

GOOD AT HEART: THE DRAMATIZATION OF *THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK*
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

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by

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PREFACE

Like millions across the globe, my introduction to the Holocaust via *The Diary of Anne Frank* at the age of sixteen was a formative experience. However, unlike most readers, who closed the book with a sense of inspiration or spiritual triumph, my experience left me with a nagging sense of incompleteness. Certainly, Anne had documented her own thoughts and experiences thoroughly, and with impressive journalistic prowess, but what of the others in hiding with her? Though their presence is significant in Anne's writing, I felt as though I was looking at them through an extremely blurry lens, as they were only mentioned in terms of their relationships with the diarist and not independently. It was the supporting characters who intrigued me the most, and I wanted – even needed – to know more about them.

So, I embarked upon the exhaustive process of uncovering more, researching as thoroughly as an eleventh-grader possibly could, and the information I found was fascinating: Anne's sister, Margot, had also kept a diary while they were in hiding, presumed to have been lost after their arrest. Friedrich "Fritz" Pfeffer, family friend and Anne's roommate in hiding, had a son from a previous marriage who he had sent to safety in England when the Nazi threat consumed Germany. Auguste van Pels, the matriarch of the family who shared the hiding place with the Franks and Pfeffer, had secretly given a valuable antique ring to Miep Gies during their time in hiding as a token of gratitude for her help in their concealment. Anne's mother, Edith, had come of age in 1920s Germany, where she dressed in flapper-style dresses and collected jazz records. The wealth of information overwhelmed me, yet in spite of these obviously intriguing

bits of information, it seemed that little attention was truly being paid to these individuals, outside of their interactions with Anne. No books exist, aside from a single biography of Otto Frank, dedicated to an empirical examination of these individuals' lives. Their lives, experiences, and untimely ends – just as rich and complex as those of Anne herself – were essentially obscured.

My frustration was only compounded when my local theatre company decided to produce *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the theatrical adaptation of Anne's story, written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett and later adapted by Wendy Kesselman. Though a comparison of the original script and its updated adaptation quickly revealed that Kesselman's script (the one that we chose to produce) was exponentially more faithful to the historical story than its predecessor, the depiction of the supporting characters in particular struck me. Aside from Anne, it was as though they had all been written as caricatures, the humanity that made their stories so poignant entirely erased from their onstage portrayals. Portraying Edith Frank, I was thrilled to discover the monologue in which she unburdens her fears to Miep Gies, yet found myself relegated to oversimplified reactions in many other scenes, usually chiding or fussing over Anne. The climactic scene in which Edith discovers that Hermann van Pels (or Herman van Daan, onstage) has been stealing bread from the dwindling food supply certainly allowed for some character development on my part, but I was shocked at the inaccurate and blatantly slanderous scene in which it occurred: at no point was it indicated that Hermann van Pels stole anything, let alone from his fellow hidiers. I have since portrayed Edith three separate times, and the scene has proven an increasing point of contention for me the more that I have performed it.

As I continued to discover the depths of the dichotomy between history and the stage, so did my castmates (likely assisted by the fact that I was none too quiet about it), and we took it upon ourselves to conduct the research necessary to better represent our characters. The results of our research took the form of many post-rehearsal discussions in which we vented our annoyance with the scant information available about our characters' lives and attempted to "fill in the blanks" of their stories. Ultimately, these conversations left me with questions that would eventually become the basis of my thesis research. Namely, why was there such a dichotomy between the historical story and its interpretation on the stage? How is it that these people had become relegated to oversimplified caricatures of their already limited portrayals in Anne's diary, especially when Otto Frank himself oversaw the first script's creation? Why is it that, now over seventy years after Anne's death, nobody has called for a dramatization that does justice to all of the people involved in her story?

As it would turn out, the answers to these questions are neither direct nor easily explainable, but may only be understood through a thorough examination of the culture in which the play was written, as well as the demands of the public that has consumed it for so many decades. Through many hours of exhaustive research, fueled by countless cups of coffee, I set out to tackle the questions about the "supporting cast" of Anne's diary that have plagued me for nearly a decade, but the story that emerged from my research transcended their onstage portrayal and soon became a complex narrative of American peculiarities, artistic interpretation, marketability, and cultural iconography. Though I remain frustrated at the inadequate attention these historical figures have received, I have now conquered my sizable confusion about how

this particular theatrical script came to be and why it persists in a culture that seemingly should have addressed its disparity with the historical story by now.

It is with this in mind that I present my thesis, the fruits of the labor that I undertook during my two years in the Kent State University History Department. The evolution of the dramatization and its American reception, which I will present in the coming pages, is not meant to put a period on the story, but is instead written in the hope that it will inspire an ellipsis. A conversation about how Anne Frank's story has been presented to and synthesized by the public through its theatrical script is vital in assessing the responsibilities of artistic interpretations in disseminating historical stories, and, more importantly, in understanding how the historical story can become grossly altered and its players wholly marginalized if the interpretations fail to meet these responsibilities. It is my hope that this work, born of my years of frustration with how Anne's story has been publically presented, will contribute to this extremely necessary conversation.

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provide levity when my research threatened to get the better of me, for being a sounding board for my ideas and all of my school-related grievances, and for giving me more love and encouragement than I ever imagined possible.

INTRODUCTION

On July 15, 1944, the fifteen-year-old Anne Frank escaped to a private spot in her family's hiding place, an annex building attached to her father's office building in the heart of Amsterdam, to write in her diary. Hunted into hiding by the Nazi forces that had occupied Holland since May 1940, Anne shared the hiding place with seven other people, including her family and four family friends. The privacy that the young girl sought that day was difficult to come by in the suffocating old canal building, stuffed past its capacity by the eight residents inside. The families had just marked their two-year anniversary in hiding, and the tensions among them ran high: forced into constant and close proximity, the hiders often clashed over the minutiae of life in the building that Anne had christened the "Secret Annex." Anne's escape that summer morning, as it had been throughout her time in hiding, was her diary, which she used both as a means of emotional relief and practicing her writing, as her eyes were set on a journalism career after the war. Her aspirations were well placed: her entries had grown exponentially in nuance and skill since she received the diary as a birthday gift two years prior, as evidenced by the entry that she penned on that particular summer day:

It's a wonder I haven't abandoned all my ideals; they seem so absurd and impractical. Yet I cling to them because I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart. It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering, and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness. I hear the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us, too. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty, too, shall end, that peace and tranquility will return once more.¹

¹ Anne Frank. *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition*. Edited by David Barnouw and Gerrold Van Der Stroom. (New York, NY: Random House, 2003).

The events that unfolded less than one month later surely tested the bounds of the diarist's proclaimed belief in human goodness. On August 4, 1944, the Gestapo raided the Secret Annex and arrested all eight of the hiders. Within months of her arrest, Anne was subjected to hard labor, separated from her family, and ultimately died alone in the barracks of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Of the eight hiders, only her father returned from the camp.²

Just a decade after her death, the voice of American actress Susan Strasberg echoed through the sound system of Broadway's Cort Theatre, as Joseph Schildkraut solemnly closed a small red-and-white checked diary on the stage. "In spite of everything, I still believe that people really are good at heart," Strasberg's recorded voice intoned. "She puts me to shame," Schildkraut declared with a nearly religious reverence as the curtains drew to a close. Thus ended the premiere of the 1955 production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, written by beloved American playwrights Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Anne's closing quote, derived from her entry of July 15, 1944, reflected the diarist's sentiments, but only a carefully chosen selection of them. Gone was the diarist's assessment of the "wilderness" in which she found herself, of the "approaching thunder" that she aptly perceived would be her eventual end. Gone, too, was the appropriate context of the events that occurred after this entry, events that led the young girl to state to a longtime friend who was imprisoned with her in Bergen-Belsen: "I don't

² The hiders were deported from the Westerbork Transit Camp in Holland to Auschwitz in early September of 1944. From there, Anne and her sister, Margot, were sent to Bergen-Belsen, where they died of typhus in February or March of 1945. Anne's mother, Edith, died of starvation and exhaustion at Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 6, 1945. Hermann van Pels, patriarch of the family that shared the Secret Annex with the Franks, was sent to the Auschwitz gas chambers in the fall of 1944, while his wife, Auguste, died near Theresienstadt after a series of death marches in the spring of 1945. Their son, Peter, perished in Mauthausen in May 1945, shortly before the camp was liberated. The final member of the hiding place, Friedrich "Fritz" Pfeffer, was transported from Auschwitz to Neuengamme, where he died of disease on December 20, 1944.

have any parents anymore,”³ so certain of her family’s deaths that she could not have fathomed her father’s liberation from the Auschwitz extermination camp in late January of 1945.

Meanwhile, audiences in America and abroad responded increasingly well to the young heroine, lauding the heroine as “at once typical and extraordinary,” their reactions suggesting no demand for increased context that informed entries such as the one of July 15, 1944.⁴

Overwhelmingly, the deliberately optimistic portrayal of the young diarist had charmed American audiences, and the quote selected from that same diary entry ironically served as the driving force. In the decades that followed, the public increasingly fell for the same optimistic characterization, growing ever more possessive and defensive of their ascribed version of her, a trend that has persisted through the present day, in spite of increasing attempts to fracture Anne Frank’s long accepted image. Whether they consider the contextual details, such as the grim words that surrounded the iconic “good at heart” quote, is only secondary to the preservation of the saintly optimist presented onstage over sixty years ago.

Where, then, did this dichotomy emerge, and why has it persisted even as it is increasingly challenged? The answer lies within the play, the process by which the “good at heart” was extracted from the larger examination of the “wilderness” of a world that threatened the diarist’s very life. With the dramatization, as well as the subsequent film based upon its script, a specifically manufactured Anne Frank was forced into the public culture, born not of the goal of accurately transmitting her story but of being widely marketable to an American audience. The tactic of creating a universalized and spiritually triumphant image of the diarist, tailored to specifically Americanized ideals of the 1950s, was a resounding success, as audiences began to synthesize the historical story via the theatrical production. As a result, as the collective

³ Willy Lindwer. *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank*. (New York, NY: Random House, 1991).

⁴ Barbara Epstein. Letter to the Author, *Commentary Magazine* (February 1, 1956).

American fondness for Anne Frank's story grew, so did the popularity of the idealized image presented in the play, and the public became increasingly defensive of her optimistic portrayal.

While the commodification of Anne's image certainly contributed to the wide readership of her diary and its unique appeal in the postwar world, it did not come without negative ramifications that must be considered when assessing the evolution of the perception created via the theatrical production. Simply, it is not enough to consider what the playwrights chose to portray, or even how they chose to portray it. In order to gain insight into the creation of Anne Frank's onstage characterization and its lasting effects on the American public, the elements that were *not* included, as well as those that were significantly altered, must also be considered.

Thus, this project will examine the legacy of Anne Frank's image in America via the theatrical adaptations of her story to demonstrate how the playwrights' manipulation of her characterization in anticipation of public demands resulted in an Americanized heroine and, as a byproduct, stripped the story of its grim historical context, relegated the supporting roles to one-dimensional stock characterizations, and marginalized the very Jewish faith for which the hidings were persecuted. In examining the play's treatment, in conjunction with the public response, at three crucial moments in the historical timeline (the original production, the 1997 script adaptation by Wendy Kesselman, and resurgences of the story in the current decade), it becomes clear that, although the clamor for a more holistic theatrical portrayal of the story has increasingly risen in crescendos throughout recent years, the singular image the public as a whole is willing to accept remains that of the optimistic and spiritually triumphant Anne first presented in 1955.

Historiography

As scholar Alex Sagan argues in his essay, “An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank’s Canonization in Postwar Culture,” the postwar world was none too eager to return to its wartime past, least of all through forms of entertainment, as evidenced by the production team’s reluctance to present material that the audience would perceive as alienating.⁵ Though the American public received Anne Frank’s diary warmly, its success was an anomaly in this specific climate of avoidance. As such, the historiography surrounding the topic remained thin for a startling number of decades, with much of the relevant material that initially emerged focusing on biographical disseminations of the diarist’s life. Earliest among them was Ernst Schnabel’s *The Footsteps of Anne Frank*, published in 1958 and billed as “the essential companion to the *Diary of a Young Girl*.” Schnabel’s work was formative within the field, as it was the first biographical piece to emerge that offered a glimpse into the events that shaped the diary. Biographies remain the most popular lens through which the story is examined, with authors such as Carol Ann Lee and Melissa Müller offering interpretations of the diarist’s life in the 1990s and early 2000s, alongside documentarian Willy Lindwer’s *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank*, which creates a narrative of Anne’s life after her arrest via interviews with those who had been imprisoned with her.

Though the gap in scholarship between Schnabel’s initial biography and those that emerged in the 1990s appears wide, that which exists between the diary’s publication and the first works of scholarly analysis of its contents is far vaster. It was not until the era of Wendy Kesselman’s updated adaptation of the script that the scholarly public turned its collective attention to the discrepancies between the historical story and the theatrical interpretation and

⁵Alex Sagan. “An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank’s Canonization in Postwar Culture.” *German Politics and Society* 13, no. 3 (1995): 95-107. Accessed February 9, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23736492>.

began to reassess Anne Frank's cultural image, thus forming the current historiography on the topic.

Among the first to write about the issue of Anne Frank's cultural image in regard to the 1955 theatrical production was Lawrence Graver in *An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary*. Graver's work focuses on Meyer Levin, a journalist who, when rejected as the playwright for Anne's story, claimed that his dismissal was ultimately an indicator of the creative team's push for her "non-Jewish" image. This book assumes an empirical approach to the controversy, highlighting its significance in regard to the difficult process by which Holocaust stories are transmitted to the mass public. Also covering this issue is Ralph Melnick's *The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank: Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary*, which highlights the creative team's suppression of Levin's script through analysis of primary sources such as legal documents and correspondence. Though not as subjective as its predecessor, Melnick's work is indicative of the new questions arising in the historiography during the mid-1990s, specifically as they pertained to the negative consequences of the original creative team's decisions.

Also contributing to the conversation on Anne Frank's image during this time period is Cynthia Ozick, whose article "Who Owns Anne Frank?" claimed that each incarnation of Anne Frank's story, from the publication of the diary itself to the theatrical and film adaptations, have forced audiences to appropriate and bastardize her image. Though her claims are occasionally extreme, Ozick's article highlights the particular phenomenon of Anne's elevation as a cultural icon, with an emphasis on its negative implications, and complicates the historiography by begging the question of why her cultural role has evolved so extensively since the diary's publication. Ozick's article also marked a crucial moment within the historiography, as its

incendiary content stirred sufficient outrage to bring the conversation about Anne Frank's cultural image back into the public sphere.

It was during this time that Alex Sagan's 1995 "An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank's Canonization in Postwar Culture" was published, in which the author traces the success of the play in 1950s America and Germany to the very quote that was plucked from the July 15, 1944 entry for the play's conclusion. Because of the heroine's conciliatory belief in human goodness, Sagan argues that audiences in both countries were uniquely willing to synthesize her story, as its effect was "to sugarcoat and obscure the nature of the genocidal persecutions that led to her death."⁶ Thus, it was indeed within this uniquely sanitized image that the story found its place in American culture, while managing to remain palatable to German audiences, as well.

After the fervor of the new historiography in the mid- to late-1990s, scholars in the new millennium began to view the issue as a whole, tracking the evolution of Anne Frank's cultural image in light of the completeness of resources now available. Notable among them is *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife* by Francine Prose, which assesses the cultural image of Anne Frank via the diary and the theatrical script. Prose approaches Anne Frank's diary and its subsequent interpretations from the perspective of a writer, providing a critique of both Anne as a writer and of the means through which her story has been transmitted to audiences since its initial publication. Similarly, Edna Nahshon's scholarly article, "Anne Frank: From Page to Stage," covers the process by which Anne Frank's story was adapted for the stage to discuss the playwrights' decisions via their anticipated reactions of the 1950s American audience. This work is crucial to the historiography of this topic because it examines the construction of Anne's onstage image and lends credence to the argument that many of the decisions made during the playwriting process were the direct result of the script being written for American audiences.

⁶ Ibid.

In 2002, Judith Doneson, who previously approached the symbolic angle of the production in her article, “Feminine Stereotypes of Jews in Holocaust Films: Focus on *The Diary of Anne Frank*,”⁷ published her monograph, *The Holocaust in American Film*, in which she disseminates the process by which the diary was adapted for the 1959 film interpretation of the story. A Jewish Studies scholar, Doneson primarily focuses on the film’s treatment of the characters’ Judaism to demonstrate that the play and subsequent film were symptomatic of the larger Americanization of the Holocaust that has occurred via American interpretations.

Similarly, Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer discusses the overarching issues of depicting the Holocaust to American audiences via artistic means in his article, “Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen,” utilizing Goodrich and Hackett’s *The Diary of Anne Frank* as an unsuccessful symptom of this process.⁸ Arguing that the event is impossible to convey to audiences that lack significant familiarity with it, Langer claims that Americanized dramatizations reassert the concept of fate over doom in order to avoid presenting the concept that the victims perished “for nothing.”⁹ He argues that Goodrich and Hackett’s script

⁷ Judith Doneson. “Feminine Stereotypes of Jews in Holocaust Films: Focus on *The Diary of Anne Frank*.” In *The Netherlands and Nazi Genocide: Papers of the 21st Annual Scholars Conference*, edited by G. Jan Colijn and Marcia S. Littell, 139-151. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press. - Arguing that negative stereotypes of Jews as “feminine” and Christians as “masculine” have pervaded representations of the Holocaust, Doneson analyzes Goodrich and Hackett’s script as a case study to illustrate this portrayal as a symptom of the Americanization of the story. In doing so, she first examines the eight Jewish characters versus the two Christians who helped to conceal them. The “weak, passive Jew(s)” depended upon the strength and heroism of their Christian protectors, thereby illustrating a stereotypical gender dynamic that inadvertently paints the Jewish characters in a negative light.

⁸ Langer’s analysis may be found in the scholarly synthesis, *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Literature*, edited by Hyman A. Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer. This publication, as well as *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory* (edited by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler) are the only published collections of essays currently available that are devoted solely to the topic of Anne Frank’s life and cultural interpretations.

⁹ Lawrence Langer. “The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen.” In *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*, edited by Hyman Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer, 198-202. (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

epitomizes this tendency, emphasizing heroic dignity in the face of generalized adversity, thereby refusing to challenge the notion that the Holocaust changed the perception of human dignity. Further, Langer argues that their script “mitigates despair”¹⁰ by insisting that the characters’ deaths were not in vain and, on the whole, presenting the issue of the Holocaust without the grim contextual details. It is in this tendency that its Americanization becomes apparent, as the tragedy is ultimately buried and the doom denied.¹¹

Though recent scholars have focused on varying aspects of Anne Frank’s cultural image, a certain homogeny has nevertheless been reached among their work, as all discuss the creative team’s impetus to manufacture a marketable image of Anne Frank, specific to American audiences of the mid-1950s. Though some hint at the dichotomous relationship between the historical events and the theatrical interpretation of them, a complicated discussion of how the public has synthesized Anne’s image via the play over time, as well as the negative characterizations and overall lack of Jewishness that arose as the result of Anne’s universal image, is still notably missing. As such, this project is necessary in order to further complicate the current discussion of Anne Frank’s role within the public and place the formation of her image into an ongoing timeline of modern American culture.

Methodology

In order to demonstrate the role of the 1955 script adaptation in creating the accepted American image of Anne Frank, this project examines the developments surrounding the theatrical interpretation of her story chronologically. Chapter One discusses the process by which Goodrich and Hackett created the original script to illuminate the deliberate creation of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For more on Langer’s analysis of Anne Frank’s diary, see “The Uses – and Misuses – of a Young Girl’s Diary: ‘If Anne Frank Could Return from Among the Murdered, She Would Be Appalled,’” also published in *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*.

her Americanized characterization and its rapid absorption into the public consciousness. In doing so, this chapter also examines its negative effects – including the minimization of the hidens’ Judaism, the transformation of the supporting characters into overgeneralized stock characters, and the downplaying of the extent of the Holocaust – and how those effects were reflected in the public’s reactions to the production. This analysis is largely informed by the use of primary source documents related to the creation of the production, including correspondence between Otto Frank and the playwrights, planning documents for the script’s construction, and a journal kept by the playwrights during the writing process. Further, this chapter presents a textual analysis of the script in order to demonstrate the effects of Anne’s universalization, including the generalization of the supporting characters and the subduing of the hidens’ Judaism. Finally, public reaction is analyzed via a wide selection of theatrical reviews published in national newspapers, as well as the box office grosses for the first year of performances. Secondary sources, such as Leonard Dinnerstein’s *Anti-Semitism in America* and Michelle Mart’s *Eye on Israel* are used in conjunction with monographs such as John Elsom’s *Cold War Theatre* to place the creation of Anne’s character in the wider context of 1950s America and demonstrate the deliberate nature of her universalization, specific to the audiences of the time.

