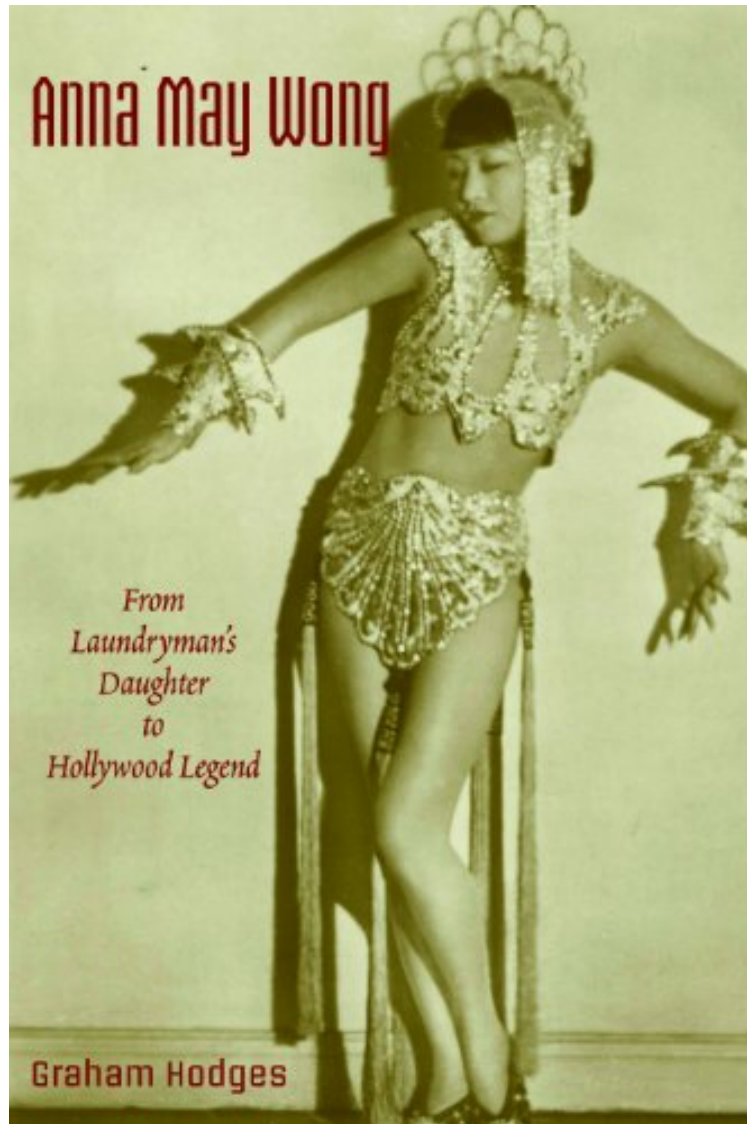


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Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend

Graham Russell Gao Hodges

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Graham Russell Gao Hodges : Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Anna May Wong: From Laundryman's Daughter to Hollywood Legend:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. not bad, butBy helenaThe author did probably his best. He writes well, and his fascination with Anna May Wong is seen through the book. However, and he admitted this drawback in

the preface, he had only limited access to personal and family papers of Anna May Wong (due to some problems withing the Wong family). And this is the unfortunate point, and that is why I rated the book with only three stars. I believe that with more information the picture of A.M.Wong would be more precise, and colourfull as well. 15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Was it done by the professor or one of his students? By Ruby Mae

Anna May Wong was known as something of a sex symbol in her day, but she was also a very talented actress. From her first starring role in *Toll of the Sea* she had an ability to touch you from the screen. Unfortunately, she was constantly put in bad vehicles and is virtually unknown today. While I was glad to find an affordable biography on Wong, I soon found that I got what I paid for. This book gives alot of facts about Wong, so many in such a hurried fashion that one gets bleary eyed reading them. The writing is terribly uneven and vague. Case in point, something happened to incur the wrath of the Chinese people against Wong when she arrived for her only trip to China. However, the author only says she was "uncharacteristically rude to her fans." So...what'd she do that was so bad they threatened her family if they allowed her to stay in China? He doesn't give us the details. I suppose it could be possible that his source was just as vague, but he could at least have let his readers know the facts were not available, especially when he went to such great detail later in the chaper describing the hatred Wong experienced at the hands of her countrymen due to the mysterious event. Then at the end of the book Hodges describes one of Wong's last appearances on television with the fact that there was a problem with her lower lip "from her near fatal stroke two years before." The TV show in question was taped in 1960. For whatever reason, this is the first time the author mentions the stroke(I went back over the previous pages to see if, in my boredom, I had skipped over it; the last illness mentioned was a two day hospitalization she had sometime in 1955 or '56. I'm sure if this was the "near fatal stroke" she would have been hospitalized for more than two days). Hodges is so busy describing her TV appearances he "forgets" to tell us about the stroke! Also disappointing is the lack of photos of Wong from later in her life. The author seems at times to be protecting Wong's reputation by omitting facts and downplaying her drinking problem so that the reader doesn't come away with a bad feeling about the actress. His subject has been dead for more than 40 years and I'm sure that the knowledge that she may have been "rude" from time to time will not deter people who enjoy her work from buying the Picadilly DVD coming out in February, or seeing any of her rare films should they become available. The man is a history professor, for goodness sakes! It is rather juvenile on his part to write a "puff piece" instead of reporting the facts. This leads me to wonder if Hodges was really the author or did one of his students pen the book for extra credit? 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Heidibelle

A wonderful look at the life and career of this sadly overlooked legend.

