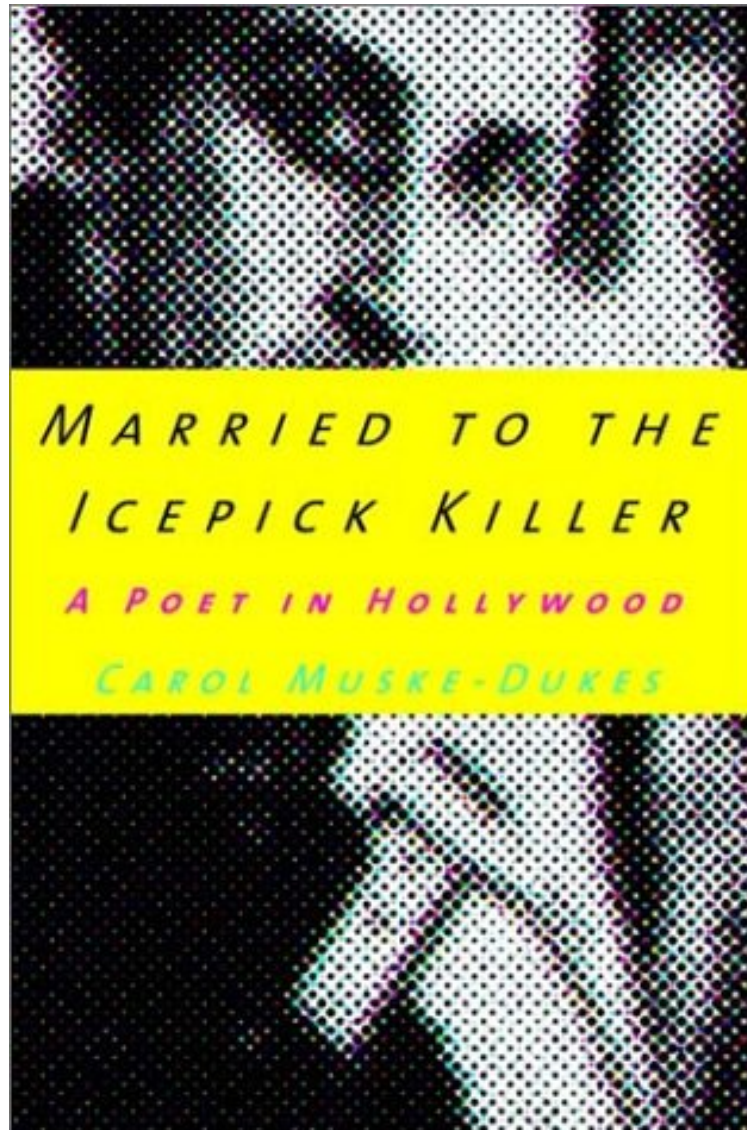


(Download ebook) Married to the Icepick Killer: A Poet in Hollywood

Married to the Icepick Killer: A Poet in Hollywood

Carol Muske-Dukes

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Carol Muske-Dukes : Married to the Icepick Killer: A Poet in Hollywood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Married to the Icepick Killer: A Poet in Hollywood:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Married To The Icepick Killer is propaganda for the poetic outlookBy Carbon MerrillThere can be a banality to good English of the kind typified by The New York Times, and Carol Muske-Dukes' Married To The Icepick Killer: A Poet In Hollywood lurks behind a prose like that with exemplary and carefree subversion, making points one could spend a lifetime exploring. Muske-Dukes has nothing