Chapter Two shifts the focus to the 1990s, a time during which Holocaust depictions were on the rise in popular culture and breaking research surrounding the story of Anne Frank came to light. In doing so, this chapter argues that, in spite of these developments, Americans demonstrated a widespread resistance to perceptions and interpretations that challenged their ascribed version of the diarist – the very characterization created and perpetuated by the original production. As this is particularly evidenced in the audience reaction to the 1997 script by Wendy Kesselman, this chapter provides a comparative textual analysis Kesselman’s script

versus the original by Goodrich and Hackett to demonstrate the attention being paid to the aforementioned negative effects of Anne's Americanized image. Further, newspaper reviews and box office data are utilized in order to illustrate the public's varied reaction to Kesselman's interventions, the mercurial nature of which complicate the notion that the increasingly tolerant climate of the 1990s would lead to the acceptance of a more holistic portrayal of the diarist. Dinnerstein's monograph continues the story of American attitudes toward the Jewish faith in order to contextualize the environment in which Kesselman's production emerged. Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* also informs the scholarship to highlight the growing American demand for moralized Holocaust interpretations that arose in the 1990s.

Finally, Chapter Three brings the study into the modern day in order to demonstrate the dichotomy occurring in American society regarding the universalized image of Anne Frank and the play's role in perpetuating it. Three case studies of theatrical productions on the university, community, and professional level demonstrate a shift toward improved awareness of the negative effects of Anne's universalized characterization, while reviews of the professional production demonstrate a public that is still largely unwilling to allow their perception of the diarist to evolve past the image that arose in the 1950s. Further, public reactions against the alternative history novelizations about Anne Frank's story emphasize the fervor with which audiences have defended the accepted version of the story. Earlier scholarship, including Elsom's *Cold War Theatre*, are recalled in order to demonstrate an ongoing American need to regard Anne's characterization as a reflection of the public's own morality, an unrealistically canonized point in the binary of "good versus evil" presented by the script. Thus, this chapter brings to light the common threads that run through American audiences of the 1950s through

the modern day, threads that create the continued demand for the optimistic image of the diarist created for the original theatrical adaptation.

Why This Play?

In examining the dichotomy between history and the stage and its effects on the lasting cultural perceptions of Anne Frank's story, the question of artistic interpretation is an unavoidable and clearly valid one. Plays, films, and even novelizations of historical events are primarily forms of entertainment, no matter how solemn; their responsibility to accurately disseminate historical stories falls second to their demand to entertain, and the concept of artistic license is certainly a legitimate consideration. While this is, in essence, true, Goodrich and Hackett's (and, later, Kesselman's) *The Diary of Anne Frank* complicates these notions. "Given that a great deal of the play's dramatic power derives from its historicity, the test of accuracy or faithfulness to the subject matter is unavoidable," Sagan writes in his 1995 article. The contents of such plays "derive much of their dramatic effectiveness and force from their claim to represent real people, events, and circumstances."¹²

This is the theory which informs this project and lends it its relevance. When Goodrich and Hackett set about adapting Anne Frank's diary for the stage, they did not claim creative license. Their primary concern was capturing the essence of the diary and the events from which it was derived, as evidenced by their exhaustive research into life in Amsterdam, Jewish traditions, and even teenage development.¹³ Further, after much debate, the playbill for the 1955 premiere specifically noted that the script was based upon true events, thus holding it to a certain level of responsibility to its audience. While the disclaimer certainly did not contractually bind

¹² Sagan, 98.

¹³ These measures are detailed in the playwrights' journal, published in September of 1956 in the *New York Times*.

the authors to historical accuracy, they were entrusted with retelling the story to the audience (and, incidentally, audiences for decades to come), many of whom were not highly familiar with the story prior to watching it. The utilization of artistic license is “not really in dispute,” writes Sagan. The question arises, however, because it “evokes our pathos not because of dramatic devices...but because we know it to have occurred in fact.”¹⁴

Sagan’s assessment has maintained its relevance within the twenty-first century, as both the 1955 and 1997 versions of the script are regularly being produced and even utilized to introduce young students to the concept of the Holocaust. As such, audiences are increasingly synthesizing the play’s contents in conjunction with Anne Frank’s story – contents that, though the events upon which they were based are clear, either skew or entirely fabricate elements of the iconic story contained within the diary. Thus, the idealized image of Anne Frank is preserved in American culture, perpetuating along with it the negative ramifications of her universalization.

¹⁴ Sagan, 98.

CHAPTER ONE

MARKETING ANNE FRANK: THE CREATION OF AN AMERICANIZED ICON

When *The Diary of Anne Frank* premiered on Broadway in 1955, the creative team responsible for its production enjoyed such critical success that within a few years of its premiere, there was already talk of adapting the script for film. However, when Charlotte Kaletta, wife of Friedrich “Fritz” Pfeffer, one of the eight individuals forced into hiding alongside Anne Frank, heard of the plans to create the film, she wrote to Otto Frank and begged him to revise her husband’s portrayal as an unattached man with no religious affiliations. She and her husband had known the Frank family prior to his hiding with them, and she and Otto had grown closer after the war. Surely, she thought, Otto would consider her plea. Thus, the response she received was likely startling. “A play cannot mirror reality,”¹⁵ wrote playwrights Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, echoed by the usually diplomatic Otto Frank, who informed her that she should not expect “an historical truth” from the film and that to do so would be “childish.”¹⁶ Incensed, Kaletta ceased contact with Otto and the creative team, and Fritz Pfeffer’s offending theatrical portrayal carried over to the screen.

The conflict between Kaletta and the team behind the creation of the play speaks to a larger issue surrounding the theatrical interpretation of historical stories. That is, do they have a

¹⁵ Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett to Charlotte Kaletta, in *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* by Carol Ann Lee. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).

¹⁶ Otto Frank to Charlotte Kaletta, in *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* by Carol Ann Lee. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).

responsibility of maintaining historical accuracy, or are they incapable of bearing “historical truth,” as claimed by Otto Frank and the playwrights? What causes these historical inaccuracies, and, most importantly, what is the lasting effect of these misrepresentations on public synthesis of the story? This issue is illustrated strongly in the creation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a production fraught with inaccuracies that created a sizable impact on public consumption of the historical story. Thus, this chapter will examine the process by which Anne Frank’s story was adapted for the stage to argue how the demands of 1955 audiences resulted in a uniquely Americanized and highly moralized heroine, a cultural figure that the public quickly and protectively absorbed into its consciousness, yet one that was created at the expense of the representation of the hidiers’ Judaism, the portrayal of the secondary characters, and the overall depiction of the Holocaust’s harsh reality.

Meyer Levin and the Rejected Script

Prior to Goodrich and Hackett’s involvement in the script, Jewish playwright Meyer Levin wrote to Otto Frank and implored him to consider adapting his daughter’s story into a theatrical script. Though Otto possessed doubts about the viability of staging the story, suggesting in an early letter to Levin that such a work would “be rather different from the real contents of her book,”¹⁷ he eventually warmed to the idea and collaborated with Levin in 1950. Having received overwhelmingly positive responses from readers since the diary’s first publication in 1947, Otto possessed a sense of duty to share his daughter’s story with widespread audiences, and a play seemed a logical means by which to do so. For the next two years, Levin acted as Otto’s agent, submitted script drafts, and began to secure members of the creative team.

¹⁷ Otto Frank to Meyer Levin, in *The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank: Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary* by Ralph Melnick. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

However, per the suggestions of producer Kermit Bloomgarden, Levin was ultimately rejected as playwright and renowned, non-Jewish, American playwrights Goodrich and Hackett were assigned to the task. The husband-and-wife team was already famous for their involvement in several successful scripts and screenplays, such as *The Thin Man*, *Father of the Bride*, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and *It's a Wonderful Life* by the time they were approached to adapt Anne Frank's story for the stage. Their qualifications and popularity were certainly evident to the producers, as well as Otto Frank himself. However, the thoroughly offended Levin perceived his rejection as a result of the creative team's underlying wish to eliminate all Jewish elements from the production and launched an obsessive legal battle against Otto Frank and the creative team, claiming breach of contract and fraud, an entanglement that would last several years after the play's premiere.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Goodrich and Hackett embarked upon the rigorous process of adapting Anne Frank's story from her diary to the stage. In addition to creating the character of Anne, the playwrights were also tasked with representing the seven other individuals that spent two years in hiding with her: her parents, Otto and Edith, and her sister, Margot; family friends Hermann and Auguste van Pels and their son, Peter; and acquaintance Fritz Pfeffer. In doing so, Goodrich and Hackett maintained the pseudonyms that Anne had assigned to the hiders in her diary. Her family members' names remained intact, but the van Pelses became Herman, Petronella, and Peter van Daan and Fritz Pfeffer was immortalized as Alfred Dussel.

Creating Anne Frank

In examining the impetus behind the authors' goals for cultivating Anne Frank's onstage image, their projected audience must be considered in a broader context. From the earliest correspondence, the production team made clear their goal of creating the most universal version

¹⁸ Meyer Levin. *The Obsession*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

of Anne possible to meet the social and political constructs of their target audience: that is, the average American citizen of the mid-1950s. What did these particular individuals hope to obtain from the productions that they attended? Broadly, the answer to this question lies within the Cold War, which had a profound effect on forms of entertainment such as film, television, and theatre, as Americans sought to have their political concerns assuaged by the action presented before them.

“In the Broadway musicals of the early 1950s, the innocent girl usually married the hero, while the flighty one got stuck with the no-good gambler. By such means, audiences could be persuaded that these were the norms of behavior, whether they tallied with real life or not,” writes historian John Elsom in his book *Cold War Theatre*.¹⁹ Elsom explains that McCarthy-era entertainment was often expected to serve as reassurance to the American audience of the triumph of “good” and “right” over evil. With the expectation of justice to triumph, audiences sought out constructs of goodness within the productions, be they “fashionable, patriotic, or racial,”²⁰ and were uneasy if not met with a clear distinction in this regard.

In light of these demands, the story of an innocent young girl who falls victim to incomprehensible evil was not likely to succeed without assigning a very specific “voice” to the heroine. Thus began what scholars, including Holocaust historian Lawrence Langer, described as “the Americanization of the Holocaust,” or the overall downplaying of the characters’ doom to make the event more palatable to American audiences.²¹ This tendency is epitomized by the authors’ obscuring of the hidings’ eventual fate, a decision that is especially noticeable in the

¹⁹ John Elsom. *Cold War Theatre*. (New York, NY: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, 1992).

²⁰ Ibid, 6.

²¹ Lawrence Langer. “The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen,” in *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*, ed. Hyman Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer. (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 198-202.

downplayed presence of the arresting Nazi officers onstage at the play's conclusion: the families' captors are never revealed and, instead, represented only by footsteps and voices offstage. The hidiers, after anxiously debating their fate, choose to go down the stairs to meet the awaiting soldiers rather than waiting for them to break into the hiding place. At no point are Nazi soldiers ever depicted.²²

Following agent Leah Salisbury's request of Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, the authors were quickly subjected to pressure from the creative staff to convey certain elements through their writing. The team was meticulous, rejecting their scripts multiple times, paying particular attention to the character of Anne. It is clear that crafting Anne's image was the priority of the team from the earliest planning stages. A scene breakdown from the second draft of Goodrich and Hackett's script is particularly telling. As the play comes to a close, their goals for the final scenes include: "Anne has come to believe that people are really good at heart," and, further, "Anne, after being cooped up for so long, enjoyed the air and sunshine in the concentration camp."²³ Early correspondence between Otto Frank and the creative team makes multiple mentions of capturing the "spirit of the diary," alluding that the proper resonance of Anne's voice as an author was among their top concerns.²⁴

However, determining that voice would prove to be a complicated process for Goodrich and Hackett. Goodrich, whose letter to Otto Frank states that she had "prayed that we had

²² Holocaust scholar Carl Sagan credits this, among the generally optimistic tone of the production, to the play's success, both in postwar United States and in Germany. German audiences, who were extremely reluctant to engage in a meaningful dialogue about their recent past, were able to consume Goodrich and Hackett's script particularly because "the depiction of German criminality was kept to an absolute minimum."

²³ Second Draft Scene Construction, August 1954. Box 10, Folder 19, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

²⁴ Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. "Diary of the Diary." *New York Times*, September 30, 1956.

conveyed the spirit of the diary,”²⁵ was understandably devastated with each critique of their products. Goodrich’s journal seems to suggest an omnipresent negativity, perhaps originating from the complexities of the demands placed upon the playwrights. “This is not like any other job we have done. Terrible emotional impact. I cry all the time,” Goodrich wrote, early in the production process.²⁶ Other entries make references to arguments between the authors and, following the rejection of an early draft by both Otto Frank and producer Kermit Bloomgarden, a particularly startling entry reads: “So blue about play ready to cut my throat.”²⁷

The “devastating criticism” that resulted in the aforementioned entry came in the form of a kindly-worded letter from Otto Frank, who expressed his hesitation to send such a disappointing response to the playwrights that he knew had put forth such a great effort.²⁸ Otto’s gentle criticism, written in June of 1954, makes mention of the script’s shortcomings in demonstrating the Frank family’s dynamic and suggests some revisions to the opening scene in which Otto returns from the concentration camp to be given Anne’s diary. However, the bulk of Otto’s criticisms lay in the portrayal of his younger daughter:

Generally one can say that I, as a layman, cannot have the right judgment about the dramatic values of the play. I agree and do not want to give any. But, having read thousands of reviews and hundreds of personal letters about Anne’s book from different countries in the world, I know what creates an impression of it on people, and those impressions ought to be conveyed by the play to the public.²⁹

²⁵ Frances Goodrich to Otto Frank, June 1954. Box 8, Folder 28, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

²⁶ Goodrich and Hackett, 1956.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Otto Frank to Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, June 14, 1954. Box 8, Folder 28, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

Reading this letter, it becomes clear that Otto Frank was primarily concerned with conveying an image of his daughter that would be as widely appealing as her diary. As such, the need for a universal depiction began to appear early within the team's goals for Anne's character.

Additionally, Otto writes that Anne's "moral strength and optimistic view on life" should be a major point of emphasis during the revision process.³⁰ A subsequent meeting between the playwrights and producer Kermit Bloomgarden later that summer confirmed that the central purpose of Anne's character was to imbue the play with a "spiritual lift."³¹

Representation of Judaism

The most obvious aspect of the historical story that was sacrificed for the sake of Anne's universalization was the incorporation of the characters' Jewish faith, something that Goodrich and Hackett greatly downplayed in their final product. Though the playwrights were not Jewish, the journal kept by Goodrich during the script's creation suggests that they took pains to study Jewish history and cultural traditions early in the writing process.³² Thus, it is clear that the downplaying of the characters' Judaism was not the product of ambivalence or unwillingness to research on their part. Instead, the impetus behind their approach may be better understood through examination of the particularities of an American audience that had already proven so demanding for the production.

In his monograph, *Anti-Semitism in America*, Leonard Dinnerstein argues that American anti-Semitism hit its peak during the years of World War II: "Most Americans thought of their country as a Protestant one, and Christian generally meant Protestantism not Catholicism when

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Goodrich and Hackett, 1956.

³² Ibid.

applied to the United States,” writes Dinnerstein, adding, “Therefore, individuals and groups of Catholic and Jewish backgrounds were often victims of antagonism from others, even though legally...they had equal rights and opportunities.”³³ Claiming that the existing anti-Semitic traditions that had been deeply rooted in the United States’ ideology were exacerbated by rising trends in pseudoscientific racism and the Bolshevik Red Scare in the years between the World Wars, Dinnerstein argues that Americans’ fear of “foreigners” and “anarchists” quickly evolved into fear of Jews.³⁴

Though these trends began to reverse following the end of World War II, the period of recovery proposed by Dinnerstein was not a swift or immediate one. Instead, the postwar years that witnessed the creation of Goodrich and Hackett’s script was one in which the status of Jews in America was unstable at best, as they began for the first time, in the words of scholar Michelle Mart, to make their transition from “outsiders” to “insiders.”³⁵ Mart, who analyzes the postwar period as a time in which anti-Semitism was redefined (along with similar prejudicial behavior), as being “un-American,” generally aligns with Dinnerstein’s analysis.³⁶ “Even many Americans who did not subscribe to anti-Semitic ideas still believed that there was no room for diverse minorities in the United States” prior to World War II, Mart writes.³⁷ In the postwar push to emphasize universal values amongst American citizens – values that included the rejection of anti-Semitism – Jewish portrayals in popular culture were revised. However, as Mart argues,

³³ Leonard Dinnerstein. *Anti-Semitism in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

³⁴ *Ibid*, 79.

³⁵ Michelle Mart. *Eye on Israel: How America Came to View the Jewish State as an Ally*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006).

³⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

“Jews were not merely embraced in the popular culture because they were just like other Americans. Jews were also depicted as having particular qualities that were valued.”³⁸

Mart’s illumination of the universalizing movement that occurred in postwar America clearly complicates the understanding of the environment in which Goodrich and Hackett wrote their script. As Jews’ portrayals in American popular culture were evolving, so were the non-Jewish expectations of them. Viewed in light of Mart’s analysis, the motivations behind Anne Frank’s universal image become clear: American audiences of the mid-1950s wanted a universal heroine, but the very Judaism that contextualized her story had to be manufactured to project only generalized and moralistic qualities, if it appeared at all.

When the play premiered, it was clear that the authors’ alterations were successful. However, as Meyer Levin pointed out five years after the premiere in an open letter to Otto Frank, the result was a Holocaust story without significantly Jewish characters. “Every Jewish thought...is rigorously eliminated from the ‘diary’ as presented on stage and on screen,” Levin wrote, still incensed at his script’s rejection by Otto Frank and the producers.³⁹ Though Levin’s tactics were aggressive, his sentiment reflected the clearest dichotomy between his script and the one that ultimately reached the American stage: the inclusion of specific references to the hiders’ Jewish faith in Levin’s script versus its virtual elimination in the accepted version by Goodrich and Hackett. A comparative examination of the two scripts illuminates the “rigorous elimination” of which Levin accused the creative team and further demonstrates the deliberate glossing-over of the Jewish faith that occurred in the interest of appeasing American audience members.

³⁸ Ibid, 22.

³⁹ Meyer Levin. “An Open Letter to Otto Frank.” *Jerusalem Post*, March 25, 1960.

Examining Levin's script, the most distinguishing element that emerges is his inclusion of specifically Jewish elements. From the oblique to the specific, Levin weaves references to the hidens' faith throughout his work, most notably bookending the production with the recitation of the psalm: "O Absalom, my son, my son. Would that it were I instead of thee."⁴⁰ The inclusion of this mournful passage provides a stark contrast to the Goodrich and Hackett version (which ends in Anne's iconic "good at heart" line) in both inclusion of Judaism and in tone, presenting a somber reminder of the events which shaped the characters' lives.

The most obvious area of comparison between the accepted and rejected scripts may be found within the scene depicting the hidens' Hanukkah celebration. The closing scene of the first act in Goodrich and Hackett's script, the celebration serves as somewhat of a background to the larger action occurring amongst the characters: most notably, Anne's consolation of the downtrodden hidens through the bestowing of handmade Hanukkah gifts and the climactic moment in which a downstairs thief threatens the hidens' sense of security.⁴¹ The Judaism, for all intents and purposes, is never more than a passing thought. Even the song is changed from the traditional Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages) to the English-language folk song, "Hanukkah Oh Hanukkah," illustrating the authors' reluctance to include elements that they viewed as inherently alienating to audiences – in this case, the traditional Hebrew language.

Levin's Hanukkah scene also includes a scare of discovery, but this is roughly where the similarities between the scripts end. In Levin's script, an abrupt ringing of the doorbell below interrupts the hidens' preparation for the celebration. Quiet panic ensues until Herman van Daan ventures downstairs and discovers that the culprits were simply children carrying out a

⁴⁰ Meyer Levin. *Anne Frank*. (Privately published by the author, 1952).

⁴¹ Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. (New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1955).

traditional St. Nicholas Day prank. Margot expresses her surprise at this, stating: “I forgot! On St. Nicholas Eve, children go around ringing doorbells! It’s just mischief.”⁴² Even this brief distraction does not allow the audience to forget the hidens’ religion, as their unfamiliarity with Christian traditions poignantly reinforces their religious differences.

