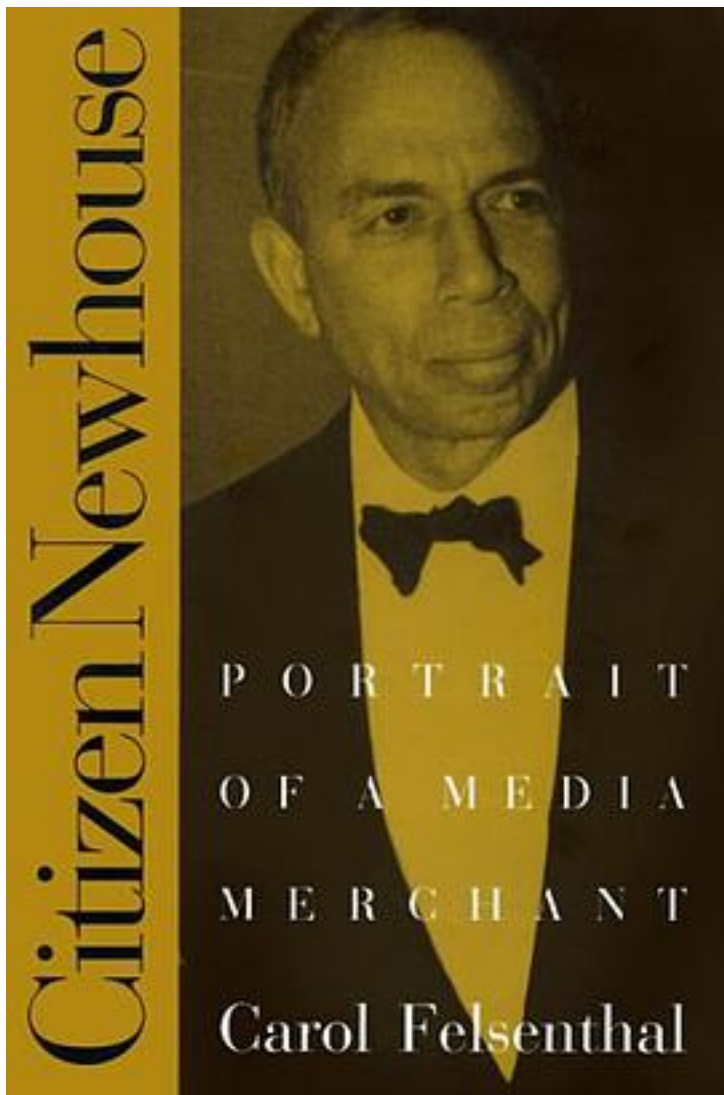


Citizen Newhouse



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著者:Carol Felsenthal

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From Publishers Weekly

Originally under contract to Viking, this searing biography of media titan Si Newhouse was canceled, claims Felsenthal (Power, Privilege and the Post) in her introduction, by Penguin Putnam chief Phyllis Grann because a friend of Grann's appears on almost every page. To be sure, Felsenthal's work is filled with unflattering descriptions of the men and women found in the top circles of New York's magazine and book publishing scene. She begins, however, with a lengthy history of the media empire—Advance Communications—assembled by Newhouse's father, Sam, a self-made newspaper tycoon born on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The elder Newhouse added Conde Nast to his holdings in 1959; it was these magazines that drew the attention of the younger Newhouse, who, after Sam's death in 1979, left the running of the newspapers to his younger brother, Donald. As Felsenthal charts Newhouse's rising influence in the world of publishing, particularly through his acquisitions of Random House and the New Yorker—trophy companies, she says, meant to increase his prestige among the media elite—she denounces his business style, reporting that under Newhouse's ownership the quality of both the publishing house and the magazine declined dramatically, as did their profitability. It is Advance's newspaper and cable holdings, she contends, that prop up Newhouse's side of the business. Felsenthal misses little in documenting the many hirings and firings that have taken place under Newhouse. Publishing insiders won't learn much here (indeed, most of her financial reporting comes from the Wall Street Journal and other secondary sources), but other readers will find her narrative brimming with dishy suspense. Felsenthal leaves little doubt about what she thinks of Newhouse and his top aides: she calls Alberto Vitale "vile" and Newhouse himself "vacuous and self-indulgent," comparing him unfavorably to William Randolph Hearst and Rupert Murdoch. This undisguised contempt for her subject blunts what is otherwise an often penetrating look at the Machiavellian politics that lie just beneath the ultra-sleek facade of the Newhouse empire. Pictures not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

The increasing conglomerate control of publishing and the media worries many critics. Felsenthal, whose most recent biography focused on the media empire of Katharine Graham (Power, Privilege and the Post, LJ 12/92), now turns her attention to S.I. Newhouse Jr. One of the richest men in America, Newhouse heads a family business that includes a string of newspapers, cable television companies, and the Conde Nast magazines. (He recently sold off Random House to the mighty German publisher Bertelsmann.) Newhouse guards his privacy closely, and this unauthorized biography struggles to reach beyond public information. While there are many details about hirings and firings at the magazines, including the recent changes at The New Yorker, there is little information given about the impact of the Newhouse family on publishing and journalism. This second recent biography of Newhouse offers some material not found in Thomas Maier's Newhouse (LJ 10/1/94) and will appeal to readers interested in the inside scoop on the operations of the Conde Nast magazines. —Judy Solberg, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC

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