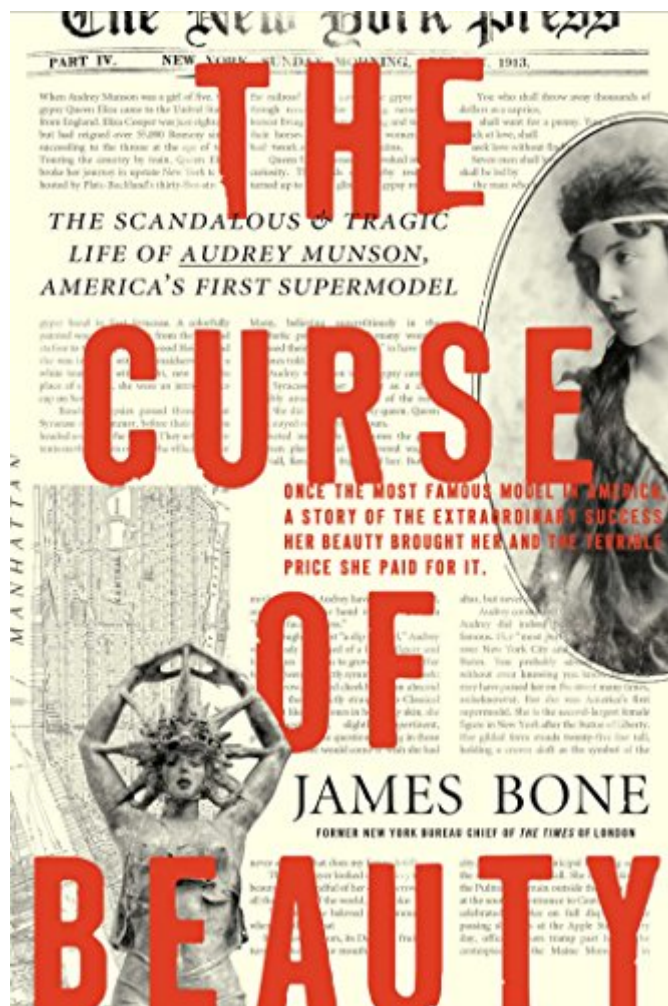


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The Curse Of Beauty: The Scandalous & Tragic Life Of Audrey Munson, America's First Supermodel



Synopsis

The tumultuous and heartbreaking life of a world-famous model whose riveting story of beauty, fame, passion, murder, and madness in the Gilded Age captivated a nation. As America was stepping into the modern era, one great beauty became the artist's model of choice. Her perfect form became the emblem of the Gilded Age and appears on the greatest monuments of New York and the nation. Supermodel, actress, icon—her beauty paved the way for a life of glamour, passion, and ultimately tragedy. She dated the millionaires of the fashionable Newport colony, became the first American movie star ever to appear naked in a film, but her promising film career collapsed, her doctor fell in love with her and killed his own wife, and on her fortieth birthday, her mother committed her to an insane asylum. She remained there until her death in 1996 at the age of 104 and is now buried in an unmarked grave. Her name is Audrey Munson. Many readers will recognize Audrey Munson, and have walked by her in the street, without even knowing her name. She stands atop New York's Municipal Building. She sits as "Miss Manhattan" and "Miss Brooklyn" outside the Brooklyn Museum, is immortalized on the Manhattan Bridge, the Frick Mansion, the New York Public Library, and the Pulitzer Fountain outside the Plaza Hotel. In gold, bronze, and stone, she still graces bridges, skyscrapers, fountains, churches, monuments, and public buildings across the nation, from Jacksonville to San Francisco, from Atlanta to the Wisconsin state capitol. From James Bone, the former New York Bureau Chief of The Times of London, this brilliantly reported investigative biography reveals, for the first time, the riveting truth of the forgotten life of an iconic beauty.

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Customer Reviews

"The Curse of Beauty" is, perhaps, the best written and best researched biography I have ever read.

It's so amazing that Audrey Munson has not been much better remembered. Mr. Bone's book makes Ms Munson a person that comes to life in the pages of this book. You'll never find a better example of a memory living through literature. How compelling is this book ? I found it compelling enough to actually seek out, and visit her final resting place. I found it exactly as it is depicted in the book. She was a most amazing celebrity of her era. Through a brief conversation with a local historian, I learned that a better (and corrected) grave marker and road-side historical marker are due to be dedicated on June 8, 2016. That would mark the anniversary her 125th birthday.