In contrast to this instance are the sentiments expressed by Goodrich and Hackett’s version of Alfred Dussel during the Hanukkah celebration. As Anne leads the group in lamenting the abbreviated celebration imposed upon them by their unusual conditions, Dussel expresses his confusion regarding the holiday tradition. As Anne explains that presents may generally be expected as part of the festivities, the perpetually confused Dussel asks, “Presents?” After Anne’s confirmation, his inquiry that follows is shocking: “Like our Saint Nicholas’ Day?”⁴³ In these lines, Dussel possesses a similar ignorance as that of the hidens in Levin’s script, but the point of unawareness is now, confusingly, the Jewish tradition rather than the Christian. Though Goodrich and Hackett’s choice to include these lines was a decision made in the interest of bringing familiarity to their target audience of American Christians, Judith Doneson writes, “it clearly indicates a lack of imagination on the part of the Hacketts, who could find no other means to inform their audience about Hanukkah. For a man’s biography is also history.”⁴⁴

Moreover, references to the Jewish faith arise abundantly throughout Levin’s script in areas wholly absent from Goodrich and Hackett’s work. One such instance occurs early in the second act, in a scene in which Otto and Edith Frank privately converse as they are preparing

⁴² Levin, 60.

⁴³ Goodrich and Hackett, 53.

⁴⁴ Judith E. Doneson. *The Holocaust in American Film*. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1987).

gifts for the Hanukkah celebration. Edith, suggesting that they surrender themselves, begs the question: “Can God want us to hide from the fate he has prepared for us?”⁴⁵ Ultimately, she blames their situation on what she perceives to be their negligence of their faith, stating:

We haven’t loved our God, Otto. And since being here, it is strange, but I feel more and more His love for us... More and more I feel that He is going through this with us, and loves us, even if we don’t show our love for Him. Just as a mother loves her child, even if the love is not returned.⁴⁶

The dutiful Edith’s fears of religious shortcomings serve as a means to multiple ends in Levin’s script. First, they reflect a certain historical context, as Anne made multiple mentions in her entries of her mother and sister being notably more religious than she and her father.⁴⁷

Additionally, the obvious reference to a mother’s unreturned love recalls the events of the previous act, in which Anne has repeatedly spurned Edith’s motherly efforts. However, the most poignant implication of this scene is the reinforcement of the Jewish hidiers as the “others,” due to their faith. This manifests specifically in the phrasing Levin chose in the aforementioned lines: “We haven’t loved *our* God.” The Franks of Levin’s script are clearly not the ambiguous bearers of human suffering; they are specifically Jewish individuals forced into hiding due to faith-based persecution.

In Goodrich and Hackett’s script, however, even the lines that speak of the hidiers’ travail usually do so without naming the religious identity for which they were persecuted. In one of the play’s lengthiest discussions of the Jewish faith, Anne sits with Peter van Daan as their captors – unbeknownst to the pair – draw nigh downstairs. Following Anne’s quiet admission of “I wish

⁴⁵ Goodrich and Hackett, 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ In multiple diary entries, Anne makes mention of her mother’s encouragement of reading from prayer books and reciting bedtime prayers.

you had a religion, Peter,”⁴⁸ she discusses the benefits of religious belief, but is notably careful not to specify any certain denomination. “I don’t mean you have to be Orthodox...or believe in heaven and hell and purgatory and things,” she insists.⁴⁹ To this, the typically reticent Peter vents his frustration, blaming their suffering and captivity on their Jewish faith and eschewing his need for religion, much to Anne’s horror. Undeterred, the play’s heroine continues: “We’re not the only people that’ve had to suffer. There’ve always been people that’ve had to...sometimes one race...sometimes another.”⁵⁰ With this, a damper is placed on the final appearance of the Judaism that contextualizes the action, and when the play ends just a few pages later, the lasting impression presented to the audience is of a story of nonspecific suffering.

In her monograph, Doneson suggests that Goodrich and Hackett’s reluctance to specify the hidens’ Judaism exemplified Henry Popkin’s concept of the “de-Semitization” that took place in the American arts of this time period – an attempt at avoiding the complexities of anti-Semitism by ignorance of the differences of the faith.⁵¹ However, as has been made clear by Dinnerstein and Mart, cultural perceptions of Jews were beginning to shift in 1950s America, thus complicating the question of why audiences were presented with a play that many did not perceive to be specifically Jewish. The answer may be found in the creative team’s push for a universally appealing Anne, a protagonist who would act as more of a bearer of virtuous values than a persecuted Jewish girl.

⁴⁸ Goodrich and Hackett, 97.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Doneson, 65.

Effects on the Supporting Characters

In addition to the overall marginalization of the hidens' Judaism, the central goal of creating a widely appealing Anne Frank also damaged the characterizations of the others in hiding with her. At the base level, the creative team's excess focus on making an appealing story diverted their attention from the other characters, independent of their interactions with Anne, resulting in oversimplified and unflattering characterizations. For example, Otto Frank's letter of June 1954 speaks little of the supporting characters, aside from his vague protest that Margot was too "snappish" toward her sister, suggesting that her portrayal should reflect her "understanding, motherly, and helpful" nature.⁵² Otherwise, the non-central characters are referred to only obliquely in his critique, suggesting a far more lax attitude about capturing their "spirits" than that of Anne.

In addition, the emphasis of Anne as the ethical center of the play – the "good" in the "good versus evil" dichotomy that Cold War-era audiences demanded – required not only her uplift but also the comparative moral downgrading of those around her. Surrounding and reacting to an unrealistically elevated heroine, the supporting characters were relegated to generic and uncomplimentary roles that primarily served as foils to Anne's character rather than truly portraying the historical figures they were written to represent. Thus, the anticipated audience demands for Anne's character once again inhibited the interpretation of the story and, as examining the one-dimensionality of the supporting characters will demonstrate, continued to do so in the final draft of the script.

The characterizations that appeared in a scene breakdown of the second draft illustrate the negative ramifications the focus on Anne's characterization had on the supporting characters.

⁵² Otto Frank to Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, June 1954. Box 10, Folder 19, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

The playwrights' goals for the scenes make clear the heroes and the villains within the Secret Annex community, drawing a dichotomous line between the two families. For instance, an early scene in which the wives divide table linens is incorporated to illustrate Petronella van Daan's "irritability," and, later, "rudeness," while later action in the scene is incorporated to depict Edith Frank as the "peacemaker" of the house.⁵³ Similarly, the scene in which the residents agree to take in Mr. Dussel is described as the following: "Otto's decision to help critical conditions [of the] outside world by taking in another potential victim."⁵⁴ A few scenes later, Herman van Daan threatens to get rid of Peter's beloved cat, suggesting "self-interest in food taking precedence over any filial feelings or human feelings that he may possibly have had at some previous time."⁵⁵ Mr. Dussel's self-interest, along with that of Herman van Daan, is mentioned vaguely in a later scene, as well.

Perhaps the most telling of the moral elevation of Anne and her family is the pivotal scene in which Herman steals bread from the communal food storage – an entirely fictitious instance. After the action, the playwrights' goal is to leave the audience with the impression of "the Franks' sense of shame over the demoralization that has occurred during their enforced hiding."⁵⁶ The van Daans and Mr. Dussel are left with no redemption as the play draws to a close in the following scenes. Though the vilifying of the hidiers outside of the Frank family was unintentional, that the creative team would allow such unsympathetic depictions of the supposed protagonists points to a preoccupation with Anne's portrayal that negatively affected the other

⁵³ Second Draft Scene Construction, August 1954. Box 10, Folder 19, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

characters. Even the “heroic” Frank family is not exempt from this oversight. They are elevated only as a byproduct of Anne’s depiction as the moral center, not due to their independent merits, especially evidenced by the playwrights’ total negligence to mention Margot whatsoever in the scene breakdown.

Just months after the Broadway premiere, a *New Republic* theatre reviewer wrote the following of the production: “[Susan Strasberg] has not only the radiance which producers call ‘star quality’ but an uncommon range for even a very talented actress of her age. The achievement of the other actors is to conceal the fact that their characterizations are stock and might easily become tiresome.”⁵⁷ Though many reviewers praised the production, this brief review touched upon a fracture in the production: the portrayal of the supporting characters. As evidenced by the earliest documents of the creative team’s planning process, most of the character development was reserved for the character of Anne, leaving the rest to fall by the wayside as a result of her elevation to the moral touchstone of the play. Further, the production team’s ever-present concern of alienating largely non-Jewish audiences led to the oversimplification of the supporting characters, who were relegated to archetypal characterizations likely already familiar to American audiences.

What, then, was meant by the term “stock characterizations” and how did these characters fall into them? In general, “stock” may refer to any characterization that is over-generalized, barely developed past the stereotype it fulfills. Lists of stock characterizations are extensive, and though the aforementioned reviewer did not mention specifically which stocks the characters in *The Diary of Anne Frank* fulfilled, the source of the complaint becomes apparent when examining the production through the lens of common Western stereotypes of Jewish characters.

⁵⁷ “The Diary of Anne Frank.” *New Republic*, January 2, 1956: 20.

In his article, in which he explores onstage themes of Jewish identity, Jonathan Krasner discusses the use of Jewish stock characters in Western dramatizations. Among them, he lists “the overbearing, dominant Jewish mother, the impotent father, the overtly sexual *belle Juive*, the money-obsessed Jew, the sage but other-worldly elder, and the alienated child (usually son).”⁵⁸ With the wide availability of stock characters through which this production may be analyzed, Krasner’s list is among the most viable, as it directly addresses Jewish theatrical archetypes that he claims “can be traced back both to the Yiddish theatre and to the stock images of Jews in Western theatre, dating at least as early as William Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*.”⁵⁹ By analyzing Goodrich and Hackett’s script, the utilization of these stock characters in *The Diary of Anne Frank* becomes apparent.

As Edith Frank’s role never surpasses that of the mother in terms of its complexity, several instances arise in the script in which she fulfills this particular stereotype. From her raving at Herman van Daan following his theft of the bread (an action later justified by producer Kermit Bloomgarden as the depiction of “a woman fighting for her children”)⁶⁰ to her constant hand-wringing and henpecking of her youngest daughter, Goodrich and Hackett’s Edith Frank exemplifies every extreme of the Jewish mother stereotype. This is particularly evidenced in a passage in which Margot expresses her despair at their situation. To this, Edith responds: “You should be ashamed of yourself! Talking that way! Think how lucky we are! Think of the

⁵⁸ Jonathan Krasner. “The Interwar Family and American Jewish Identity in Clifford Odets’ ‘Awake and Sing.’” *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1), 2006. Indiana University Press: 2–30. JSTOR.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁶⁰ Kermit Bloomgarden to Otto Frank, August 12, 1975. Box 8, Folder 28, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

thousands dying in the war, every day! Think of the people in concentration camps!”⁶¹ This moment exemplifies the classic idea of the domineering, guilt-inducing Jewish mother described in Krasner’s article.

To a similar end, the character of Alfred Dussel, though pointedly not written as a father,⁶² fits easily into the “impotent” stereotype described by Krasner. Clearly employed as the comic relief, Dussel is constantly bewildered by his surroundings and blunders excessively through each scene, seemingly never grasping the situations unfolding around him. Throughout, Dussel’s impotence is pitiable, as suggested by his exchange with Anne early in the first act:

ANNE: Do you always live alone? Have you no family at all?

MR. DUSSEL: No one.

ANNE: How dreadful. You must be terribly lonely.

MR. DUSSEL: I’m used to it.⁶³

Herein, Mr. Dussel is instantly established as the outsider, unable to cling to a family unit in the manner of those surrounding him. As a result, his character lacks the ability to even assert himself through fulfillment of domestic leadership roles, as do the characters of Otto Frank and Herman van Daan. Thus, he becomes the archetypal “impotent Jew” of Western dramatizations, as described in Krasner’s article.

Petronella van Daan’s *belle Juive* becomes apparent from her first appearance, and her utilization in contrast to the matronly Edith reinforces her utilization as this archetype. The coquettish nature that Anne described in her diary is severely exaggerated, her character’s

⁶¹ Goodrich and Hackett, 73.

⁶² Fritz Pfeffer did, in fact, have a son from his first marriage that he sent to England prior to his own escape to Amsterdam. The son, Werner Pfeffer, survived the war, but there is no mention of him in the script.

⁶³ Goodrich and Hackett, 43.

behavior bordering on childish inappropriateness on several occasions. A soliloquy an instance in the first act illustrates this tendency:

And when I was sixteen! We were wearing our skirts very short those days and I had good looking legs. I still have ‘em. I may not be as pretty as I used to be, but I still have my legs. How about it, Mr. Frank?⁶⁴

During this, the stage direction instructs the actress portraying her to be “very flirtatious,” stating that “she pulls up her skirt to above her knees,” a gesture meant to attract the attention of Otto Frank.⁶⁵ Through these actions, Petronella van Daan becomes a negative utilization of the *belle Juive* stock character, lacking any true character development beyond sexualized actions, materialistic tendencies, and hysterics.

Her husband, meanwhile, becomes the “money-hungry Jew” archetype, yet his greed extends beyond monetary matters to include the most predominant form of currency within the Secret Annex: food. Perhaps the most overt stock characterization of the group, Herman van Daan is gluttonous, his mind never straying from the dwindling food supply that was to be shared between the eight hidiers. The epitome of this characterization is, of course, the scene in which he steals the bread and only justifies his actions with the line, “I’m hungry.”⁶⁶ However, this scene is simply the culmination of a characterization that the playwrights had crafted throughout the script. Described in the stage direction as “a portly man”⁶⁷ – the costume plot even suggesting that this be achieved through the use of padding – Herman van Daan is the glutton of the play, consuming or worrying about cigarettes or food in nearly every scene. When the residents are approached about taking Alfred Dussel into their hiding place, Otto Frank is

⁶⁴ Ibid, 30.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 87.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 10.

depicted as instantly and selflessly consenting to the plan. To this, Herman states: “The only thing I feel...there’s so little food as it is...and to take in another person...”⁶⁸ Emphasizing his greed, the stage direction instructs Peter to turn away from his father in shame at this statement.

As suggested by the aforementioned scene, Otto Frank is depicted as Herman’s perpetual foil throughout the play. Though not unflattering, his portrayal is clearly the authors’ utilization of the “sage elder” archetype of Jewish dramatic characters. Calm and morally upright, Otto is viewed unequivocally as the leader of the group, offering advice to Anne and the other hidiers that is unrealistically virtuous and logical. When the Annex collapses into chaos following Edith’s exposure of Herman’s theft, Otto detaches himself from the scene, woefully stating, “We don’t need the Nazis to destroy us. We’re destroying ourselves.”⁶⁹

In addition to serving as a moral compass for Anne and the supporting characters, Otto is also called upon for advice throughout the production, even from the audience. His closing line, “She puts me to shame,”⁷⁰ is one of instruction, telling the audience how to feel about the prolific diary entry that is read at the play’s close. Once again, the sage elder takes his place as the shepherd of those around them, “other-worldly” in his action as the surrogate narrator to the audience, thus reinforcing his character’s fulfillment of this stereotype.

Finally, Peter van Daan takes on the role of the “alienated child” among the Jewish stock characters, often expressing his wish for detachment from his parents both subtly and in his confidential conversations with Anne. During his parents’ arguments, the stage direction frequently instructs Peter to be visibly uncomfortable and attempt to separate himself from his family through physical actions such as turning away and shifting awkwardly. Further, his

⁶⁸ Ibid, 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 89.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 101.

statements to Anne make clear his alienation. “At least you’ve got someone you can talk to,”⁷¹ he tells Anne despondently as they commiserate about their families, obliquely referencing his perception of separateness from his own parents. His later confessions of plans to abandon his Jewish faith in the event of their liberation also serve to suggest an estrangement from those around him, and particularly his family.

Examining the characters through the lens of stock portrayals specific to Jewish dramatizations serves both to illustrate the critical complaint of underdeveloped characterizations as well as the larger issue of how Judaism was represented by the non-Jewish playwrights. However, what is perhaps most telling about the implementation of stock characters is not how they were used, but why the playwrights transformed historical figures into caricatures that so easily fit these molds. Unsurprisingly, the answer again lies within the demands of the 1950s audience. In his monograph, *American Culture in the 1950s*, Martin Halliwell explores the phenomenon of the stock character within 1950s television, stating that stock characterizations of the time were indicative of an escapist response to social conditions but were also “a relatively safe means to explore the fine line between social norms and their critique.”⁷² Using the lens of safety proposed by Halliwell, it is evident that these generalized characterizations came not as the intent to marginalize the figures they were written to represent but instead to provide a safe means to introduce Jewish characters to largely Christian audiences in the 1950s. Further, by presenting familiar archetypes rather than more fully realized characterizations, the playwrights were ultimately able to create a dichotomy between the protagonist and the supporting players without alienating an audience that was largely unprepared for a complex portrayal of Jewish characters.

⁷¹ Ibid, 76.

⁷² Martin Halliwell. *American Culture in the 1950s*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

The Public Response

In the weeks following the Broadway premiere, reviews of the play began to emerge in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States. Overwhelmingly, the news was good: critics and civilians alike were charmed by Susan Strasburg's interpretation of Anne and appropriately stilled by the untimely demise that befell her. Described as a "delicate, rueful, moving drama"⁷³ by *New York Times* reviewer Brooks Atkinson immediately following its premiere, Goodrich and Hackett's script was widely celebrated for its ability to present the touchingly human aspect of the story without dwelling on the characters' doom, of which the audience was already aware due to the prominence of the diary prior to the premiere of the play.

Naturally, the production was not without its negative reviews, though they were few and far between. Writing in the Jewish publication, *Commentary Magazine*, Algene Ballif railed against Goodrich and Hackett's interpretation, claiming, "Seldom do we glimpse the Anne Frank of the real diary."⁷⁴ Citing Anne's dramatized relationship with Peter van Daan as the epitome of the play's "central failure...to catch the spirit of the work from which it springs,"⁷⁵ Ballif wrote from the stance of a diary reader, her words echoing the elusive "spirit" of Anne's work that Otto Frank and the authors had so labored to represent.

Months after Ballif's review appeared in print, a *Commentary* reader, Barbara Epstein, wrote an impassioned rebuttal. Addressing Ballif's disappointment of Anne's presentation as an archetypal teenage girl, Epstein wrote: "Miss Ballif went to the theater expecting to find in Anne Frank a woman of 'high moral seriousness' – F. R. Leavis in a pinafore. She saw instead a

⁷³ Brooks Atkinson. "Theatre: The Diary of Anne Frank." *New York Times*, October 6, 1955: 24.

⁷⁴ Ballif, Algene. "Anne Frank on Broadway." *Commentary*, November 1955.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

bobby-sox Mae West. The complexity of Miss Ballif's visual problem is appalling."⁷⁶ Epstein supported her claims by arguing that, in spite of Anne's obvious advanced tendencies, she nevertheless "was a normal, in many ways still conventional, girl."⁷⁷ Citing instances from the diary in which Anne mentions her preoccupation with adolescent pastimes, Epstein was gravely offended by what she perceived to be Ballif's misinterpretation of the Anne Frank presented in the diary, once again calling the true spirit of the diary into question.

Epstein's response is indicative of a tendency already developing among the American theatergoing public at this time to create a specific vision of these characters – visions that some, like Epstein, were prepared to staunchly defend if challenged. Examining the multitude of reviews that arose after the production, it becomes clear that the supporting characters' onstage misrepresentation affected the public's synthesis of their roles in the story.

Because the roles of Peter van Daan and Margot Frank fade largely into the background when they do not interact directly with Anne, they are remembered sparingly by reviewers as "shy,"⁷⁸ and "loyal [and] placid,"⁷⁹ respectively. The bulk of the attention received by Peter's character is simply in the capacity of the love interest, and it is worth noting that he is occasionally not referred to by name at all but instead by the title of "her boyfriend."⁸⁰ Scarcely are they regarded independently, though Peter's status as Anne's love interest lends him more of the audience's attention than is ever afforded to Margot. Thus, the characters never evolve in the

⁷⁶ Barbara Epstein. Letter to the Author, *Commentary*, February 1, 1956.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Broadway Postscript." *Saturday Review*, October 22, 1955: 27-28.

⁷⁹ Atkinson, 24.

⁸⁰ "Broadway's Big Beginning." *Life* 39, October 7, 1955: 161-163.

audience's consideration beyond the roles of the love interest and the quiet, virtuous foil to the precocious Anne.