unkind in either her poetic or literary outlooks, she has mirth, and as the sort of woman who knows who Tu Fu is she uses names well, notably Adrienne Rich. Three key characteristics of this text can be illustrated by a single "David" repetition which cunningly makes us fall in love with her husband because an actor is better than a statue. These are her embrace of the California sensibility, her poetic use of repetition within essays, and the normativity of her vantage point, which is total, as cultural arbiter. While she writes at that The New York Times level, she has the deniability that this voice of the essayist is not her true voice. Because she is a poet. So her driver to the remodeled ancient home of her poet friend in the Italian countryside is this guy "David" who is some kind of slick actor. Perhaps his best quality is staying out of the way of our author's poetry discussions with their hostess. Much later in the essay "Destino" we see the David theme exemplified by the statue itself repeated, on what seems to be every fencepost of a home's garish fencing in the author's Hancock Park neighborhood. It is a likable pointing of the finger but it is an arbiter pointing the finger. Imagery and repetitions like the classic David sculpture frame this book and connect its pieces, but its center of gravity is her marriage and the Hollywood world she moved out to Los Angeles to endure and ultimately to understand. One can summarize the California sensibility as doing one's own thing if one adds the Pacific Ocean and the sun. Having Hollywood and Los Angeles as her husband's backstory supplies Muske-Dukes with most of her material, besides junkets and names of literary giants. Her personal stars, who mostly write, do their own thing and she encourages the reader to do their own thing, which might be to continue reading. The Los Angeles scene is recontextualized within the saga of Western civilization by her marriage and her anecdotes and her poems, lurking behind the prose like time spent sun-bathing. One can observe that this transplantation into Hollywood lurks in her subtitle and heads her first essay, which begins, "Not long after I moved to Los Angeles." The finale of the book starts with "Out of Life's Shadows Comes Poetry With Light" which is an emotional summation of poetry as the mind's ultimate good cause, then this flows into her big closing chapter on her dead husband and his excellence as an actor, and then it closes with a "Coda." This Coda occupies a privileged position in the book and begins, "Don't get me wrong: I love the city in which I live." She literally closes her book on the sky's adjective "blue" which can be considered her poetic final statement on L.A. Simple, visual, and provoking for the imagination of a devoted reader. These uses are some of many symptoms showing the prominence Muske-Dukes' move to Los Angeles has in her narrative, at least constantly in the background like mountains. The use of repetition in these essays sometimes exemplifies Muske-Dukes' mirth, because there is an indulgence to her poetic control that amounts to condescension. She always takes pains to be gracious and supportive of the reader, but the emotionality of some of these twists has a cinematic simplicity which is fun. As she closes her final chapter to her husband, she uses the phrase "within the expectation of repetition" to describe swinging as a child while her mother recited a Robert Louis Stevenson poem on swinging. Muske-Dukes' own repetitions can give us a similar feeling, even just when she chooses to bring up Emily Dickinson or Adrienne Rich. A brief but amusing repetition is in Muske-Dukes' "War Of The Edens" describing the rhetoric of Harold Bloom as "larded with resentment against the School of Resentment" or when shortly thereafter she quotes Auden having written that readers' relationship to an author's text should allow them to "judge his judgments." Muske-Dukes notes her added emphasis on that one. Her essay "Development Hell" uses the word "indispensability" to weave its entire narrative about the key role of producers in getting film projects made or squelched. The word closes her first paragraph and is just a few lines back from her final word "producers." Any careful flipping through this book however will find David Dukes himself dominating the repetitions in terms of frequency while never being tedious. All of this cadence and swinging is very structured by the author's poetically crafty mind and it is filled with a fondness for life as well as David Dukes, a fondness she hopes readers will absorb into the world of more intense personal reading. Poets have arguably been the single most influential arbiters of culture in every major civilization where a high culture flourished. Irish praise bards, the language of the Koran before the Koran, the Brahmins of India, emperors of ancient China, the Japanese imperial house, and countless royals throughout the world have shown prowess in language alongside political power. The normativity of the poet as cultural arbiter gave us the Renaissance and it gives us Carol Muske-Dukes' southwestern-facing vision, enjoying great writing from all around the world while being nestled against the Pacific. There are certainly worse ways to exert oneself. In seeing the negative reviews here, one can also observe that the high-and-mighty or high-falutin aspect of all this can seem horribly exclusive, which casts a suspect light on all the many glowing reviews from cultural icons. We know Muske-Dukes can be intentionally artificial, but in her covert subversion does she do anything to justify all this class? To me the easiest response is the stereotyped pro-reading argument in defense of J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books. Rowling herself studied the stoics in the original and frequently defends reading and critical thinking in her public statements. Muske-Dukes clarifies throughout this book that her readers should go out into their future lives encouraging themselves to face poems more immediately, to explore ambiguities with abandon, and to cultivate a more intensely personal reading space as feeding the powers of the inner imagination. In other words, what Muske-Dukes has been doing with herself since she moved to Los Angeles. Case closed. In conclusion, don't trust the surface of this book. Its author boasts that she can write anything in any meter or length so she has written this book for other purposes. These include fun, journaling, getting in print (again), discussing great topics, and spreading the gospel that people should explore literature including and maybe especially reading. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Cambridge Turn

On Your Brain By Pamela S. Being familiar with and a fan of Muske-Dukes' poetry and fiction--have you read "Dear Digby"? If not, why not?--I can't understand the brief, snide "criticism" of one of her customer reviewers. The essays in "Icepick" celebrate, dissect and illuminate a cultural mish-mash of writers and writing history in California--and offer insight into the "writing scene" in LA, so closely knit as it is with movies, ocean, earthquakes and sun and a literary history overlooked! It is not enough to pass off an accomplished author's work in one snide line. It is misleading and unfortunate. It is obvious from CMD's essays her passionate belief in the art of poetry, of writing, and the life of a writer in sprawling Los Angeles, passion that makes for an engaging read. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. engaging title, lively book By A Customer Acerbic, funny, culturally aware and crackling with insight, as are Ms. Muske Dukes's poems and criticism