Personally, I will return on that date to pay respects. This book is truly a powerful testimony to a celebrated but tortured soul

An unknown story of one of America's first supermodels. The book had me craving more about this woman who was immortalized in stone, granite, etc. in cities such as New York and Cleveland. It is a short read (took me about a week) but I am ready to read it again. It was one of those books you can't put down because you want more. Sad story about rags to riches to rags. What is amazing that even now her own family doesn't want to acknowledge her. If you enjoy anything about the 1920's (i.e. William Desmond Taylor, Fatty Arbuckle, Norma Desmond) then this is the book for you!

I was drawn to this book by an article in the New Yorker magazine. History, early 20th century history fascinates me, so I bought it. Glad I did. It was a bit of a slow start, but once into Audrey Munson's story, I could not stop reading! Well researched and well written, I recommend it highly.

James Bone has done a superb job by thoroughly investigating and telling Audrey's story. I have been researching Audrey for over ten years. After reading the book I have learned new info I have never known, Definitely a must read

I just finished reading this meticulously researched book. The author painstakingly sought all the available information on this once world-famous artist's model and contacted all surviving family. He takes us on his research journey, which was not an easy ride, and does not whitewash the evidence he uncovers. One of the wonderful surprises is that the dust jacket unfolds to reveal a well-documented map of existing statues for which Audrey Munson posed in the New York area. The bibliography is also very instructive. In fact the author wants his book to be a starting point for further research on Munson and thus provides the reader with information on all the primary sources available. I found the writing engaging and the topic fascinating.

I had never heard of Audrey Munson before, and I had assumed that the author was taking liberties with the term "supermodel" in the subtitle. But Munson really was probably the closest thing to a supermodel that existed in her day. She posed for countless famous sculptures (many of which I recognized, and I am not really an art enthusiast) and starred in several silent films. This book is a well-researched biography about someone whose image is on a lot of popular landmarks around the country. It's a fascinating, frustrating, and ultimately sad account of a woman who enjoyed immense fame (for the times) and suffered because of it. The book discusses her career and many troubled relationships (with family, friends, boyfriends, and business associates) at length. Her proximity to many of the famous screen and theater names of the times is really interesting, and provides some insight into the inner workings of Broadway and Hollywood during the height of Munson's fame. Munson suffers a pretty catastrophic fall from grace, but there are a number of things that triggered it, including what appears to be some kind of mental break. The author has clearly done a lot of research to figure out what may have caused Munson's mental health crisis, but we are still left wondering what exactly happened. It is not entirely clear that her problems were organic and not the result of the pressures of being a famous woman trying to find a suitable husband in a deeply judgmental environment with an overbearing and vehemently anti-Semitic mother. I found this to be one area where the book fell a bit short; I thought the author could've provided more context about the state of women's rights, their roles in society, and tabloid journalism. He touched on this a little bit, but I think he could've discussed it more while not straying too far from the main topic. Overall, though, it is a great book about a woman I'd never heard of before. I highly recommend this book.

Who knew that most of the gilded statues decorating New York City share the same face and body, modeled upon the same woman, Audrey Munson? What an amazing find, and so beautifully

represented with photos and artwork! Unfortunately, model Munson was so thoroughly consumed with her outward appearance and popularity, I didn't think she made for the most scintillating of subjects. I do find it fascinating how standards and criteria for beauty evolve with time, how long celebrity and lurid tabloid journalism has been around, and I particularly like the way author James Bone begins this book by drawing parallels between America's political and economic situation today and the America Munson was born in: the power of the 1%, racism, and the effects of revolutionary technological advances.

I never knew! The "Playmate" before the "Playmates"! Certainly, Audrey crossed Hef's mind when he was starting Playboy. She knew her assets and tried to work them to her advantage. She exercised to maximize those assets and preserve them. The times were against her, in my opinion. She was around long before nudity was common or accepted as something "good" girls did. Reputation was everything and hers was sketchy. Whether she ever married the rich guy or not is a mystery and her reference to "Is that my son?" makes me want to dig further, that's for sure! A really great read!

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