Similarly, Edith Frank becomes the “patient mother whose nerves are once unstrung”⁸¹ to Atkinson, an assessment echoed by Theophilus Lewis who, in his review in the Catholic *America Magazine*, commended her portrayal as “infinitely patient.”⁸² A review in *Time Magazine* made a similar reference to her tendency to be “excitable,”⁸³ likely referring to the singular episode of “unstrung nerves” described by Atkinson, in which she admonishes Herman van Daan for stealing from the food supply. Other articles simply refer to her in terms of her relationship with Anne, in which she assumes the role of the “mother who has lost Anne’s affection.”⁸⁴

Though the perceptions of the aforementioned roles indicate one-dimensional characterizations, these characters do not suffer a fraction of the negative interpretations imposed upon the van Daans and Mr. Dussel. Mr. Dussel, his pseudonym taken directly from the German word for “dope,”⁸⁵ fulfills that role with no subtlety on behalf of the playwrights whatsoever. Critics lauded the performance of Jack Gilford, who portrayed Mr. Dussel as “the man who finds himself in the way wherever he turns,”⁸⁶ a clear element of comic relief among the tension

⁸¹ Atkinson, 24.

⁸² Theophilus Lewis. “The Diary of Anne Frank.” *America* 94 (October 22, 1955): 110-112.

⁸³ “New Plays in Manhattan.” *Time* 66, no. 16 (October 17, 1955): 53. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed October 12, 2015).

⁸⁴ “Broadway Postscript,” 28.

⁸⁵ This pseudonym, which Anne created during the revision of her diary, remained unchanged by the playwrights.

⁸⁶ “Broadway Postscript,” 28.

portrayed onstage. Described by critics as “nervous [and] crotchety,”⁸⁷ as well as “fussy,”⁸⁸ Mr. Dussel is the odd man out, notably “unattached”⁸⁹ in contrast to the precisely defined family units that surround him. These interpretations are indicative of a widespread misinterpretation of his historical character – one that ultimately led Charlotte Kaletta to her unsuccessful crusade for his improved portrayal before the film adaptation was created.

The true villains emerge unequivocally in the reviews as Herman and Petronella van Daan. Though, like the other characters, they were not afforded a specific review in every critical article that emerged following the premiere, the authors that made special mention of them unanimously described them in an unflattering manner. Described as “a rather disgusting pair of selfish refugees” by the *Saturday Review*, their breakdowns in propriety are examined much more harshly than those of the other hidiers. The term “selfish” arises again in *Time Magazine*,⁹⁰ while the *New York Times* preferred “boorish.”⁹¹ On the whole, these reviews spend more time damning the van Daan family for their actions than the hidiers’ eventual captors – likely due to the German soldiers’ lack of physical representation in the production. A review in the *New Yorker* states the following regarding the van Daans: “A coward breaks down when he is caught stealing from the tiny common store of food, a stupid woman weeps over the loss of her fur coat.”⁹² There is no room for understanding of their actions: by virtue of this play, the

⁸⁷ Atkinson, 24.

⁸⁸ “New Plays in Manhattan,” 53.

⁸⁹ Lewis, 110.

⁹⁰ “New Plays in Manhattan,” 53.

⁹¹ Atkinson, 24.

⁹² “Amsterdam and Troy.” *The New Yorker* 31 (October 15, 1955): 71-72.

van Daans have indelibly become the gluttonous and unrefined foils to the “perfect” Frank family, thus reinforcing the “good versus evil” moral binary that Elsom argues was so crucial to theatrical success during the early Cold War era.

What may have been incited by Anne’s depiction of these individuals – a separate bias unto itself – was amplified considerably by their depictions onstage. No longer could the public read the diary and, recognizing Anne’s subjective position as the writer, synthesize the events depicted therein to create their own understanding of the characters. Instead, they were, for the first time, being instructed how to feel and what to make of the inhabitants of the hiding place through unambiguous “evidence” placed before them in a supposedly objective format, resulting in mass misinterpretation of the characters.

It was not just professional theatrical critics who seemed to be consuming the play with such enthusiasm. Weekly grosses from the show’s premiere in November of 1955 through the end of 1956 indicate a high, albeit wavering, number of attendees, with notable peaks in the beginning of its run and its one-year anniversary on Broadway.⁹³ In a thirteen-month period, approximately 25,294 tickets were sold, averaging at over 1,945 attendees per month.⁹⁴ Actors generally performed for six days a week and on major holidays. American audiences, it seemed, were responding positively and consistently to the characters and events depicted onstage. For these Americans, these characterizations had forever placed the playwrights’ lens on their interpretation of Anne Frank’s story.

⁹³ Weekly Grosses, November 1955 – January 1957. Box 8, Folder 15, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

⁹⁴ This data omits the month of April 1956, which is not completely recorded in the weekly grosses. Averages are based on a typical schedule of one performance per day (Monday through Saturday) for thirteen months, though performances were not held on certain dates for unspecified reasons.

Through public consumption of her story, Anne Frank has certainly fulfilled the goal of “living even after death” that she so famously wrote in her diary. However, as argued by historians such as Lawrence Langer, the public synthesis of the story as an optimistic account undermines its role in interpreting history. Goodrich and Hackett’s theatrical script magnified this synthesis exponentially. Unlike Anne’s diary, the tone of their work was manufactured with the goal of public consumption. As such, their alleviation of their characters’ contextual doom was an intentional action taken in the interest of appealing to an American public that was largely unprepared to cope with the horrors of the Holocaust and the mainstream representation of Judaism. Increasing this appeal ultimately required a two-pronged approach of generalizing the story and making the protagonist widely relatable to the intended audience. Thus, they transformed Anne Frank into the universal figure of optimism in the face of adversity, her Jewishness whitewashed, rising morally above those around her.

Examined through the lens presented by John Elsom in his analysis of Cold War theatre, it becomes apparent that the Americanization described by Langer was indeed a necessary step in ensuring that the play would sell to an American audience that demanded the triumph of good over evil. The need for an optimistic, relatable heroine was unavoidable for the authors, who created an Anne Frank that would “stand up to” and even triumph over evil – both in the form of the unseen Nazis and the “villains” of the Secret Annex – morally and thematically in place of doing so literally. As a result, the story of a young Jewish girl hunted into hiding and eventually murdered by her Nazi oppressors became one of generalized suffering, a universal coming-of-age story that conciliatorily emphasizes the triumph of the diarist’s optimistic spirit in order to avoid directly addressing the issue of “good versus evil.” This was the story appropriated by the

public, many of whom, like *Commentary* reader Barbara Epstein, felt compelled to defend the figure with which they had so strongly identified if the ascribed image was challenged.

In 1959, the film version of *The Diary of Anne Frank* premiered, its screenplay written by Goodrich and Hackett to reflect the theatrical script almost exactly. The complaints of Charlotte Kaletta and others who had opposed the marginalization of the supporting characters had long been forgotten, and the public was once again presented with a bumbling, non-Jewish Alfred Dussel and the thieving, gluttonous van Daans. However, the American audience to which it was presented received it warmly, and it continued to be regarded as a classic retelling alongside the theatrical script for years to come. Though the widespread reception of his daughter's story likely heartened Otto Frank, who continued his mission to promote her humanitarian message until his death in 1980, the film adaptation finalized the process that the theatrical script had initiated by its creation for the American public: the gradual deviation from the historical story that ultimately maligned the secondary characters, ignored their Jewish faith, and mitigated the horrors that they faced in the end.

CHAPTER TWO

1990S AMERICA: CHALLENGES TO ANNE FRANK'S IMAGE AND THE PUBLIC RESISTANCE

The 1990s were an eventful decade for the story of Anne Frank, which had only grown in popularity since the play and film premiered in the 1950s. The “critical edition” of the diary had already been published in the Netherlands and featured, for the first time, all known versions of Anne’s writing, including her unedited drafts. It was followed in 1989 by an English edition, titled *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition*.⁹⁵ The release of these writings was a formative moment for scholars and general readers alike, as it presented Anne’s diary entries in their raw, unedited format (Version A) next to the entries that Anne had edited in Version B and, finally, those edited by her father in Version C. However, what was perhaps most crucial about their release was that they allowed readers to see for the first time just how extensively Anne’s literary voice was edited for public consumption.

The events that unfolded in the surrounding years saw the fissure in the traditionally accepted public image of Anne Frank, as scholars began to reassess the extent to which it was born of the public’s demands. Pushing the discussion further into the public consciousness was the emergence of a new adaptation of the script, as Jewish playwright Wendy Kesselman reworked Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett’s 1955 theatrical interpretation for the Broadway stage. In her revisions, Kesselman rectified many of the negative byproducts of Anne’s

⁹⁵ Anne Frank. *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition*. Edited by David Barnouw and Gerrold Van Der Stroom. (New York, NY: Random House, 2003).

universalization that had occurred in the original script – most notably, adding significant references to the hidiers’ Judaism, altering Anne’s characterization to incorporate the newly published unedited entries, adding dimension to the secondary characters, and deepening the portrayal of the historical events that shaped the action of the play. However, as the audience reactions to Kesselman’s interventions quickly demonstrated, the American public continued to place its unique moral and ideological demands upon the story and reacted vehemently against attempts to complicate the ascribed image that had originated with Goodrich and Hackett’s script. Thus, this chapter will examine the 1990s as the next point in the evolution of the public synthesis of Anne Frank’s image via the theatrical interpretation, examining the critical reaction to Kesselman’s intervention to demonstrate that Americans on the whole remained reluctant to move beyond the image of the diarist created by the original script.

Updating the Historiography

Scholars immediately took notice of the dichotomy between the edited and unedited diary entries, their fervor perhaps enhanced by the fact that there had been few significant developments in the story of Anne Frank in the preceding decades. Though her diary had continued to soar in popularity and the Anne Frank House Museum, created in the original hiding place in the heart of Amsterdam, had drawn droves of visitors since its opening, the release of previously unknown material to the public was paramount. Scholarly interest in Anne’s story began to surge once again, this time with authors concentrating on the complexities of the story indicated by her unedited text.

A particular area of interest for scholars was the diary’s transition from a private document to one to be presented to the public. During this time, two major texts emerged that lent focus to the Meyer Levin controversy: Lawrence Graver’s *An Obsession with Anne Frank*:

Meyer Levin and the Diary, which disseminated the conflict and Levin's subsequent response.⁹⁶ and Ralph Melnick's *The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank: Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary*, which defended Levin's belief that his ousting was an unfair byproduct of the plan to remove the ethnic context from the diarist's story.⁹⁷

Also lending context to the story that had been sanitized in the decades after the diary's publication, Willy Lindwer published *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank* in 1992, in which he utilized interviews with those who had been imprisoned in Westerbork, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Bergen-Belsen alongside Anne and her family to conceptualize the events that occurred after her final diary entry. It was also around this time that analyses by scholars such as Lawrence Langer and Judith Doneson were being penned for the compilation *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*, published in 2000. Analytical essays such as those by Langer and Doneson spoke to the tone of the decade, as they discussed the complexities of presenting Anne Frank's image to the public and called into question the efficacy of the previous means of doing so – most notably, Goodrich and Hackett's script.

If the aforementioned works indicated the trend emerging among the historiography of Anne Frank's image in the 1990s, it was journalist Cynthia Ozick's essay, "Who Owns Anne Frank?" that truly set the tone for the public conversation and scholarship on the subject. In her galvanizing essay, Ozick railed against the public's appropriation of Anne Frank as a cultural icon and claimed that the "nonsensical" uplifting reputation that it earned as a result undermined

⁹⁶ Lawrence Graver. *An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

⁹⁷ Ralph Melnick. *The Stolen Legacy of Anne Frank: Meyer Levin, Lillian Hellman, and the Staging of the Diary*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

the entire purpose of sharing Anne's story.⁹⁸ The diary's downfall, as Ozick perceived, lay in its inherent nature and was compounded by the edits that Otto Frank made to the text prior to its initial publication. The story told in Anne's initial diary, Ozick wrote, presented a falsely reassuring "protected domestic situation," one in which the diarist's own unawareness of her impending doom created a barrier between her story and the contextual realities of the Holocaust.⁹⁹ This trend was mimicked within its readership, and thus, the public that consumed the diary did so under the impression that it was a spiritually triumphant coming-of-age story rather than a Holocaust document. In this process, Ozick argued, the diary was first ascribed with its contentiously uplifting reputation.

However, the incarnation that Ozick particularly damned was the 1955 theatrical script, in which Anne's words were further appropriated by those who claimed to be speaking for her. Chiefly among them, Ozick wrote, was Otto Frank, who she claimed was not entitled to the level of certainty with which he acted as Anne's representative. Having grown up in a bourgeois household in the relative safety of early-twentieth-century Frankfurt, Otto's generally optimistic nature regarding politics and humanity remained untainted even by his service in the First World War. He was not forced to face the impending threat of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party until he was well into adulthood, with a young family of his own. Thus, Ozick argued, his life experience was entirely incongruent with that of his daughter, who was only four years old when Hitler was elected chancellor of Germany. This proved especially problematic when Otto, described by Ozick as the product of "an era of quiet assimilation," was tasked with editing and

⁹⁸ Cynthia Ozick. "Who Owns Anne Frank?" In *Quarrel and Quandary*, edited by Cynthia Ozick, 74-102. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

⁹⁹ Ibid, 82.

interpreting his daughter's words for the diary and its subsequent theatrical adaptation.¹⁰⁰

Pressured by the creative team to create an image of Anne that would conform to the peculiarities of 1950s American society, Otto – in the interest of accommodation as well as marketing his daughter's work to a wider audience – acquiesced on many facets of her portrayal. It is impossible to say whether Anne would have crafted the same public image had she survived the camps, but Ozick placed partial responsibility on Otto's biased interpretation of her words for the creation of her overly saccharine and idealized image.

The truest offense of Goodrich and Hackett's script, Ozick argued, was its amplification of the optimism that, even by 1955, had begun to be commonly ascribed to the diary. This interpretation cemented a very particular Anne Frank into the public's consciousness: starry-eyed and silly, offering generalized consolations about suffering while mooning over her teenage love interest – the “bobby-sox Mae West” of Algene Ballif's review.¹⁰¹ Not only did this image undermine the context within which Anne's diary was written, Ozick argued that it actually helped to perpetuate her eventual transformation from historical figure to “usable goods.”¹⁰² The theatrical team responsible for Anne's initial portrayal succeeded in creating a universally appealing character, but her universalism was ultimately a catalyst for her appropriation by the public. Because her characterization was made so relatable, the public ascribed to her roles such as the misunderstood child, the blossoming young girl, the symbol of lost potential, the martyr – whatever image best suited their particular needs of the character. Thus, the extremely personal voice of the diary, albeit heavily edited in its initial printing, is even more obscured by a public

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 83.

¹⁰¹ Algene Ballif. “Anne Frank on Broadway.” *Commentary Magazine* (November 1955).

¹⁰² Ozick, 100.

that has consumed Anne as a malleable symbol rather than a historical figure. Through this process, Ozick wrote, the true story “has been bowdlerized, distorted, traduced, reduced; it has been infantilized, homogenized, sentimentalized, falsified, kitschified, and, in fact, blatantly and arrogantly denied.”¹⁰³

Ozick’s article appeared in print for the first time in *The New Yorker* in October of 1997, just two months before the updated theatrical adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, reworked by playwright Wendy Kesselman, premiered in New York City, starring a young Natalie Portman making her Broadway debut in the titular role. Unlike that of the 1955 production, the atmosphere in which Kesselman’s adaptation emerged was one still buzzing with talk of Anne Frank and, specifically, of the various depictions of her famous story. Separated by only a few years from the emergence of an unedited diary and generally encouraged by an increasingly tolerant society, the American public at last appeared prepared for a more holistic representation of Anne Frank and her experiences in hiding. However, the developments that had taken place in the years between the original script’s publication and that of its successor complicated the public consciousness of the story, and, following in the lead of authors such as Ralph Melnick and Cynthia Ozick, readers and audiences afforded a closer look at the untold and often negative ramifications of the diary’s success. As such, American audiences viewed the 1997 retelling with a critical lens previously unavailable, a trait that was reflected in Kesselman’s revisions to the script. However, the widespread public familiarity with – and affection for – Anne Frank’s story revealed new complications, as many audiences responded negatively to developments that challenged their personal visions of the diarist.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 77.

The Holocaust in 1990s America

The decade that witnessed the theatrical rebirth of Anne Frank's story was a far cry from the one in which Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett penned the original text. Though episodic instances of anti-Semitism arose in the 1980s,¹⁰⁴ it was no longer mainstream in American culture. As Leonard Dinnerstein attested in 1994, "Professionals in the field of Jewish community relations who follow the waxing and waning of American hostility toward Jews generally agree that anti-Semitism has been on the decline in the United States since the end of World War II."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, as early as 1969, leaders in the Jewish community such as Earl Raab perceived a receding in political anti-Semitism. Raab, upon whom Dinnerstein drew for his assessment, wrote the following for *Commentary Magazine*:

For the past quarter of a century, there has been no serious trace of political anti-Semitism in America. Any suggestion today that 'it could happen here,' has had an antique flavor and would be widely branded as phobic, paranoid, and even amusing.¹⁰⁶

According to Dinnerstein, this trend only continued in the decades that followed, demonstrated both politically and socially. A poll conducted in 1992 revealed that, in spite of the occasional anti-Semitic threats seen on college campuses and continued Christian teachings that held Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Christ,¹⁰⁷ only seventeen percent of white Americans and thirty-seven percent of African Americans could be classified as extremely anti-Semitic.¹⁰⁸ With

¹⁰⁴ For example, instances of anti-Semitism were still somewhat prevalent among college campuses, where discrimination occurred in student social and athletic groups.

¹⁰⁵ Leonard Dinnerstein. *Anti-Semitism in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Earl Raab. "The Black Revolution and the Jewish Question." *Commentary* (January 1, 1969).

¹⁰⁷ According to Dinnerstein's research, polls of high school students conducted in the 1980s revealed that many students believed that Jews were "Christ-killers" and regularly drank the blood of Christians.

¹⁰⁸ Dinnerstein, 231.

the exception of isolated incidents, it appeared that the slow evolution that American attitudes toward the Jewish faith had undertaken in the years following World War II had finally reached a peak, with Jewish Americans finding themselves in a more secure societal position overall.

Indeed, “American Jews have never been more prosperous, more secure, and more ‘at home in America’ than they are today,” Dinnerstein concluded in his work, the research for which concluded in 1992.¹⁰⁹ Supporting his belief that American anti-Semitism had steadily declined since the conclusion of World War II, Dinnerstein published his book during what he believed to be a new low in reports of anti-Semitic ideologies, sentiments, and actions amongst Americans. Aside from unique instances such as African-American antagonism toward Jewish Americans, as well as a general sense of danger among Jewish populations in larger cities – a trait that Dinnerstein contributed to the greater diversity among inhabitants of these areas – the author emphasized the postwar transformation of American society that facilitated this change, stating the following:

...Since 1945, and especially since the mid-1960s, the American government has conducted serious campaigns designed to lessen and eradicate (a goal if not a realistic possibility) prejudice in American society. The cessation of hostility toward Jews falls into this greater American goal.¹¹⁰

Recalling Dinnerstein’s assessment of the changing attitudes that took place in the United States immediately following its peak during World War II, it becomes clear that the increasingly secure societal position of Jewish Americans in the 1990s was the product of several decades of political and ideological evolution among the American public. Instances of anti-Semitism had by and large become the exception rather than the rule, and the public of the 1990s far more

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 228.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 250.

accepting and even familiar with authentic Jewish representation than their 1950s counterparts as a result.

It is certainly due in part to the increase in Jewish acceptance that an influx of Holocaust depictions emerged in American popular culture in the 1990s. In addition to the resurgence of Anne Frank's story in the media, several Holocaust films, documentaries, and memoirs premiered to great critical acclaim in this decade. Notably among them were films such as *Schindler's List* in 1993 and *Jakob the Liar* in 1999, the former of which won seven of the twelve Academy Awards for which it was nominated. In 1997, the Italian film, *Life is Beautiful*, also made a sweep at the Oscars,¹¹¹ its wins outside of the categories specifically dedicated to foreign films reflective of its particular success in the American market. Even the story of Anne Frank once again¹¹² reached the Academy, as the highly acclaimed documentary, *Anne Frank Remembered*, received the award for Best Documentary Feature at the 1996 Academy Awards.¹¹³

Holocaust depictions, once considered inherently alienating to American audiences, were clearly enjoying an era of popularity in the 1990s, likely due in part to Americans' increasing acceptance of Jews in society. In addition, the political climate of the 1990s was a markedly changed one; the Cold War and its emphasis on "un-American" paranoia no longer pressed upon

¹¹¹ The film received seven nominations in total and won the award in three categories.

