

This isn't my usual cup of tea but I decided to give it a chance because it was referenced in an episode of *The Office*. In fact, I think it was referenced in two episodes and that's when my curiosity was piqued. I wasn't expecting much, but I came away with a bundle of conflicting thoughts in my head which I think is the mark of some sort of success. At the very least, I was entertained.

The first thing I want to say is that Emily Blunt completely stole the show here. Meryl Streep is going to do Meryl Streep, and Anne Hathaway's character is fairly straightforward, but I was astonished at how convincingly Blunt was able to play bitchy, snarky and condescending, all while saying thoroughly entertaining lines. Any scene she was in made me light up, and I was sad when she basically disappeared in the final act.

Now, to the themes of this film. It dawned on me quickly that this wasn't really a film about fashion at all, but about being led into a cult. Having recently watched both *Twin Flames* documentaries recently, I think I'm more prone to notice how a cult leader is able to indoctrinate others into following them. Anne Hathaway's character Andrea doesn't care about fashion at all - much like myself, so she was easy to relate to - but she soon falls under Meryl Streep's spell after she is constantly negged by her boss and treated as worthless by all her colleagues.

Streep's character, Miranda Priestly, can't even be bothered to learn Andrea's name - or purposefully calls her by a different name to make her feel worthless. In an early scene, we see Andrea speak up for herself and correct Miranda, which results in Miranda's wrath. After being made to do all sorts of humiliating and challenging chores for Miranda, the two have an argument where it seems as if Andrea will be fired. The assertive part of myself was willing for her to stand up for herself and ask that she be treated decently since that's what she deserves. Instead, she runs off and cries to Stanley Tucci's character, who gaslights her and says she isn't trying hard enough. I get it; when I began working in an office, the amount of social pressure I felt made it very difficult for me to ask for more equitable circumstances. Tucci influences her to start wearing more fashionable clothes, which she seems to adjust to instantly.

I also want to take a moment here and talk about something I loathe in films like these, where Anne Hathaway's character is described as fat and ugly by the characters around her. Admittedly, these are the characters that are gaslighting her into part of their cult, but all the same it's utterly insane to try and cast someone like Anne Hathaway to play some sort of plain Jane. She's freaking Anne Hathaway. Just look at her. She could look great wearing a plastic rubbish bag or a tarpaulin. It's crazy that they do the 'ugly duckling to beautiful swan' transformation on her in this film. I also think that she seems to adjust too quickly. If it were me, I guess I would try some clothes, but I would never be able to keep it up.

Interestingly, her hipster boyfriend uses the term "you drank the Kool-Aid," because that was exactly what was floating around my head at that time. She's in a cult where everyone is obsessed with Miranda, and that's really what I think this film is about.

Then there's the disgusting Christian Thompson character, whose ulterior motives are so clear that they don't seem ulterior at all. Why on earth would this successful businessman be suddenly interested in an assistant for anything other than wanting to sleep with her or get closer to Miranda? He feigns interest in her writing, but she naively believes it. It was really galling to watch her be this naive, but I suppose it's good if a film can make you feel that way.

I was quite enjoying the ride of seeing Andrea getting sucked more and more into the cult, losing her friends and her boyfriend along the way, and was interested in the outcome. However, the

ending was bitterly disappointing. All it takes is a few words from Miranda for Andrea to suddenly realise “I don’t want to be like you” and then walk away, throw her work phone in a Parisian fountain and suffer absolutely no consequences. It is monumentally difficult to extract yourself from a cult, to have to unplug yourself from that mindset, and it is emotionally challenging to reckon with the damage that cult has done to your psyche. Andrea seems to snap straight back to her old self, but who knows if there’s any lasting damage? Her boyfriend takes her back, Miranda *recommends her for a job* and then even gives one of her coveted ‘rare smiles’ to close the film. Utter hogwash, and it suggests that it’s a good thing that Miranda gave her the smile that everyone in the fashion industry clamours for. I don’t think the film quite acknowledges just how harmful Miranda’s character is and doesn’t punish her enough at the end to make this a ‘happy ending’.

On the one hand, it presents a rather accurate portrayal of how a cult can be, with a charismatic cult leader who can be ruthless to their subjects and with other members participating in the brainwashing. On the other hand, the film misses some beats, especially near the end that would have made this tale more realistic and satisfying. At the very least, Emily Blunt’s character made me laugh a ton. My favourite moment was when she uttered “What a pile of bollocks!” between mouthfuls of chocolate pudding in the hospital.