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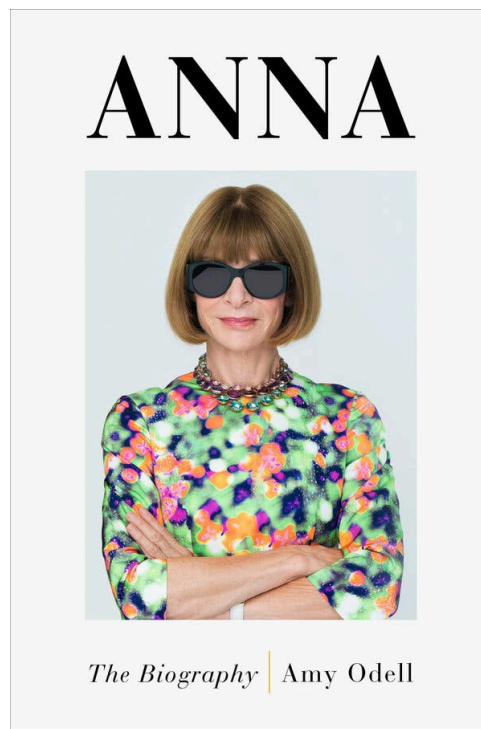
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Review: "Anna: The Biography"



BY LIBERTY IMHOFF · MAY 31, 2022



Anna: The Biography by Amy Odell

"Anna: The Biography", the newest work by fashion and culture journalist Amy Odell that has taken bestseller lists everywhere by storm, was not contributed to on a first-hand basis by Anna Wintour herself.

Anna did, however, provide Odell with a list of contacts with whom she could connect and interview. How nice of her.

This book and its included information is very detailed, though not entirely a revelation to those already familiar with the workings of the fashion industry. But then, something to consider is this: what if Amy Odell wasn't writing this book for those that already work in the fashion industry? What if she was writing it for those that aren't as knowledgeable about the innards of fashion? Anna Wintour has said that she never plans to write her own memoirs, so "Anna: The Biography" could be looked at as a historic document for those that will either enter the industry at a later time or that simply follow fashion on a casual basis.

If one is looking at the book strictly from the standpoint of what has been given to the reader in its pages, it is easy to come away with the view that Anna is a shrewd media figure that expertly figured out how to place herself squarely in the middle of anything and everything important in fashion. Indeed, she is a kingpin of the fashion industry; that much cannot be realistically denied by one person in the industry.

It is equally easy to come away with the opinion that Wintour is a ruthless figure that is more than willing to step on anyone to get what she wants – whether that be jobs or romantic partners. It could be said that she is unapologetic in how she operates within the scope of her life, and is in love with both the quest for power and with power itself.

One of the better features of the book, however, is its bestowing of humanity upon this supposed ice queen who is often looked at cruelly by many that are familiar with who she is and what she represents. She is a loving mother, doting grandmother, and has a surprising side that enjoys what her home life entails. It is easy to see public figures as goddesses and gods that inhabit a world and a state of being that no mere mortal will ever be permitted to enter. This book showed a different side of Wintour that was welcome and needed.

Without giving away too much of the book before you read it yourself, a few specifics to take away from "Anna: The Biography" are as follows:

- Anna Wintour is professionally very similar to her dad, Charles Wintour, the past editor-in-chief of the London Evening Standard
- Anna was able to accept what so many struggle to be able to early in their fashion careers: working jobs that paid little-to-no money because she received payments from her grandfather's estate that helped with living expenses during her early years of climbing the fashion ladder
- Anna once reported to Elsa Klensch during their respective tenures at Harper's Bazaar
- The extent of Anna's injection of celebrity presence in the fashion industry cannot be overstated
- Anna's feelings about Style.com were lukewarm, at best, and she eventually took action that led to its demise

One more note that should be pointed out is this: is it any surprise that Anna Wintour has no problem with supporting celebrities and nepotism models when she herself was assisted at the start of her career because of her convenient connections – many of which stemmed from her father? Sure, she left London and came to New York, ostensibly to get away from the influence of her father. In fashion, however, an initial start is often crucial to success in the industry. That is what her connections gave her.

A particular issue with the book is the way that Amy Odell chose to wrap it up:

"Anna has built her own kingdom. And the world's most beautiful, most powerful people are living in it. The rest are just looking on."

For those that work in various parts of the fashion industry, reading that the most beautiful and powerful people are in Anna's circle and the rest of us are simply onlookers is not only insulting, but untrue. It is unclear if Odell meant this seriously or jokingly, but whatever the case, this assessment is a joke. The fashion industry is much bigger than Dame Anna Wintour DBE; we'd all be a lot better off if we internalized that thought.

Though "Anna: The Biography" seemed at times to be a bit too sympathetic to Anna Wintour, Odell did attempt to do her due diligence and lay all parts of her bare for the reader to see – and for that, the book is certainly worth reading.

Anna: The Biography | Amy Odell | 447 pp | Gallery Books | \$29.99