¹¹² Shelley Winters, who portrayed Petronella van Daan in the 1959 film adaptation of Goodrich and Hackett's script, received the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress the following year for her work in the film.

¹¹³ *Anne Frank Remembered* was initially created for television in association with the Anne Frank House, Walt Disney Pictures, and the British Broadcasting Corporation, and was later released by Sony Pictures. The documentary, which contained diary excerpts read aloud by Glenn Close, featured filmed images of notable locations in Anne's story, as well as the only known film footage of the diarist. Additionally, Miep Gies and Anne's surviving friends, Hanneli Goslar and Jacqueline van Maarsen, contributed interviews to the production, which most notably featured footage of the first meeting between Miep and Fritz Pfeffer's son, Werner, who tearfully thanked her for her attempts to save his father's life.

the minds of the American citizens. The unique cultural demands placed upon America by the 1950s' political peculiarities no longer applied to the Holocaust films, memoirs, and documentaries being produced and consumed at this time. However, as made explicit by Peter Novick in his monograph, *The Holocaust in American Life*, the Holocaust depictions that emerged in the 1990s shared a common thread that was very telling of the culture in which they were created: the need for Holocaust stories to impart a moral lesson to their audiences.¹¹⁴ Thus, though the need described by historian Lawrence Langer to "Americanize" Holocaust depictions was no longer as pressing a concern, the American public still impressed their personal and moral demands upon them.

The 1990s audiences' preparedness to explore diversity and the harsh realities of the oppression that millions had faced just fifty years prior was reflected in the renewed and redirected interest in Anne Frank's story during this time. However, as indicated by the audience's reaction to the developments that arose from this interest, the increasing culture of utilizing the Holocaust to impart moral stories ultimately perpetuated the demand for the beloved, optimistic Anne of the 1950s dramatization. Thus, a dichotomy arose during this decade, as those who attempted to challenge the orthodox cultural image of Anne Frank began to split from those who demanded it be maintained.

Changes to the Script

Analysis of Wendy Kesselman's updates to Goodrich and Hackett's *The Diary of Anne Frank* demonstrates the increasingly accepting society in which it was written, as well as an improved understanding of Anne Frank's story that had occurred over time as familiarity with the diary grew among the public. Additionally, Kesselman's revisions displayed the playwrights' clear drive to improve the depictions of the supporting characters, especially those

¹¹⁴ Peter Novick. *The Holocaust in American Life*. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

who had previously been allotted to stock characterizations in the creation of a universally appealing Anne Frank.

However, though many reviews of Kesselman's adaptation displayed an apparent understanding of the dichotomy between characters and historical figures, an examination of the language used in Ben Brantley's *New York Times* review reveals several familiar negative descriptors left over from the 1955 production. About the van Daans, Brantley wrote that Linda Lavin's performance as "the vain, anxious Mrs. van Daan... achieves some splendid effects," making mention of her new monologue and alluding to other endearing moments that he perceived as "artificially calculated" on the character's behalf.¹¹⁵ He further referred to Harris Yulin's impressive performance as "the cynical, self-serving Mr. van Daan," his words echoing many of the merciless reviews of Hermann van Pels' original characterization. His descriptions of the "graceless" Mr. Dussel, "endlessly patient" Otto, and "fragile" Edith only serve to further recall the commonalities with Goodrich and Hackett's characterizations.¹¹⁶

With a new adaptation aimed at rectifying the perceived missteps of the original production, how was it possible that a reviewer could still use such terms to describe these characters? One possible answer lies within the limitations of Kesselman's adaptation. Because she was reworking Goodrich and Hackett's work and not creating an entirely original script, Kesselman was contractually bound to only alter ten percent of the existing text.¹¹⁷ This

¹¹⁵ Ben Brantley. "This Time, Another Anne Confronts Life in the Attic." *New York Times* (December 1997).

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Further amplifying the severity of these descriptors were conflicting reviews, such as the one by Vincent Canby, which appeared in the same periodical just weeks later and described the van Daans as "decent folk in ordinary life who come close to cracking in the terrible circumstances of their confinement," suggesting an improved understanding of the characters' complexities. (Canby, 1997)

¹¹⁷ Francine Prose. *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009).

stipulation challenged the author to be selective about which of the original script's issues should be corrected for the show's updated run. Therefore, when considering the public reaction to this adaptation, it is important to remember that ninety percent of the material to which they were reacting was the original content put forth in Goodrich and Hackett's script; in spite of Kesselman's intervention, the script did not present an entirely new lens through which the Secret Annex and its residents could be viewed.

The limitation placed upon Kesselman's revisions, though it stunted her ability to transform all aspects of the script, makes her adaptation all the more telling. Because she was forced to be so selective in her alterations, the changes that she prioritized demonstrate the aspects of the script that she found to be the most problematic. To this end, much of the altered text presented in the new adaptation's Broadway premiere focused on three primary areas: restoring the characters' Jewish faith and resulting persecution, inserting elements of Anne's writing that had been revealed since the first adaptation, and adding depth to the previously one-dimensional supporting characters. However, the works of Lawrence Langer and Alex Sagan, who argue that the very success of Anne Frank's initial commercialization lay within her Americanized and specifically non-Jewish image, reveal complications within Kesselman's choice to alter these elements.¹¹⁸

The element that drew the most critical attention in the months following the play's premiere was Kesselman's incorporation of both Judaism and the faith-based persecution that drove the Franks, van Pelses, and Fritz Pfeffer into hiding. Indeed, this seems to have been the largest focus of Kesselman's revisions, with references both to the hidings' faith and the horrific events occurring outside the walls of the Secret Annex peppered throughout the script. In the

¹¹⁸ Alex Sagan. "An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank's Canonization in Postwar Culture." *German Politics and Society* 13, no. 3 (1995): 95-107. Accessed February 9, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23736492>.

more religiously tolerant atmosphere of the 1990s, and especially one in which the public was more aware of the extent of the Holocaust's horrors, it seemed that the revision would be welcome and perhaps even perceived as long overdue. However, given the revision's contractual limitations, Kesselman was forced to use creative and alternative means to affect the most significant change possible.

One of the primary methods that Kesselman's script employed to clarify the previously muddled historical context was the use of technical elements, such as lighting and sound, which were used much more so than in Goodrich and Hackett's script. This technique was a means by which the author's revisions could accomplish several ends, especially highlighting the terror that constantly threatened the hidiers from the outside world. Included for the first time were extensive radio broadcasts, taken from the speeches of political figures such as Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill, as well as high-ranking Nazi officials, to impress upon the audience the historical context of the events seen onstage. Particularly telling is a voice-over speech by Hanns Rauter, who headed the Schutzstaffel (SS) in the occupied Netherlands, played toward the end of the production:

All Jews must be out of the German-occupied countries before July first. The province of Utrecht will be cleansed of Jews between April first and May first, and the provinces of North and South Holland immediately thereafter.¹¹⁹

Such pieces lent a sense of horror to the production that was entirely absent from its predecessor. It should additionally be mentioned that Kesselman's inclusion of Nazi soldiers who force their way into the Annex to arrest its inhabitants, a more historically accurate piece of staging than that of Goodrich and Hackett's script, personified the families' oppressors and left no ambiguity about the fate that awaited the hidiers.

¹¹⁹ Wendy Kesselman. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. (New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1997).

Perhaps one of the most obvious alterations that Kesselman made in the interest of restoring the Jewish elements of Anne's story is that which she made to the scene depicting the hidens' celebration of Hanukkah. Though she maintained its structure and position as the climactic end of Act One, the subtle changes that she made spoke volumes. First and foremost removed was Mr. Dussel's incendiary and thoroughly confusing mention of "our Saint Nicholas Day,"¹²⁰ and Kesselman included Mr. van Daan's carving of a wooden menorah for the occasion, which serves as the physical centerpiece for the scene. Most notably altered, however, is the celebration ritual itself: the Hanukkah prayers have been restored to their contextual Hebrew, seemingly without fear of alienating a non-Jewish audience, and the song sung at the end changed to the Ma-oz Tzur.¹²¹

The characters' Jewish faith was clearly elevated to a central theme in Kesselman's rewrite, albeit still not to the extent to which it was depicted in Levin's rejected script. Kesselman achieved the improved depiction of the hidens' faith particularly in the symbolic elements of the production. A stage direction in the opening of the show indicates that, upon their entrance, the yellow Star of David is prominent on each piece of clothing worn by the hidens. Shortly thereafter, Peter van Daan, in an act of rebellion, attempts to remove his star, stating: "Now I don't have to be branded."¹²² A curious Anne follows his lead, removing her own star to find that, according to the stage direction, "the outline of the star remains" on her sweater.¹²³ Later, one of the play's final moments reflects this scene, as Anne tells Peter, "You'll

¹²⁰ Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. (New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1955).

¹²¹ Kesselman, 41.

¹²² Ibid, 16.

¹²³ Ibid.

always be Jewish...in your soul.”¹²⁴ It is particularly worth noting that this final moment replaced Goodrich and Hackett’s generalized speech about different groups having to suffer that took place as Anne’s captors closed in on her and thus left the audience with a grim reminder of the faith for which the hidiers were oppressed.

An especially poignant inclusion of this context came in the form of additional or altered speeches by members of the ensemble, indicating the awareness that the adults in hiding had of the senseless and precarious position in which they found themselves. In Mr. Dussel’s first appearance, he informs the hidiers of the developments that had taken place in the city since their flight,¹²⁵ a speech that Kesselman largely retained. However, she omitted the following lines of text that had been included in Goodrich and Hackett’s version:

This has been such a shock to me. I’d always thought of myself as Dutch. I was born in Holland. My father was born in Holland, and my grandfather. And now...after all these years...¹²⁶

This wholly inaccurate line, which Goodrich and Hackett likely included to distance the hidiers from their Jewish faith, was removed entirely and replaced with an extensive speech detailing the process by which Jews arrested in Amsterdam were sent to the Westerbork transit camp and, from there, to the mysterious “East,” establishing a sense of foreshadowing early in the text.

Similarly, in a new set of lines, Edith Frank expresses her sorrow to helper Miep Gies and confesses her doubt that her family will survive the war – a scene taken directly from Gies’ memoir, in which she states that Edith would often detain her at the entryway to their hiding

¹²⁴ Ibid, 66.

¹²⁵ Fritz Pfeffer joined the others in the Secret Annex in November of 1942, four months after the Frank and van Pels families had gone into hiding.

¹²⁶ Goodrich and Hackett, 43.

place and unburden her dark thoughts to her.¹²⁷ Kesselman's inclusion of this detail is particularly notable, as it created depth for the character that likely assisted the audience in sympathizing with her. However, it was more than just a device to add layers to a formerly one-dimensional character; the wording of Edith's monologue highlighted a sense of frustration and despair common among persecuted Jews at the time:

There's no hope to be had. I know that...I knew it the night Hitler came to power, when that voice came screaming out of the radio. I sat there paralyzed. And now in London, what is the Dutch queen doing? What are they all doing? Nothing. They're not even *mentioning* the word Jew.¹²⁸

If Dussel's lines detailing the unimaginable fate that awaited the Jews who were arrested in Amsterdam was an inkling of Kesselman's deviation from the optimism of the original script, Edith's monologue solidified this change in tone. No longer was she chiding her daughters for expressing their worries, reminding them to be grateful that they were not in concentration camps.¹²⁹ Instead, her character demonstrated both an improved sense of Jewish identity and the insecurity that accompanied it at the time.

Among Kesselman's structural alterations to the script was the inclusion of Otto Frank's soliloquy at the play's close, in which he returns after his liberation from Auschwitz to tell the audience of the fate of his family and friends. Softened in Goodrich and Hackett's version by his quickly disclosing the news to Miep, who then gives him Anne's diary, Otto's revelation of the events that took place after the previous scene was transformed into a more accurate

¹²⁷ Miep Gies and Allison Leslie Gold. *Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman Who Helped to Hide the Frank Family*. (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

¹²⁸ Kesselman, 49.

¹²⁹ While a similar incident was recorded in Anne's diary upon which this moment was based, Kesselman's choice to omit this in favor of the aforementioned monologue makes clear her intention to add further dimensionality to the character.

dissemination that made the hidiers' suffering impossible to ignore. Among the changes to this speech, Otto now details each individual's fate, as well as the gruesome conditions to which they were exposed.

The changes made to Otto's discussion of Anne's death, however, transform the entire tone of the final scene. In Goodrich and Hackett's version, he simply states, "I know now," subtly implying that he was informed of her death, and opens the diary, as the infamous "good at heart" line is heard in a voiceover, eclipsing the statement.¹³⁰ When the new adaptation premiered in 1997, however, audiences were presented with the following closing lines:

A few days later, Anne dies. My daughters' bodies dumped into mass graves, just before the camp is liberated. (*Mr. Frank bends down, picks up Anne's diary lying on the floor. He steps forward, the diary in his hands.*) All that remains.¹³¹

It is in this moment that the full extent of Kesselman's changes becomes visible. Leaving the audience with no consolations, no uplift, and, especially, no subtle hint of Anne's character somehow persevering through her optimistic views, Kesselman's final lines offer only a grim reminder of the horrors that the young diarist faced and the oppression that ultimately ended her life at the age of fifteen. Though certainly done at the risk of alienating audiences that had grown accustomed to the spiritually triumphant Anne Frank, Kesselman's alterations to Otto's closing speech offered a great deal of necessary context, not only to the hidiers' faith but to the persecution inflicted upon them because of it.

How, then, did this unflinching depiction fit into the dynamic presented by scholars such as Alex Sagan and Lawrence Langer, of a commercial success that was contingent upon the glossing-over of the grim details of Anne Frank's fate? "A decidedly optimistic image of Anne Frank...was key to establishing her unique position in postwar culture," Sagan wrote in his 1995

¹³⁰ Goodrich and Hackett, 101.

¹³¹ Kesselman, 69.

article, discussing the unique commercial appeal that Anne's story held in an era that was otherwise none too eager to address the horrors of the previous decade. In line with Sagan's assessment, a detailed analysis of the initial play's success and subsequent audience reaction demonstrates that indeed, the protagonist's optimism was crucial in the larger Americanization that contributed to the original production's popularity. However, Kesselman's incorporation of newly published, unedited diary entries in her revised script greatly altered the upbeat tone that had proven so fundamental in marketing Anne's story to American audiences. The effect was a notably more mature Anne, one that better reflected the two years of emotional and intellectual development that she so famously chronicled during her time in hiding. However, particularly when coupled with the grim context of the Holocaust underscoring the new production, it was a portrayal that simultaneously challenged the very element that many scholars agree was the key to the play's success in America. After all, in light of Peter Novick's assessment of the Holocaust culture emerging in 1990s America, a play that leaves the audience with the final notion that its famously lovable heroine brutally perished at the hands of her captors hardly imparts a clear-cut moral lesson.

Instead of allowing the action to flow throughout the scenes, as suggested by Goodrich and Hackett's script, Kesselman's reworking positioned Anne as the narrator, her prerecorded diary entries lending context to the story and suggesting the passage of time. This allowed for the inclusion of several crucial elements previously unseen, such as a demonstration of the diarist's awareness of her own situation. Voiceovers that open both acts, in which Anne details the anti-Jewish measures taken by the occupying Nazi forces and the physical and mental toll their first year in hiding had taken upon them, highlight the perceptiveness that Anne so often

demonstrated in her diary and indicate to the audience the complexities of their situation.¹³²

Further, these voiceovers consistently include discussion of the diarist's emotions, which matured significantly throughout their time in hiding. The deeper examinations of these issues that Kesselman lent to the Anne of her script not only created a better-rounded characterization but also provided audiences with a glimpse of her evolving writing prowess. The following lines exemplify this tendency and demonstrate a level of reflection unseen in Goodrich and Hackett's incarnation of Anne:

I see the eight of us in the Annex as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds... We're surrounded by darkness and danger, and in our desperate search for a way out we keep bumping into each other. We look at the fighting down below and the peace and beauty above, but we're cut off by the dark mass of clouds and can go neither up nor down. It looms before us, an impenetrable wall, trying to crush us, but not yet able to.¹³³

Here, audiences were presented with an Anne that is simultaneously divergent from her original onstage incarnation and more reflective of the writing for which she had become so beloved.

Indeed, most of the voiceovers that Kesselman supplied for her adaptation were drawn directly from Anne's own diary entries and altered only slightly for the sake of the production, thereby lending more of the diarist's original "voice" to the production and establishing a sense of Anne's development throughout the events seen onstage.¹³⁴

The inclusion of Anne's diary entries was particularly indicative of the time in which Kesselman was readapting the script, as the unveiling of Versions A and B for the first time just a few years prior obviously influenced her characterization of Anne. The fullest extent of diary

¹³² Kesselman, 10, 45.

¹³³ Ibid, 43-44.

¹³⁴ Elements such as wording and chronology were altered to fit the sequence of events presented in the dramatization.

material, unavailable to Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett when they were drafting the original text, was crucial in Kesselman's rewrite and perhaps even more so in fulfilling scholars' demand for a more holistic portrayal of the diarist in the 1990s. As such, contentious entries, previously suppressed by Otto Frank in diary's first publication, were included in the form of the aforementioned voiceovers. References to Anne's strained relationship with her mother, as well as discussions of her physical development, were now explicitly onstage, lending a better sense of Anne's tumultuous maturation and her use of the diary as an outlet for her complex emotions and innermost thoughts.¹³⁵

With this updated Anne came a darker overall tone, as her voiceovers led the audience into the scenes with a sense of the mercurial emotions that would follow. Even her more optimistic lines are shrouded in a contextual foreboding, creating the effect, as described by Ben Brantley, of "watching a vibrant, exquisite fawn seen through the lens of a hunter's rifle."¹³⁶ Chiefly among these changes was the reworking of the closing line in which Anne expresses her spiritually triumphant belief in the inherent goodness of mankind. Though the line remained intact in Kesselman's version, the context was overhauled entirely. Instead of playing unto itself at the very close, with Otto reminding the audience that her optimism "puts [him] to shame," as in the original script,¹³⁷ Kesselman's inclusion of the famous quote is played as the Nazi captors burst into the hiding place and usher the hidiers to their fate. "The juxtaposition is ironic, ambiguous, chilling," wrote reviewer Richard Zoglin, and stripped the line of its original purpose

¹³⁵ For an example of such references, see Kesselman, 46.

¹³⁶ Brantley, "This Time, Another Anne Confronts Life in the Attic."

¹³⁷ Goodrich and Hackett, 101.

of consoling the audience in the last moments of the production.¹³⁸ Instead, it served to better reflect the ellipsis that the quote presents in her diary, its place within her final entry before her arrest suggesting a developing understanding of human nature that was likely deeply altered just weeks later.

An additional factor that contributed to the change in tone is Kesselman's development of the formerly one-dimensional supporting characters, whose portrayals were extremely incongruent to their historical counterparts in Goodrich and Hackett's script. Many of the changes that Kesselman prioritized in her edits centered not only on incorporating additional context but also on softening or removing contentious lines, as well as adding content that helped distance the characters from the stock characterizations of the original text. Recalling Jonathan Krasner's dissemination of Jewish stock characters, it becomes clear that these are the very theatrical archetypes from which Kesselman hoped to distance the characters in her adaptation. Though no character was without at least minimal line alterations, the most significantly changed characters were those who had been the most marginalized in the 1955 incarnation of the story: specifically, those who were not members of the Frank family.

Chiefly among these changes was the transformation of Petronella van Daan from Krasner's *belle juive*¹³⁹ to a more complex – and simultaneously toned down – character. Creating a more realistic and sympathetic Petronella likely proved a challenge for Kesselman, as her historical counterpart, Auguste van Pels, was often the subject of Anne's ire in her diary entries and was thus not usually described in flattering terms. However, Kesselman seemingly took into account reminiscences of others who had known her, such as her cousin who described

¹³⁸ Richard Zoglin. "A Darker Anne Frank." *New York Times* (December 1997).

¹³⁹ See Chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of the characters' utilization as traditional Jewish stock characters.

her as “a very brave, somewhat homely, middle-class person, who would never hurt anyone else.”¹⁴⁰ Taking into account the complexities of how the hidiers were perceived, Kesselman omitted the portion of the first-act speech in which Mrs. van Daan implores that Otto examine her legs and instead closed the line with her historically accurate piece of advice to Anne: “If any of them gets fresh, you tell them... ‘Remember Mr. So-and-So, remember I’m a lady.’”¹⁴¹ Kesselman’s reworking made for a highly transformative effect, as it ended the moment on a lighthearted note, rather than on the implication of the character’s inability – or unwillingness – to maintain social propriety, as in the original script.