Anna May Wong was perhaps the best known Chinese American actress during Hollywood's golden age, a free spirit and embodiment of the flapper era much like Louise Brooks. She starred in over fifty movies between 1919 and 1960, sharing the screen with such luminaries as Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Marlene Dietrich. Born in Los Angeles in 1905, Wong was the second daughter of six children born to a laundryman and his wife. Obsessed with film at a young age, she managed to secure a small part in a 1919 drama about the Boxer Rebellion. Her most famous film roles were in *The Thief of Baghdad*, *Old San Francisco*, and *Shanghai Express* opposite Dietrich. Despite these successes, instances of overt racism plagued Wong's career. When it came time to make a film version of Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, she was passed over for the Austrian-born actress, Luise Rainer. In a narrative that recalls both the gritty life in Los Angeles's working-class Chinese neighborhoods and the glamour of Hollywood at its peak, Graham Hodges recounts the life of this elegant, beautiful, and underappreciated screen legend.

From Publishers Weekly While Wong (1905-1961) has been called "the premier Asian-American actress," controversies surrounding her career have left her life and work largely unexamined. In this groundbreaking biography, Colgate University history professor Hodges reveals this captivating woman, offering readers a sense of the struggle her career represented. Although Wong was a third-generation Californian, she needed permits to re-enter the U.S. after her foreign tours. She could work in the movies, but only in Asian roles, replete with negative stereotypes. Even then, she was barred from roles involving marriage with non-Asians-even with white actors playing Asians. Off-screen romance wasn't much easier; a Chinese husband wouldn't accept her career, but marriage to a non-Asian violated anti-miscegenation laws. Still, Wong persevered, improving what roles she could get by supplying authentic costumes, hairstyles and gestures. When even bad roles disappeared, she turned to the stage or took work in European film productions. Wong's Chinese war relief work and post-WWII TV appearances provided some satisfaction in her last years. Yet her career and life were cut short by a world that simply wasn't ready for an Asian-American star. Hodges summarizes the plots of all of Wong's films, covers the chronology of her career and has done extensive research into Chinese sources. He's particularly adept at viewing Wong through the lens of Chinese culture, interpreting the meaning of her attire or hand movements. He also covers the Chinese and Chinese-American press's reaction to Wong, adding an important dimension to understanding her limbo between two worlds, unacceptable to racist Hollywood and to the conservative Chinese establishment. Illus. not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Hodges first encountered "the premier Asian American actress," who appeared in more

than 50 movies during a career spanning some 40 years, in 1999 in a framed photo in a London bookstore. Internationally popular, Wong (1905-61) became the film personification of Chinese womanhood, angering her own family and Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist movement, who considered her callously exploited by Hollywood because her career coincided with the Chinese Exclusion Act and increased discrimination against Chinese Americans. Indeed, film codes forbade kissing between races, and the concept of "Orientalism" was forged to excuse such prejudice. Wong portrayed characters whose inevitable fate was lovelessness or death. Hodges not only rediscovers her films but also examines her life as a third-generation American in racist L.A. Rebellious against tradition, she became a Chinese flapper, but through her film work, she later found identity in her roots and sought to improve Americans' image of China and became a movie legend, gay camp favorite, and figure of continuing controversy. A well-illustrated, accessible, scholarly addition to film and women's studies. Whitney Scott Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Graham Russell Gao Hodges' fascinating biography of Anna May Wong is an important contribution to not only film studies but Asian American history and women's history. The facts of Wong's life her humble origins as laundryman's daughter, her tragic love affairs, her international political activism, and her celebrity status as the nation's first Chinese American movie star are far more compelling than any of her roles on film. (Iris Chang, New York Times bestselling author of *The Rape of Nanking* and *The Chinese American: A Narrative History*) An illuminating, authoritative biography of Anna May Wong one of the most enigmatic icons in Hollywood and in the history of Chinese America. (Yunte Huang, author of *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History*) Through a scrupulous examination of Anna May Wong's life and work, Graham Russell Gao Hodges, a leading African American historian, deploys his keen understanding of American racial matters to transform Wong from merely a tragic figure to a real human being, vulnerable, and longing for appreciation, love and family. The Anna May Wong that comes to life in this definitive biography is admirable because of her honesty, hard work, and true dedication to her craft as an actress, despite repeated denials of opportunities and deserved recognition due to her race. Her courage and humanity are a lesson to all who strive for a harmonious and just multiracial society. (Peter Kwong, City University of New York, and author of *Chinese America: The Untold Story of America's Oldest New Community*) Graham Hodges has woven a spellbinding tale that sweeps you into Anna May Wong's star-crossed life, with rich details of the passions and lost loves, conflicts and triumphs, brilliance and frustrations of this daring woman born far ahead of her time. Like a scene with the great diva, this book has nuance, complexity, and drama and I did not want it to end. (Helen Zia, author of *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*)