Poetry and Hollywood seem like the ultimate odd couple, and once upon a time the accomplished poet, novelist, and critic Carol Muske-Dukes might have agreed. But no longer. This is a collection of real-life adventures and meditations on literature and landscape. In *Married to the Icepick Killer*, Muske-Dukes explores the uniquely Southern Californian approach to poetry, including the random appearance of poems by Emily Dickinson and others on L. A. billboards; the hiring of poet-consultants to top off the final scene of a submarine action film; and the wonder of teaching a genius surfer poet. She also illuminates the pure poetry of falling in love with actor David Dukes, who introduced her to the City of Angels and its poetic paradoxes. Poets from Dickinson to Brecht, Robinson Jeffers, Arna Bontemps, and Randall Jarrell make appearances in these pages, and are seen in rapid close-up as the author reveals her talent as camera, witness, and learned and intrepid adventurer and social critic. Muske-Dukes is a wise and hilarious diviner of correspondences and contradictions. In *Married to the Icepick Killer* (the title is taken from Muske-Dukes's wry, loving remembrance of her late husband's exceedingly varied career), she provides a geographical (and commercial) context for cultural counterpoint and shows how it both complements and collides head-on with a poet's sensibility.

From Publishers Weekly The chair of the graduate writing program at USC, Muske-Dukes has written novels (*Life After Death*) and poetry collections (*An Octave Above Thunder*); her new offering is an odd medley of essays whose observations range from fresh and enlightening to pretentious and irritating. By tackling the relationship of poetry (an "art made of consciousness") to Hollywood (a world made of images and illusions), Muske-Dukes puts a new spin on the familiar art's-connection-to-life inquiry. "Slouching Toward a Brief Literary History of Southern California" delivers the titular promise, touching on the "poetic motifs" of the Chumash Indians, L.A.'s drive to "unmake history," the "poetry karaoke" of some public readings and the work of poet Kenneth Rexroth, who came to represent "something close to a uniquely Californian identity." If it sounds confusing, it is: Muske-Dukes has so many ideas to express (often without transitions) that readers may feel as if they're standing on a fault line of logical thought. "I Married the Icepick Killer" marks a break from the theorizing (and from sentences like "for the poet who is helping shift the emphasis from emotion recollected in tranquillity to emoting rendered in amplification, the reward is the muse's cell phone number"); it is a brief, sweet meditation on her marriage to the late actor David Dukes, while "Destino," which charts their meeting, is even better. "Let Me Play the Lion Too" is an elegy to Dukes, a pastiche of interview excerpts, eulogies and snippets of their lives before and after they met. There are a few gem-like moments here, but Muske-Dukes's book ultimately fails to cohere as an argument or entertain as a memoir. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Poet/novelist/critic Muske-Dukes (*Life After Death*) here turns to the essay form. In her introduction, she writes, "It never occurred to me as I was writing these essays that I was writing, in part, an elegy." Her husband, actor David Dukes (who once played an icepick killer), passed away last year, and many of the essays included are meditations on the contradictions of their life together. Thus, what is ostensibly a collection of essays is also an extended love letter. Upon her arrival in Hollywood, the author was asked what kind of writing she did "half-hour or hour?" and was mentioned in Liz Smith's columns. She uses Hollywood's show business culture as a stepping stone for ruminations on what it means to be an artist, the significance of poetry quotations on billboards, and the adjustments made in a marriage between two artists. Her subjects run the gamut from being invited to the Clinton White House to lunch with Michelle Pfeiffer. Her insights are acutely observed and often devastatingly funny. Recommended for libraries with large poetry and film collections. Pam Kingsbury, Florence, AL Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist A writer of depth, precision, and wit in her poetry and novels, which include *Life after Death* [BKL My 15 01], Muske-Dukes turns out to be a piquant essayist. Fascinated with her adopted city, L.A., and the nature of "a poet's existence in a city whose main industry is the serious production of illusion," she assesses Hollywood as a writer, director of the University of Southern California's graduate writing program, and wife of actor David Dukes, who died unexpectedly in 2000. Muske-Dukes' poignant memories of her late husband's love of acting and language enrich her crisp parsing of poetry's place in today's noisy, image-saturated world as she imagines John Keats at a poetry slam, profiles a surfer poet, and describes her attempt to write a screenplay based on her first novel, which was eagerly optioned by Michelle Pfeiffer. Smart and ardent, amusing and light on her feet, Muske-Dukes also squares off against Harold Bloom, and recounts a surprisingly literary conversation with Bill Clinton, all the while drawing on the strength and second sight poetry bestows. Donna