Moreover, Kesselman provided Mrs. van Daan with depth previously unseen during the climactic moments of Act Two, primarily through her reactions to her husband’s theft of bread from the food supply. The original script saw Petronella defending her husband, justifying his actions by stating, “He needs more food than the rest of us. He’s used to more. He’s a big man.”¹⁴² Shortly thereafter, Miep bursts into the hiding place with the news that Normandy has been invaded, and the action moves forward with only subtle and nonverbal indicators of her apology for defending her husband’s actions. Kesselman, in one of her many alterations to this particular scene, omitted her defense and changed her reaction to a simple, “It can’t be... What are you doing?”¹⁴³ Coupled with her refusal to look at her husband in the action that follows, the script update provided Mrs. van Daan with a moral complexity that made her character more sympathetic to the general audience.

¹⁴⁰ Hermann Röttgen, quoted in Lee, Carol Ann. *Roses from the Earth: The Biography of Anne Frank*. (London: Penguin, 2000).

¹⁴¹ Kesselman, 23.

¹⁴² Goodrich and Hackett, 87.

¹⁴³ Kesselman, 61.

It is worth noting that both Mr. and Mrs. van Daan receive a significant moment of redemption in the play's closing moments. In what is perhaps the most noticeable alteration, Kesselman provided Petronella with a lengthy monologue following the aforementioned scene, in which she attempts to console Herman, who is consumed with shame after his theft is exposed. Spotlighted at the kitchen table in the center of the stage, she recounts to him her memories of the day that they met and promises that they will return to their former life someday after the war. Demonstrating a resolve entirely unique to her updated characterization, she commands him to rely on her for strength if his hunger becomes too much to bear, and the two embrace as the lights dim in what becomes the couple's final significant moment onstage before their arrest.¹⁴⁴

This scene serves as a transformative update to Herman van Daan's character, as well, as it offers a more profound demonstration of remorse for his actions than the character was given in the original script. Gone, too, is his explanation of theft, in which he states, "I was hungry," the line poignantly replaced by his affirmation, "Never before! Never before!"¹⁴⁵ Though Kesselman was unable to omit the entire scene, her alterations to it were so extensive that it carries with it new implications, specifically regarding why Herman stole the bread. No longer is he the self-serving, gluttonous Jewish stock character described by Krasner, but he is instead a man buckling under the pressure of his own suffering. His immediate regret of his actions and lack of justification, indicated by his remorseful silence throughout the remainder of the scene, now serve to remind the audience of the hiders' fragile humanity.

Kesselman also addressed many of the concerns that Charlotte Kaletta had expressed to the original creative team regarding the portrayal of Fritz Pfeffer as Alfred Dussel. In her initial

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 64.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

plea for the playwrights' revision of the character for the upcoming film in 1959, Kaletta wrote the following of her husband's portrayal: "I do not wish my husband to be shown in the film as a psychopath. I think it enough that this had been done already in the play."¹⁴⁶ Chiefly among her complaints were his ignorance of the Hanukkah ceremony and his portrayal as "an inveterate bachelor...a man without relations."¹⁴⁷ Many of Kesselman's revisions to his character served the dual purpose of improving his portrayal while reinforcing the hidens' faith, the updated Hanukkah scene as well as a scene in which he is seen praying in Hebrew during a bombing raid illustrating his religious affiliation.

However, Kesselman also altered several of Mr. Dussel's lines to indicate his relationship with his then-fiancée, a factor that was entirely unaddressed by the original production, perhaps due to the discontent that an unwed couple, particularly one of different religious affiliations, cohabitating might have stirred among 1950s audiences. In the original, Dussel introduces himself to Anne by describing himself as a man "who has always lived alone."¹⁴⁸ Reminiscent of the impotent father stock character described by Krasner, Dussel emphasizes that he has no family and is pitied by Anne for what she perceives to be a dreadfully lonely existence. Kesselman entirely reworked these lines for her adaptation, establishing the hidens' existing familiarity with his family situation, a more historically accurate detail. "I know you'll miss the woman you live with terribly," Anne now states in the new incarnation of the aforementioned scene, to which Mr. Dussel replies, "Charlotte and I have never been apart."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Charlotte Kaletta, to Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, in *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* by Carol Ann Lee. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Goodrich and Hackett, 43.

¹⁴⁹ Kesselman, 32.

It is worth mentioning that, although the van Daans and Alfred Dussel received the most alterations to their characterizations, no character went through Kesselman's adaptation entirely unchanged. Similarly, the depiction of the remaining characters also underwent revisions to separate them from the stock characters that they became in the original script. For instance, the addition of lines to illustrate Edith Frank's sense of foreboding and frustration with the war gave dimension to her former hand-wringing, fussy Jewish mother, while notable revisions to Otto Frank – including the omission of the nearly saintly line “We don't need the Nazis to destroy us. We're destroying ourselves.”¹⁵⁰ – made him more relatable than his previous “sage elder” archetype.¹⁵¹ Peter van Daan, meanwhile, is shown struggling with his Jewish identity, providing a deeper reasoning for his wishes to emancipate himself from his family and from the situation in which he found himself. Meanwhile, Margot Frank, who is notoriously relegated to the background in the original script, was given lines to better illustrate a characterization that is independent from that of her sister. Particularly to this end are a set of lines in which she reveals to Anne her plans to emigrate to Palestine after the war to become a maternity nurse, which Kesselman based upon an interaction between the sisters that Anne detailed in her diary.

In spite of Kesselman's contractual limitations, her revisions speak to many of the textual features of Goodrich and Hackett's original text that had, by the 1990s, proven problematic, particularly in the areas of Jewish representation, characterizations, and inclusion of historical context. Thus, the new script separated itself from the overly Americanized stock characters that appeared to have served 1950s audiences so effectively, in favor of a more historically accurate and inclusive portrayal overall. However, the efficacy of Kesselman's reworking cannot be

¹⁵⁰ Goodrich and Hackett, 89.

¹⁵¹ Krasner, Jonathan. “The Interwar Family and American Jewish Identity in Clifford Odets' ‘Awake and Sing.’” *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1), 2006. Indiana University Press: 2–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4467755>.

measured via its loyalty to the historical story alone. As with the first production, the reviews that emerged after the play's 1997 Broadway premiere are crucial in gauging the success of the retelling, as they lend insight into how the more holistic version of the script was synthesized.

The Public Response

On the whole, the reviews of Wendy Kesselman's adaptation to the script were decidedly more divisive than those of the first premiere. Though some lauded the new creative team's efforts to incorporate the historical context of Anne Frank's story, others found it ineffective in its attempts and even questioned the necessity of the update. What is perhaps more telling of these reviews, however, is not what the reviewers thought of the production itself but what informed these impressions. Examining the reviews of the second Broadway incarnation, several trends become apparent that did not emerge in the reviews of 1955-1956. Specifically, reviewers began to establish a clear divide between dramatization and historical story, evidenced in their assessment of the characters and of the larger issues that Kesselman sought to address via her revisions. However, just as these new trends seemed to indicate a new direction for the public synthesis of Anne's story via the play, several lines of rhetoric common among the reviews also hinted at a reluctance to leave the Anne Frank of the 1950s behind.

Perhaps the starkest difference between the reviews of 1955 and those of 1997 is the reviewers' treatment of the characters. Instead of utilizing the stage depictions to make assumptions about those they were written to represent, reviewers began to describe them unto themselves, with particular focus on the actors' portrayals of them. Though most dedicated the bulk of their printed reviews to the controversies that had evolved regarding the censorship of Anne's diary instead of character assessments, those who evaluated the characterizations

centered primarily around the characters of Anne and Otto Frank and Herman and Petronella van Daan.

One such reviewer was *American Theatre* arts correspondent Benjamin Ivry, who noted some effective updates to the characterizations, although his review called into question the effectiveness of the second adaptation overall. Utilizing the advantage of comparison unique to reviewers of the 1997 adaptation, Ivry complained of the van Daans' former portrayal, stating that Shelley Winters' Petronella was "whinily pathetic" and Lou Jacobi's pudgy Herman was "comic and pathetic, like a tragic Oliver Hardy" when his theft was discovered.¹⁵² Mentioning nothing of the characters' significant alterations in the script, Ivry was impressed by Linda Lavin's "tougher, more acerbic" Petronella, while he lauded Harris Yulin's "play[ing] down of the role's more humorous aspects."¹⁵³ Similarly, Richard Zoglin wrote briefly of the van Daans' portrayal in *Time Magazine*, stating that they appeared "less foolish and more touching than before," crediting the rewrite for their improved portrayal, as well as the emphasis placed upon the ensemble cast by the new adaptation.¹⁵⁴

Though reviewers were impressed with the van Daans' improved portrayal – both in the script and onstage via their actors – the reviews of Anne and Otto were not as complimentary. In the same article in which he lauded Lavin and Yulin for their performances, Ivry was quick to identify George Hearn's Otto Frank as a major source of inadequacy for the new adaptation. Compared to original actor Joseph Schildkraut, Ivry found that Hearn was "by contrast...a stolid,

¹⁵² Benjamin Ivry. "Will the Real Anne Frank Please Stand Up?" *American Theatre* (January 1998).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Zoglin, "A Darker Anne Frank."

puffy bourgeois.”¹⁵⁵ This, wrote Ivry, undermined the comforting, quiet heroism that was originally ascribed to the character, a trait that he claims was crucial in the 1955 audiences’ acceptance of the play’s tragic ending. By contrast, however, Zoglin made brief mention of the “hushed dignity” that Hearn brought to the character, mentioning it as one of the high points of the ensemble.

Ivry’s rejection of Otto Frank’s updated characterization indicates a certain reluctance to part with the “sage elder” archetype of Goodrich and Hackett’s script. Ivry cited Broadway historian Abe Laufe’s work, *Anatomy of a Hit*, in which Laufe interviewed a Holocaust survivor about his preference for *The Diary of Anne Frank* over John Hersey’s Holocaust drama, *The Wall*, which premiered in 1960 to little commercial success. “During the play, I kept calm because Mr. Frank tried to keep all the people in the attic calm, and I reacted the way they did,” the man had divulged to Laufe.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Laufe echoed sentiments such as those of Langer and Sagan, that the play’s success could easily be traced back to its placid treatment of the contextual horrors that framed its action.

Ivry clearly shared this view, stating his preference for the 1955 structure, in which Otto Frank appears in vignettes to open and close the action of the play, again reinforcing the concept of Otto as the shepherd for both audience and characters. Further, in his description of the gentle refinement of Joseph Schildkraut’s performance, it is clear that Ivry credited the original depiction of Otto Frank with the success of the production, claiming that a “more merciless” depiction of the Holocaust likely would not have been as warmly accepted.¹⁵⁷ Reading his

¹⁵⁵ Ivry, “Will the Real Anne Frank Please Stand Up?”

¹⁵⁶ Abe Laufe. *Anatomy of a Hit: Long-Run Plays on Broadway from 1900 to the Present Day*. (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966).

¹⁵⁷ Ivry, “Will the Real Anne Frank Please Stand Up?”

review, one might easily harken back to Langer's complaint that the victims' suffering is "mitigated" in such depictions for the sake of the American audience's comfort.¹⁵⁸ However, where Langer found this mitigation detrimental, Ivry – and Abe Laube before him – believed it crucial for the success of a Holocaust retelling.

The most divisive portrayal was, unsurprisingly, that of Anne Frank herself. The reception given to Natalie Portman was lukewarm at best; even those who found the production to be successful were underwhelmed by Portman's performance and her perceived failure to realize the full extent of Anne's character. Writing for *Commentary Magazine*, Molly Maglid Hoagland claimed "Portman onstage fails to convey Anne's budding sexuality, to say nothing of her budding intellect," further stating that she is only successful in enacting the Anne of the earliest scenes – immature, attention-seeking, and very much still a child.¹⁵⁹ "Whereas Anne in her diary often observes that her experiences in hiding have transformed her," wrote Hoagland, "in the second act Portman merely furrows her brow and wears a ragged sweater."¹⁶⁰

Even Zoglin, who was conservative in his complaints about the production, suggests that the ensemble cast that he found so effective possibly found its strength as a reaction to the fact that "Natalie Portman's Anne is a little short on stage charisma."¹⁶¹ Similarly, *Backstage* reviewer David Sheward blamed Portman's awkwardness on her inexperience, stating that in spite of her increasing film prowess, she made her debut as "a raw and unfinished actress

¹⁵⁸ Lawrence Langer. "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen." In *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*, edited by Hyman Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer, 198-202. (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁹ Molly M. Hoagland. "Anne Frank, On and Off Broadway." *Commentary Magazine* (March 1998).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Zoglin, "A Darker Anne Frank."

onstage.”¹⁶² Echoing the complaints that Portman could portray the “zestful child” of Act One but was unable to present the maturation crucial to the character throughout the subsequent action, Sheward insisted: “If we do not fully see that the life cut short by anti-Semitic tyranny is a promising one, the piece’s power is diminished.”¹⁶³

New York Times reviewer Ben Brantley, however, raved about Portman’s characterization in spite of – or perhaps even due to – her shortcomings. “There is ineffable grace in her awkwardness,” he wrote, later stating:

Even when her line readings are stilted, her delicately expressive face never fails her. It becomes, as it should, the evening’s barometer of changing moods in the Annex. She has, moreover, an endlessly poignant quality of spontaneity, and of boundless energy in search of an outlet, that is subtly modulated as the evening goes on.¹⁶⁴

In stark contrast to this review was an article by Vincent Canby, printed in the very publication in which Brantley’s appeared just weeks earlier. Canby, who found the production to be egregiously flawed overall, credited Portman’s failure to effectively portray Anne with much of the play’s inability to truly innovate the retelling of her story. Describing Portman’s Anne as “earnestly artificial,” particularly in her attempts to portray endearingly childlike behaviors, Canby wrote that “the girl we see has no relation to the thoughts she speaks, either in person or as prerecorded narration,” and that, as a result, “here is a *Diary of Anne Frank* without an Anne.”¹⁶⁵

Critics clearly spent a sizable portion of their consideration on Portman’s portrayal, as is

¹⁶² David Sheward. “The Diary of Anne Frank.” *Backstage Magazine* (December 1997).

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Brantley, “This Time, Another Anne Confronts Life in the Attic.”

¹⁶⁵ Vincent Canby. “New Anne Frank Still Stuck in the 50s.” *New York Times* (December 1997).

to be expected for the titular character of the production. However, the question remains of why the reviewers were so critical of Portman's performance, beyond the fact of her inexperience onstage. As can be seen throughout the reviews, the critics often spoke of Portman's perceived failure to capture the emotional and intellectual maturation that made Anne's diary such a remarkable coming-of-age story. For instance, in the opening lines of her review for *Commentary*, Hoagland stated that the "rash of fresh productions" that would likely arise in light of the production's revival were "regrettable, for...what one says about the play – whether the play of 1955 or the play of 1997 – has very little to do with the Anne Frank that emerges from her diary."¹⁶⁶ Once again, it appears that the public was defensive of the Anne that they had come to know, ever concerned with how her perceived "spirit" was conveyed, lending credence to Ozick's argument that diary readers' perceptions of Anne Frank are largely colored by their own self-serving demands for her. While Kesselman's updates may have included more of Anne's unedited literary "voice," it seems that Portman's depiction of the diarist in the new adaptation did not align with the reviewers' personal expectations for the character and, thus, drew additional ire. Thus, in light of the public's defensiveness against the updates to Anne's characterization, it becomes clear that their reactions to Portman's portrayal were likely complicated by their existing demands for the character.

Further, reviewers also paid particular attention to the changes that Kesselman made to the original script, often drawing comparisons between the two in order to judge the new adaptation's efficacy. As they did with the characterizations, the reviewers' opinions varied widely. However, both positive and negative reviews demonstrated an understanding of the production that was unique to the new adaptation; that is, it became apparent to reviewers what

¹⁶⁶ Hoagland, "Anne Frank, On and Off Broadway."

Kesselman had chosen to alter and how these changes illustrated the larger conversation that was simultaneously occurring about Anne Frank and her public image.

Brantley, in his glowing review of the production, noted his hope that “Ms. Kesselman’s reworking of the original script...goes a long way in redressing such objections” as those of Cynthia Ozick.¹⁶⁷ Referring to the “bleach[ing] out” of much of the contextual Jewishness in Goodrich and Hackett’s adaptation, Brantley commended Kesselman for her reincorporation of the Jewish faith, particularly in the opening scene in which the enforced Star of David is blatantly visible on the Frank family’s clothing as they enter the hiding place.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, Brantley discussed the updated script’s emphasis on the outside horrors from which the hidiers had fled, an element that he described as having been “eclipsed by a disproportionate emphasis on the girl’s idealism.”¹⁶⁹

Similarly, Zoglin also utilized Kesselman’s changes to identify the most concerning elements of Goodrich and Hackett’s script. Also citing Ozick’s essay, Zoglin expressed his hope that the new script would address the concerns that she raised, as well as those of Ralph Melnick, who had once stated that the original production was so generic that it was nearly “a drama of people who were suffering through a housing shortage.”¹⁷⁰ Citing the addition of Jewish elements and “a less sentimental, more astringent tone” overall, Zoglin described Kesselman’s adaptation as “underplayed, almost muted, yet gripping in its down-to-earth immediacy.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Brantley, “This Time, Another Anne Confronts Life in the Attic.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Zoglin, “A Darker Anne Frank.”

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Several other reviewers identified the implications of Kesselman's changes but expressed concerns that the reworking was not a successful one. For instance, Canby claimed that in spite of the supposed updates to bring the story to modern audiences, the production was still "stuck in the 1950s," and that "Ms. Kesselman's interpolations are very mild indeed."¹⁷² Further, he wrote that the updated production only served to emphasize the realization that the staged version "doesn't do justice to the original document, to its author, or to the experience it represents."¹⁷³ Similarly, Hoagland identified Kesselman's attempts to restore the hidiers' faith, create an "unexpurgated" Anne, and to remind audiences of the dark circumstances of their hiding, but stated the following:

...The whole of Kesselman's revision amounts to far less than the sum of its parts. Despite the changes, this is still the same sentimental play about a luminous, flirtatious, idealistic Anne Frank that made the critics swoon forty years ago.¹⁷⁴

Both Hoagland and Canby identified the creative team's attempts to update the production but expressed doubts that it did so in a significant way. Sheward, whose review of the production was scathing overall, seemed to echo their sentiments, as he stated that "despite its more explicit depictions of the Holocaust...this 'revisal' lacks the necessary cohesion to powerfully convey" Anne Frank's story.¹⁷⁵

Ivry's review, meanwhile, was distinct among those of his peers. Like them, he identified Kesselman's changes and believed them significant, but his opinion on the efficacy of these revisions varied notably from the other reviews that emerged at the time. Though Ivry

¹⁷² Canby, "New Anne Frank Still Stuck in the 50s."

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Hoagland, "Anne Frank, On and Off Broadway."

¹⁷⁵ Sheward, "The Diary of Anne Frank."

approved of the updates to some of the characterizations, the overall downplaying of humor seemed to irritate the reviewer. He described Kesselman's limitation of Alfred Dussel's awkward interactions with Anne as "providing fewer opportunities for comic feuding with the girl, as if the play itself were 'no time for comedy.'"¹⁷⁶ Considering the lengths to which he credited Otto Frank's gentility and the overall glossing-over of the tragedy that befell the hidlers for the success of the initial adaptation, it becomes obvious why Kesselman's emphasis on the seriousness of the subject matter might have proven a sticking point for Ivry. "Such is the view of today's creative team," he wrote, "but it was not how the original creators felt, closer to the historical events," his quote implying that the original adaptors' script was perhaps more correct due to the immediacy of its emergence.¹⁷⁷

Attendance throughout the show's six-month run reflects the mercurial reception it received from critics. Overwhelmingly, the production drew the largest crowds during the month of its debut, with approximately 30,907 attendees through the month of December. This number was never matched, though a brief spike in attendance in March of 1998 saw over 28,000 audience members.¹⁷⁸ Combined weekly grosses for both of these months show a return of over one million dollars in ticket sales, a number that, though impressive, was modest for Broadway productions running at the time.¹⁷⁹

Attendance dropped in the months following the show's premiere and, following its spike

¹⁷⁶ Ivry, "Will the Real Anne Frank Please Stand Up?"

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Weekly Grosses, December 1997 – June 1998. Playbill Weekly Gross Search, <http://www.playbill.com/features/category/grosses>.

¹⁷⁹ By comparison, the musical adaptation of *The Lion King*, which premiered just five months prior to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, saw 70,574 attendees and grossed over four million dollars in ticket sales for the month of December 1997. (Data compiled from the Playbill Weekly Gross Search.)

in March, began to steadily decline until its close in mid-June 1998. Though attendance at the Music Box Theatre was steadily greater in number than that of the original production at the Cort Theatre, the trends in ticket sales tell a different story than the raw numbers. Whereas attendance figures of Kesselman's adaptation indicated an erratic yet waning interest, its grosses increasing and decreasing by wide margins week-to-week, grosses of the original production demonstrated lower but far steadier attendance through its extensive run.¹⁸⁰ What, then, do these numbers reveal about the success of the new adaptation? Was the production simply overshadowed by lighter and more appealing options, or was the audience of the 1990s not as prepared for a "darker" Anne Frank as the show's creators had assumed?

Though the ambiguous reviews and box office numbers of Wendy Kesselman's new adaptation do not reveal clear answers to the questions that they raise, it is obvious that the 1997 script was, like its predecessor, very much the product of the political and cultural environment in which it was written. However, the public reaction that emerged following the show's premiere indicated that the relationship between the general public and Anne Frank had grown in complexity since the premiere of the original production. Now separated from the event by over half a century, several generations of Americans had, by 1997, gotten the chance to "grow up with" Anne Frank, many introduced to her diary through assigned school readings. While these circumstances allowed for the emergence of more realistic, unflinching Holocaust depictions in 1990s popular culture, it also complicated the relationship that audiences developed with the young protagonist of Kesselman's *The Diary of Anne Frank*. As reflected by Cynthia Ozick's

¹⁸⁰ Weekly Grosses, November 1955 – January 1957. Box 8, Folder 15, MS 8AN Kermit Bloomgarden Papers, 1938-1977, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, Wisconsin.

incendiary article that emerged prior to the play's premiere, Anne Frank had by that point been subject to the "shamelessness of appropriation."¹⁸¹

In 1995, amidst the flurry of Holocaust-related biographies, memoirs, and documentaries emerging in America, American author Cara Wilson released a book, titled *Love, Otto: The Legacy of Anne Frank*. Within this book was a collection of letters, initiated by a twelve-year-old Wilson, who wrote to Otto Frank after unsuccessfully auditioning for the lead role in the film adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. To her surprise, Otto responded to her letter, and the two began to correspond regularly. These letters represented over two decades' worth of correspondence, in which Wilson sought Otto's advice after having identified with Anne through reading her diary. The author's identification with the diarist, as well as Otto Frank's consistent willingness to serve as her "distant guru," outraged Ozick and prompted her to use the book as a case study in Anne Frank's appropriation. "The unabashed triflings of Cara Wilson – whose 'identification' with Anne Frank can be duplicated by the thousands, though she may be more audacious than most – point to a conundrum," Ozick wrote. "Did Otto Frank comprehend that Cara Wilson was deaf to everything the loss of his daughter represented? Did he not see, in Wilson's letters alone, how a denatured approach to the diary might serve to promote amnesia of what was rapidly turning into history?"¹⁸²

The questions that the indignant Ozick raised in reaction against Wilson's identification with Anne Frank were increasingly valid, even more so as the new adaptation premiered to audiences and reviewers who would begin again to debate the diarist's elusive "spirit." Though the public appeared to recognize Kesselman's efforts to redress the egregious generalizations made in the interest of appealing to 1950s audiences, many of their reactions to the new version

¹⁸¹ Ozick, 80.

¹⁸² Ibid, 82.

indicated a preoccupation with Anne's characterization and the optimistic tone distinctive of the first version. Indeed, some even felt that the retelling, in spite of its efforts to adhere more strictly to the historical details of the story, was neither successful nor necessary and lamented the loss of certain elements of Goodrich and Hackett's script, their complaints echoing claims of scholars who credited the original production's decidedly optimistic tone with its success.

Through analysis of Kesselman's revisions, as well as the wider public reaction to Anne Frank's story and depictions of the Holocaust in the 1990s, it becomes clear that scholars, theatre professionals, and even the general public were aware of the ways in which the original theatrical interpretation manufactured a specific version of the diarist for its anticipated audience. However, examining the language of the reviews, in conjunction with the monthly ticket sales, tells a more complex story of a public that was perhaps less willing to demand a more holistic story if it came at the expense of their specific version of the protagonist. Thus, while this decade eliminated many of the barriers between the audience and a more accurate retelling of the diary's events – barriers such as suppressed historical context, downplayed Judaism, and the creation of a universal and optimistic protagonist at the expense of the supporting characters – it seemed, paradoxically, to erect just as many. Audiences of Kesselman's retelling likely did not bat an eye at the songs sung in Hebrew for the Hanukkah celebration but, because of their inherent familiarity with the story and fondness for the character of Anne Frank, they were far more likely to flinch if the creative team's interpretation of "their" Anne did not meet their expectations. Therefore, the public reactions again indicated a resistance to elements of the new theatrical interpretation that cut against the grain of the culture of "Holocaust lessons" that developed in 1990s America.

Shortly after the play premiered, Austrian journalist Melissa Müller was conducting research for her new biography of Anne Frank. Dissatisfied with the lack of information on Anne's mother, Edith, Müller sought the assistance of Cornelis Suijk, expressing her frustration to him that it was "as though Anne Frank had no mother."¹⁸³ To Müller's surprise, Suijk revealed to her five pages of Anne's original diary entries, never before seen by the public – or, in fact, by anyone still living who was associated with Anne Frank's story. Within these pages, Anne had divulged extensive opinions about her parents' marriage, which she believed to have been for the sake of convenience on her father's part rather than true romantic love. This, Anne believed, had hardened her mother's heart and forced her to assume the "cold, sarcastic" demeanor that had often set the diarist at odds with her during their time in hiding.¹⁸⁴ This analysis came in addition to an entry, also suppressed, in which Anne expressed the wish for her diary "I shall also take care that nobody can lay hands on [the diary]."¹⁸⁵ Upon discovering the content of these entries, Otto Frank had removed the pages early in the editing process and bequeathed them to Suijk, with the provision that he not share them until all involved were deceased.

Though these entries were not particularly scandalous, the questions that they raised were enough to drive the image-conscious Otto Frank to suppress them. However, over fifty years removed from the dates in which they were drafted and with both Otto and his second wife, Elfriede, now deceased, Müller decided to include them in her book. Just months after the play's premiere, *Anne Frank: The Biography* was released, containing an extensive analysis of the

¹⁸³ Ralph Blumenthal. "Five Precious Pages Renew Wrangling Over Anne Frank." *New York Times* (September 10, 1998).

¹⁸⁴ Frank, 1944.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 1942.

pages that Suijk had given to Müller. The book presented a highly holistic account of Anne's life before, during, and after the period chronicled in her diary – indeed, due to the inclusion of the previously unpublished pages, it was the most complete account available at the time. Unsurprisingly, it was a hit among the American public and, by the end of the decade, a televised miniseries was being planned, based upon Müller's monograph.

In spite of the book's success and the public's clear interest in the newly-released pages, savvy readers surely noticed a glaring hole in Müller's analysis: direct quotes from the suppressed entries were not included. However, this was not a matter of grave oversight on the author's part; the Anne Frank Fonds, its spokesperson claiming that Suijk's decision to share the page was "absolutely illegal," refused to permit Müller to quote the material.¹⁸⁶ "For me, this is terrible," Müller stated in a *New York Times* interview as the Fonds' head, Anne's cousin Bernd Elias, began to speak out publicly against Suijk's decision.¹⁸⁷

The suppression of Müller's work was not the end of the Fonds' censorship of the entries that had been forced unexpectedly into the public sphere. In the years that followed, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) worked with Müller to produce a miniseries, based upon her monograph, that would portray Anne's life from her family's move to Amsterdam through her death at Bergen-Belsen. By this time, the contentious pages had been included into the officially sanctioned diary and reprinted alongside all other known entries in the Critical Edition. Further, the Anne Frank House, under the direction of Hans Westra, had endorsed Müller's book and the subsequent film based upon it, even offering their support to the production team. However, Elias and the Anne Frank Fonds remained incensed at Müller's utilization of the suppressed pages and refused to sanction the film, even appealing to proposed

¹⁸⁶ Blumenthal, 1998.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

director Steven Spielberg until he dropped out of the project in fear of the potential controversy that it would stir.¹⁸⁸ Ultimately, the film was created, but due to the lack of permission from the Fonds – which holds all of the rights to Anne’s written work – it could not quote the diary directly.¹⁸⁹

As the 1990s faded into the new millennium, questions of Anne Frank’s image and ownership were present as ever in public and scholarly discourse– perhaps even more so, with the emergence of the suppressed entries. Thus, the conversation about the ways in which Wendy Kesselman revised the theatrical portrayal of Anne’s story remained relevant in the years following its premiere, the public just as divided as those directly involved with the story. As can be seen in the common threads of censorship and the tailoring of Anne’s “voice” for the public, although the American public had moved past the social constraints that demanded a homogenized protagonist in the 1950s, the public was largely reluctant to accept a version of Anne’s story that did not fit into their preexisting conceptions of the diarist and her work.

¹⁸⁸ Bernard Weinraub. “TV Film Rekindles Dispute Over Anne Frank's Legacy.” *New York Times* (April 10, 2001).

¹⁸⁹ The opening title card addressed this issue by including following statement: “The following dramatization is based on Melissa Müller’s biography of Anne Frank and original research and interviews by Kirk Ellis. Some of the scenes in the film can also be found in *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, but the film does not use the words in the diary to express her feelings...” This statement was followed by a brief warning about realistic depictions of concentration camp life and advised viewer discretion.

CHAPTER THREE

ANNE FRANK IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: DEEPENING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE

Anne Frank's story has only grown in popularity among readers, now separated from the diarist's story by several generations. Overwhelmingly, the diary – and, more relevantly, its theatrical retelling – is assigned to students who seek to learn about the Holocaust in a relatable and easily palatable manner. Films and miniseries continue to be produced around the world, celebrating the diarist's life and struggle in hiding.¹⁹⁰ Books, films, and television shows have reimagined her fate countless times over, their tone ranging from the somewhat expected dramatic to the less conventional horror genre.¹⁹¹ The advent of social media in the twenty-first century has even allowed fans worldwide to connect with the diary via unique and previously unknown means: official organizations, such as the Anne Frank House Museum, maintain Facebook and even Instagram accounts, while unaffiliated fans have created countless social media accounts dedicated to sharing photographs and information related to the famous story.

The widespread popularity of Anne Frank's story, as well as the immediacy with which the public may react to it via social media accounts, has allowed for vastly improved dialogue

¹⁹⁰ Among these productions are the British Broadcasting Company's 2009 miniseries, *Anne Frank*, as well as a German-language film, *Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank*, set to premiere in 2016.

¹⁹¹ The popular American television show, *American Horror Story*, included a two-episode arc in its 2012 season in which a woman is institutionalized in a 1960s asylum after repeated claims that she is Anne Frank. Having survived the war, Anne claims that she allowed her father and the media to believe she had died so that she could serve as the martyr and cultural icon that the world needed her to be. Ultimately, her family and the hospital staff do not believe her, and she is lobotomized. Her true identity remains inconclusive, though it is hinted that she truly was Anne Frank.

about the story of which so many have grown deeply fond. However, it has also illuminated a continuation of the larger trend within the treatment of Anne's story: the public's growing tendency to show what Cynthia Ozick had described as "appropriation" of the diarist barely over a decade earlier.¹⁹² Public comments from fans of the Anne Frank House Facebook page often include instances of speaking "for" the diarist (i.e., "Anne would not have wanted this"), or lauding statements reinforcing her canonization in public culture (statements such as "Anne is my hero," and "she was so brave" are common).¹⁹³ Because Anne Frank continues to serve as a phenomenon popular culture, a trait that continues to reflect the trends spawned by her original characterization in 1955, this chapter will examine the treatment of the diarist's image in the twenty-first century to demonstrate the deepening of the rift between the accepted perception of the story and those who seek to challenge it.

The language seen among these social media comments is eerily reminiscent of the possessiveness that the public had already begun to demonstrate in the 1950s and which had grown in intensity in the 1990s. In the modern day, it seems that the public's fascination with Anne Frank has only deepened, as has their reverence for her. While this is certainly commendable and speaks to the diary's longevity as a historical document, these trends also reveal disturbing implications about Anne Frank's public image. Namely, the public continues to "fall for" the particular version of Anne Frank made popular by the 1950s dramatization: a generalized, largely American, heroine whose true legacy is her moral triumph over not only her oppressors but those around her as well, best remembered for her falsely reassuring sentiment

¹⁹² Cynthia Ozick. "Who Owns Anne Frank?" In *Quarrel and Quandary*, edited by Cynthia Ozick, 74-102. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

¹⁹³ The aforementioned instances are anecdotal examples, pulled from a wide pool of comments that have taken place over a period of several months, and are not intended to directly quote any particular individual.

that “people really are good at heart.” This tendency is best evidenced in an examination of Anne Frank in modern North American popular culture, a uniquely dichotomized environment in which audiences protest interventions into the accepted story with every instance of others seeking more holistic or alternative retellings of the story. Responses to the historiography, novelizations based upon Anne’s story, and alternate scripts will illuminate this trend. However, what is most telling is the treatment that the scripts by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (and, later, Wendy Kesselman) are currently receiving, as three separate case studies will illuminate that, while creative professionals have made attempts to be more faithful to the historical story, the public is quick to shun any production if it challenges the orthodox image of Anne Frank.

The Struggle for Ownership

If the controversy surrounding Melissa Müller’s attempt to utilize the previously suppressed diary pages in her 1998 biography of Anne Frank indicated an emerging split between the sanctioned public image of Anne Frank and those who challenged it, the issues that would arise in the new millennium solidified the bifurcation. Perhaps no better example of this conflict exists than the divide between the Anne Frank Fonds, located in Switzerland, and the Amsterdam-based Anne Frank House, which has been steadily increasing in the years since the second theatrical adaptation of the diary. The first notable instance of the divergence between the two groups occurred in 1996, when the Anne Frank Fonds sought legal action against the Anne Frank Foundation, which heads the Anne Frank House Museum in Amsterdam, for what representatives of the Fonds perceived to be the “commercialization of Anne Frank’s heritage.”¹⁹⁴ This move came on the heels of the museum’s attempt to raise funds for restoration

¹⁹⁴ Richard L. Kroon. “Court Fight Disputes Legacy of Anne Frank.” *New York Times* (February 15, 1996).

efforts that were, at the time, perceived as urgent; in addition to an international drive, museum officials began considering selling items such as pens and children's books with Anne Frank's name. Members of the Fonds, succumbing to hearsay that the museum would use Anne's image to market frivolous and inappropriate "trinkets" such as tee-shirts and balloons, registered Anne Frank's name as a trademark under Swiss and international law in a move to protect action that they perceived to be appropriation of the diarist's image.¹⁹⁵

The tension between the groups only continued to grow in intensity in the early 2000s, with the Fonds' refusal to sanction the miniseries based on Müller's biography in spite of the Foundation's approval and assistance with the production. In 2013, the groups found themselves in yet another legal battle, when the Fonds sued the Anne Frank House Museum for immediate return of over ten thousand documents and artifacts, including Anne's original diary itself, most of which had been on long-term loan since 2007 and were assumed to be on track to a permanent loan status.¹⁹⁶ However, responding to what officials of the Fonds perceived to be a "transform[ation] of Anne into a sort of child saint without context, an appealing icon of hope but one whose Jewish identity and place among the millions killed in the Holocaust are too little emphasized," the copyright-holding group demanded its artifacts be returned for relocation to a proposed Frank Family Museum in Frankfurt, Germany.¹⁹⁷ Ultimately, the relocation did not occur, but the conflict was enough to yet again force the question of Anne's legacy into the public conversation.

The Anne Frank Fonds' aforementioned protest of the diarist's manufactured image becomes somewhat ironic in light of recent developments that emerged surrounding the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Scott Sayare. "Two Groups Rekindle Fight Over Anne Frank." *New York Times* (June 2013).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

authorship of the diary. In November of 2015, the Fonds announced to publishers that Otto Frank was not only the editor but also the co-author of the diary, thereby extending the copyright from its impending expiration date of January 1, 2016, through 2050.¹⁹⁸ The move, made strictly in the name of practicality – preventing royalty- and permission-free publication of the diary throughout the world – once again complicated the public understanding of Anne Frank’s story, with many raising the question of the true implications. “If you follow their arguments, it means that they have lied for years about the fact that it was only written by Anne Frank,” stated Parisian lawyer Agnès Tricoire in an interview with the *New York Times*. Further, the move once again placed the Fonds at odds with the Anne Frank House, as the announcement found the museum in the midst of adapting a free online version of the diary for release after the expiration of the copyright. As of the announcement, the Anne Frank House had not yet decided on a course of action in light of the new development, but a spokeswoman insisted, “Otto Frank nor any other person is co-author.”¹⁹⁹

An Expanding Historiography

The legal wrangling between the groups has likely been frustrating for scholars of Anne Frank, who have kept a watchful eye on these issues as they have unfolded. Indeed, it appears that much of their highly publicized conflict has been somewhat of a boondoggle for scholars and the public alike, as it has brought about an inconclusive debate about the ownership of the diarist and her intellectual property. However, the legal interactions between the groups have not deterred the flurry of scholarly examinations that have emerged since the new millennium, with many attempting to reframe Anne Frank’s story in innovative and holistic ways.

¹⁹⁸ Doreen Carvajal. “Anne Frank’s Diary Gains ‘Co-Author’ in Copyright Move.” *New York Times*, (November 2015).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

One such scholar, and certainly one of the most relevant to this particular study, is journalist Francine Prose, who examined Anne Frank's literary legacy in her monograph, *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife*. Within, Prose analyzes the diary, as well as the subsequent theatrical scripts and film, to assess the story's deliberate formation as a "work of art" that has become emblematic of larger themes such as persecution, hope, and the coming-of-age – the very elements that emerged from the universalization of the story by the original playwrights.²⁰⁰ Prose first disseminates the process by which Anne edited her diary with the goal of postwar publication to demonstrate the earliest tailoring of her public image, a process that she goes on to demonstrate was amplified and ultimately cemented by the theatrical script and subsequent film.²⁰¹ Prose's work, which relies heavily on literary analysis, echoes claims made by scholars such as Cynthia Ozick, who believed the theatrical script to be the "final nail in the coffin," so to speak, of Anne Frank's manufactured optimistic image.

Additionally contributing to the conversation about Anne Frank in recent years is Carol Ann Lee, whose *Roses from the Earth: The Biography of Anne Frank* was published to high acclaim in 1999. In 2003, Lee published a controversial monograph, titled *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*, in which the author explores Otto Frank's longtime dealings with a Dutch Nazi collaborator who, the author proposes, blackmailed him and ultimately betrayed his family's hiding place.²⁰² Though the information is based upon a confession from the alleged informant's son and the author, Lee's theory has yet to be officially confirmed nor denied, with groups such as the Anne Frank Fonds and Anne Frank House openly more concerned with their own

²⁰⁰ Francine Prose. *Anne Frank: The Book, the Life, the Afterlife*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009).

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Carol Ann Lee. *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank*. (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002).

squabbles over Anne's legacy than the identity of the hidiers' still-anonymous betrayer.

However, Lee's book indicates a new trend in the historiography, in which scholars are turning their attention to the elements of Anne's story that prove less easily sentimentalized, her theory apparently convincing enough for Müller to address it in her re-released and updated biography in 2013.²⁰³

Also complicating the discussion in the vein of Carol Ann Lee's biography are essay collections such as *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy* and *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, published in 2000 and 2012, respectively. Both compilations offer an analytical examination of the very "afterlife" proposed by Prose and discuss, broadly, issues such as the means by which Anne Frank's story was transformed for the public, complexities of retelling stories of the Holocaust, and how Anne and other victims have been memorialized over time. The emergence and popularity of these collections²⁰⁴ speaks to a wider phenomenon occurring amongst Anne Frank scholarship, one glimpsed in its earliest stages in the 1990s, in which scholars began to assess the Anne Frank of history versus the Anne Frank of popular culture.

Reimagining Anne Frank

Though no new officially sanctioned theatrical retellings of Anne Frank's story have emerged since Wendy Kesselman's 1997 adaptation, creative interest in the diarist has certainly not waned. In fact, perhaps encouraged by the evolving scholarship on the subject (and certainly by the rising popularity of the "alternate history" genre in general), many authors have offered

²⁰³ In addition to her acknowledgement of Lee's claims, Müller also felt compelled to release a new edition of her book because she was able to incorporate additional material previously unavailable in her original publication.

²⁰⁴ Anne Frank's first cousin and longtime head of the Anne Frank Fonds, Bernd Elias, wrote the foreword for *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*.

their own narrative reimagining of her story. Authors such as Jillian Cantor, Ellen Feldman, and Sharon Dogar have shifted the spotlight to the supporting characters, placing Margot Frank (Cantor) and Peter van Pels (Feldman and Dogar) in the spotlight of their narratives. Cantor and Feldman provide readers with an entirely alternate history, in which their chosen protagonists survive the Holocaust and struggle to come to terms with the diary's emerging popularity in postwar America,²⁰⁵ while Dogar maintains the hidings' ultimate end but offers the well-known story through Peter's perspective.

Unsurprisingly, these books were not without public resistance, particularly Dogar's 2010 novel, *Annexed*, as it was scathed for its portrayal of a somewhat sexualized relationship between the protagonist and the diary's heroine.²⁰⁶ Chiefly among the protestors were Gillian Walnes, co-founder and executive director of the Anne Frank Trust, who claimed to have been told by Anne's surviving cousin, Bernd Elias, that he was "very upset" about the book, though the book's publisher Klaus Flugge recounted that Dogar remained in touch with Elias throughout the writing process, as she "fully respect[ed] his role as the guardian of Anne's memory."²⁰⁷

Undeterred, Walnes claimed:

We have to be scrupulous with the truth when it comes to Anne Frank. Anything else feeds the Holocaust deniers. It is so important. The author is introducing the modern obsession with sexualization of young people into a time when such things didn't happen – especially in such close proximity to the family. A fifteen-year-old girl in the 1940s would have been shocked at the thought.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ See Jillian Cantor's *Margot* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2013) and Ellen Feldman's *The Boy Who Loved Anne Frank* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005).

²⁰⁶ Sharon Dogar. *Annexed*. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010).

²⁰⁷ Jessica Elgot. "Anne Frank's Cousin Slams 'Sexed Up' Novel." *The Jewish Chronicle* (June 2010).

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Whether Walnes' dramatic accusation that such alternate histories have a direct contribution to Holocaust denial is inconclusive, as she did not divulge in her interview the process by which she believed this to be possible. What is obvious, however, is the hysterical, nearly religious fervor that arose around Dogar's relatively tame re-imagination of the story, surprising in the seemingly jaded era of modern America. However, examining this reaction as part of the larger trends in Anne Frank's cultural image, the backlash against Dogar's novelization becomes clear.

In order to understand the current status of Anne Frank's image in modern America, attention must be paid to two scripts that indeed have emerged since Kesselman's 1997 adaptation. *The Secret Annex*, written by Alix Sobler, which premiered in Canada in 2014, offers another reimagining of Anne's fate and presents the audience with a heroine whose family is not captured but is liberated from their hiding place, alongside their friends. Anne, who in this play lives in Brooklyn with her sister, Margot, attempts to have her diary published while struggling with her memories and her feelings for Peter van Pels, who remains an acquaintance in the postwar years.²⁰⁹ An additional creative intervention, *Dreams of Anne Frank*, a musical retelling marketed as "a play for young people," emerged in the late 1990s, shortly after Kesselman's script premiered on Broadway. However, it enjoyed neither the commercial success nor the distinction of being particularly sanctioned by any of the bodies that govern Anne Frank's legacy. The same may be said about Sobler's play, though it was revived in Montreal in early 2016, starring the actress who had portrayed Anne in the well-received Stratford Festival performance of Kesselman's script just months earlier.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Jim Burke. "In Segal Centre's 'The Secret Annex,' Anne Frank is Alive and Thriving in 1950s Brooklyn." *Montreal Gazette* (January 2016).

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Why, then, has no new officially sanctioned theatrical retelling of Anne Frank's story emerged in America, particularly when a Dutch play, simply titled *Anne*, has been given the distinction by both the Anne Frank Fonds and the Anne Frank Foundation? Though it is certainly possible that the Dutch production could eventually make the journey to the American stage, no official plans have been announced to do so, leaving the script by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett as the longstanding officially recognized script. Currently, the original script and its 1997 adaptation both remain generally popular among theatre companies of all levels, with no overt preference seemingly given to the updated incarnation. This, in and of itself, is puzzling, particularly in a culture that places value upon the new; it would seem that the 1955 script would have been rendered largely obsolete by this point. However, it remains a stalwart among the "modern classics" of play scripts, just as its 1997 counterpart has since its premiere.

The answer to this conundrum not only accounts for the lack of nationwide attention to alternative theatrical scripts, but also for the backlash against Dogar's novel, and, even further, why Lee's proposed solution to the question of the hidiers' betrayer was never largely accepted as canonical. As with the 1990s, the public has once again placed its particular demands upon the story of Anne Frank, perhaps now more than ever, and has become nearly cult-like in its devotion to the accepted image of the diarist and, more largely, her story. Although theatre professionals and scholars specializing in Anne Frank's story have attempted to crack the foundation of the sanitized and optimistic tale by presenting more complete or even alternate versions, the public as a whole, as well as those who tirelessly claim to "protect" Anne's legacy, react against them, their attempts at protection bordering on wholesale censorship.

Case Studies

While no new officially sanctioned theatrical retellings of Anne Frank's story have emerged since Wendy Kesselman's revision to Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's 1955 script, both incarnations of the play continue to serve as popular fare among theatre companies at all levels. Thus, gauging the modern public perception of the script and its characters is notably more difficult than doing so for the productions when they premiered on Broadway, both because of the lack of immediacy in the media and because of the existence of two equally popular scripts. However, three different case studies of the script's performance on the university, community, and professional levels will help illuminate how the public perception of Anne Frank's story via the theatrical script has evolved and split between those who subscribe to Anne's traditional American image and those who demand more.

The School of Theatre and Dance at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, produced *The Diary of Anne Frank* in the spring of 2015, employing the efforts of student dramaturges in order to ensure the historical accuracy of the production.²¹¹ Jesslyn Wilson, who was assigned to the position for this production, spoke of how her research affected her perception of the historical story behind the script. Noting that the department chose the adaptation by Wendy Kesselman because they regarded it as "[more] honest and truthful" than its predecessor, Wilson approached the production already familiar with the story of Anne Frank yet previously unaware that two versions of the script existed.²¹² As she researched the historical context of the play, Wilson began to discover a dichotomy that remains between the well documented figures of Anne and Otto Frank and the other characters, who are not afforded as

²¹¹ In a theatrical setting, a dramaturge's main function is to research and develop the play being produced, including ensuring that the production adheres to historical accuracy.

²¹² Jesslyn Wilson. Email interview by author. (March 2015).

much attention by historians. It was at this point that Wilson began to realize the potential for the onstage characters to deviate from their historical counterparts.

Relating the issue of characterizations to the lack of available information about the figures being depicted, Wilson credits much of the unflattering portrayals to the issue of their being shown solely through Anne's lens. "The characters we see onstage are seen through the eyes of Anne Frank. She saw these people a certain way, and now we, the audience, see them the same way she did," Wilson states. "All we have on some of the characters is the angst-filled attitude that Anne had toward them. It is hard to see these people as their own person when we have hardly any accounts of them, except through Anne."²¹³ Wilson's awareness of this bias is indicative that the unflattering characterizations that arose due to Goodrich and Hackett's initial focus on Anne as the central character remain obviously problematic to professionals tasked with performing the play.

Wilson speaks with a certainty that comes from personal experience with the story, as well as witnessing the reaction of the cast to their characters. Discussing her initial perceptions, Wilson states:

Honestly, I perceived them the same way Anne did. I thought Mrs. van Daan was a little floozy, that Mr. van Daan was a selfish pig, [and] that Edith Frank was oppressive and uptight. All of this [was] because of how Anne discussed them.²¹⁴

Though Wilson's impressions of the characters changed upon researching them, she also notes that the actors also believed their characters to somehow be inferior to that of Anne upon their first reading of the script. It is particularly telling that Wilson's initial perceptions perfectly mirror the stock characterizations presented in Jonathan Krasner's dissemination of Jewish archetypes in Western theatre, suggesting that these generalized characterizations continue to

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

alter how the historical figures behind the characters are perceived. Though the ensemble has developed different opinions of their characters throughout their work on the production, Wilson appreciates the danger of inaccurate or unflattering portrayals in historical theatre, stating “if a play is done wrong, it can severely skew an audience’s mind to the real history of something.”²¹⁵

Wilson was particularly troubled by the portrayal of the van Pels family as the van Daans. As indicated by her own initial reactions to the characters, Wilson believes that “they are seen to be the antagonists of the Annex at points. I think the play relies too heavily on making the Franks out to be the perfect family who deserves more because the van Daans are made out to be so selfish,” once again reinforcing the maligning of these characters that arose as a result of the playwrights’ goals over sixty years ago. Further, Wilson states that her sympathy for the characters was ultimately spurred by her own reactions to them:

I know that when I first read and watched the play, I felt that the van Daans did not deserve to live as much as the Franks, which is a terrible thing to think. This all goes back to how historical theatre is performed, and how it is written as well. The most important thing I have learned while working on this show is that the lives of all the other people living in the Annex were just as important as Anne’s. This conclusion should not have come so late to me, and I think audiences need to learn this earlier on.²¹⁶

Wilson’s reaction highlights a startling reality of the theatrical script: the marginalization of the supporting characters’ humanity that occurred as the result of the playwrights’ push for a universally identifiable Anne has created an unspoken hierarchy, a microcosm of “good versus evil” within the larger narrative. Particularly in Goodrich and Hackett’s script, these characters were relegated to non-relatable and generally unlikeable stock characterizations, thus diminishing their own humanity in contrast to Anne’s and preventing the audience from significantly empathizing with them. The historical figures transformed into caricatures, it is far

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

easier for audiences to identify with the bright-eyed young diarist whose humanity constantly underscores the action than the unrealistic and cartoonish man, his figure further distorted by padding, who cannot help himself from stealing the food of his already malnourished family and friends.

Wilson is not the only member of the creative staff to identify the problematic characterizations within the script. A 2015 performance by the Geauga Lyric Theatre Guild, a community theatre company in Chardon, Ohio, omitted Alfred Dussel's confusion regarding Hanukkah, in spite of the fact that their troupe produced the Goodrich and Hackett script, from which the line originates. In addition, the director chose to further counter the depiction of Dussel's religious ignorance by inserting the cutaway scene in which he recites prayers in Hebrew, an element not included in the script until Kesselman's 1997 intervention.²¹⁷ These significant changes, as well as revised phrasing²¹⁸ indicate awareness on behalf of the director and actors of the inconsistencies between the play and the historical story, as well as a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the information put forth in the original script.

Further, Mark Miloro, the actor who portrayed Alfred Dussel in this production, took his own measures in the performance to improve his audiences' perceptions of the character. Having taken on a great deal of personal research into his character, it was Miloro's own concern about the lack of Dussel's Jewish faith in the onstage depiction that led to the director's decision to omit the Hanukkah sequence. Additionally, Miloro attempted to reconcile his performance with the variety of perceptions through which Fritz Pfeffer is viewed, poignantly stating the

²¹⁷ Geauga Lyric Theatre Guild performance, Chardon, OH. (March 2015).

²¹⁸ Mark Miloro. Email interview by author. (March 2015). – For example, the line, "I'm a man who's always lived alone..." was altered to "I'm a man who lives alone," in order to downplay the concept of Dussel/Pfeffer as a reclusive man with no family.

following with regard to the conflicting views of Anne, Charlotte Kaletta, and Fritz's own son, Werner:

We have the perception of a son who has lived most of his life remembering the short time that he had with his father – a father who had saved him by sending him away and who had given his own life in protection of his family. We have the perception of his would-be spouse, who was able to see him like nobody else could. And we have the perception of a thirteen- to fifteen-year-old girl, with an opposing personality, who was forced to share a room with an older male stranger. Perceptions are tricky things. Which was correct? I decided that all three were based in reality... Only the additional changes by the playwrights rang a bit untrue to me.²¹⁹

Miloro's efforts to provide the audience with "a bit of the real Mr. Pfeffer,"²²⁰ as well as Wilson's statements on her company's efforts, speaks to a certain self-awareness that modern-day creative teams have adopted in light of the availability of both script adaptations. With the wide availability of research opportunities that exist on the subject, magnified immensely by the convenience of the Internet, actors and creative staff are generally more aware of the scholarly conversation about how Anne and the other hidlers are depicted and how those depictions were complicated by both incarnations of the script. The result is a more diligent consciousness on behalf of those attempting to retell the story via theatrical performance: creative teams possess an improved awareness of where the dramatization departs from the historical story and strive to make the line between the two less stark.

Modern theatrical companies are also demonstrating responsiveness to the significance Anne's story holds for the general audience, particularly evidenced by the performance of Kesselman's script at the 2015 Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada. As stated in a review by J. Kelly Nestruck for *The Globe and Mail*:

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Most directors see *The Diary of Anne Frank*, understandably, as a play about Anne Frank. But [director Jillian] Keiley...has refocused attention onto the diary and its readers, onto how and why we have been passing this record of ordinary moments under extraordinary circumstances down decade after decade as the horror of history recedes further and further into the distance.²²¹

The production's refocusing was clear even before the curtains opened, as the facility was equipped with a booth in which audience members could record themselves reading selected passages from Anne's diary.²²² These recordings would then be played over the theatre's sound system at a later performance as the audience was filing in before the show. Additionally, the play's action was prefaced with a presentation from all members of the ensemble and the chorus, in which they each told a personal story to the audience relating their past with the story to be presented onstage. Some spoke of their own tumultuous teenage years, some of their first experiences with the diary, and some of their familial connections to World War II or the Holocaust.

Much of Keiley's vision for the production's altered focus came in the form of technical and visual reworking, rather than textual updates. As opposed to the usual replica of the Secret Annex, the set that greeted audience members of this production was four bare-bones walls of slatted wood, which the actors then converted throughout the action to represent features such as tables, walls, beds, and stairs. "The design...reflects both the claustrophobia and the utility of the space: how one thing must represent many things, how space is converted from one room to the next," Keiley wrote in her Director's Notes within the playbill.²²³ The effect, coupled with

²²¹ J. Kelly Nestruck. "Stratford's 'Diary of Anne Frank' is Hard-Hitting and Deeply Entrenching." *The Globe and Mail* (May 2015).

²²² Information from this case study was taken from the October 12, 2015 performance at the Avon Theatre in Stratford, Ontario.

²²³ This information was acquired from the playbill of the Stratford Festival performance of *The Diary of Anne Frank* on October 12, 2015.

the actors' monochromatic costumes, was also one of eliminating distraction: never did the set dressing or costumes overtake the tone of the particular scene. It also allowed for improved context, as the walls were pulled out and converted to represent the train cars that carried the hidiers to their doom in a vignette added by the director to the closing of the play. Coupled with the utilization of shadowed outlines of Adolf Hitler and other Nazi officials that appeared from behind the wooden slats during the corresponding radio broadcasts, Keiley's vision also served to enhance the foreboding tone that Kesselman's revision had lent to the production.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Keiley's production, however, is its treatment of Anne's diary itself. The recorded voiceovers, in which Anne narrates from her diary entries, were transformed into moments in which each cast member stepped out of the action to the edge of the stage and, a copy of Anne's published diary in hand, read the corresponding entries. Similarly, Otto Frank's closing line, in which he originally picks up the diary and woefully states that it is "all that remains,"²²⁴ was given an addendum: Joseph Ziegler, the actor who portrayed Otto, stated, "All that remains...is this," and handed the copy of Anne's diary used during the production to a randomly selected audience member in the front row. The outcome of this poignant moment is a final reminder that the diary has become a character in its own right, its significance deeply personal yet unifying for its readers.

Like its university and community counterparts, this professional production is an exercise in the modern attitude toward the dramatization of Anne's story. Conceptual and self-conscious, the Stratford Festival production's reworking of central elements, such as the set and Anne's voiceovers, redistributed focus to other aspects of the story previously sidelined by the structure of the script and the time in which it was written. Stratford's rendition has removed Anne from the central role of storyteller and instead elevated her diary as its own character,

²²⁴ Wendy Kesselman. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1997.

demonstrating an awareness of the power the diary has attained since its publication but also deepening the divide between the diarist and her published work.

The Public Response

It should be noted that, though published critiques do not exist for the aforementioned university and community productions, several theatre correspondents reviewed the Stratford Festival's interpretation of Anne Frank's story. Although the scope is somewhat more limited than the Broadway performances of the 1950s and 1990s, reviews of the Stratford production illuminate several persisting trends in public reaction among the new issues that the reviewers raise in their analyses of the dramatization. Though many reviewers chose to approach Keiley's creative interventions, thus rendering their reviews entirely unique to this production, their assessments speak volumes about the larger issue of public consciousness surrounding Anne Frank's iconic image. Specifically, reviewers in 2015 spoke of the dramatization – and, accordingly, of the depiction of Anne – with the same fondness, familiarity, and even possessiveness hinted by reviews of Wendy Kesselman's 1997 adaptation. Although the reviews as a whole demonstrated a matured understanding of the characterizations and the circumstances surrounding the story's onstage depiction, an analysis of these reviews reveals the reviewers' continued defensiveness of their version of both diarist and diary, often enshrouded in a rhetoric of “doing justice to the story.”

In examining the reviews, a base level change becomes apparent that first must be recognized as the current capstone of the evolving public understanding of Anne Frank's story. Much like the testimonies of Wilson and Miloro, the reviews of the Stratford performance similarly suggest an improved understanding of the dichotomy between historical figures and onstage characterizations, particularly in the reactions to the supporting roles. However, even

some sixty years after the first critiques emerged, a smattering of modern reviewers continue to use terms that harken back to the original reviewers' reactions to the oversimplified stock characterizations of Goodrich and Hackett's creation.

It is similarly worth noting that, for the first time, reviewers afforded attention to the marginalized characters of Margot Frank and Peter van Daan, although their reviews often reinforced the one-dimensionality of the original characterizations. About Margot, reviewers discussed her "fragil[ity]"²²⁵ and described her as a "sympathetic mouse"²²⁶ or "sensitive and vulnerable,"²²⁷ recalling the reticent background role to which she was originally assigned. However, others still suggested an improved perspective of the oft-forgotten sibling: "Margot Frank so often lives in the shadow of her younger sister," wrote reviewer Laura Cudworth, who then stated that "[actress Shannon] Taylor's Margot doesn't need the attention, but she's a steady rock for Anne to lean on."²²⁸ Further, Laura Glenow wrote of a "smart, graceful" Margot, who "acts as a confidante and friend" to her younger sister.²²⁹ Though the dichotomy continues within the perceptions of the character, it is nonetheless telling that Margot Frank has only recently entered the theatergoing consciousness to any significant extent.

²²⁵ Richard Ouzounian. "The Diary of Anne Frank: Review." *The Star* (May 2015).

²²⁶ Robert Cushman. "The Diary of Anne Frank Review: Stratford Production Refocuses from the Diarist to the Diary." *National Post* (June 2015).

²²⁷ Jamie Portman. "Reviews from Stratford, 2015: Jillian Keiley's 'Diary of Anne Frank' is Sadly Misconceived." *Capital Critics' Circle* (May 2015).

²²⁸ Laura Cudworth. "Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Exploration of the Human Heart." *Stratford Beacon Herald* (May 2015).

²²⁹ Lauren Glenow. "BWW Review: Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Honest and Stunning Production." *Broadway World* (May 2015).

The same may also be said of Peter van Daan, once passingly referred to in a review as “the boyfriend” of Anne Frank.²³⁰ Though the reviews overwhelmingly lack significant attention to his character independent of Anne, many who reviewed the Stratford performance were impressed with the character’s portrayal as “a mass of insecurities, shyness, meekness, and eventually confidence,”²³¹ one even describing him as “bristling with teenage life.”²³² Further, Cudworth described the character as “unsure, vulnerable, and charming,”²³³ while others deemed him “sweetly touching.”²³⁴ Similarly, Glenow referred to him simply as “shy.”²³⁵ However, the wording in two particular reviews calls into question how far public understanding has come from the original characterization that fit so neatly into Jonathan Krasner’s description of Jewish stock characters.²³⁶ Reviewer Robyn Godfrey describes Peter as “isolated,”²³⁷ while Robert Reid was particularly impressed with Peter’s “brooding introspection of a teenager making his first tentative steps into manhood.”²³⁸ As these reviews suggest, elements of Peter van Daan’s

²³⁰ “Broadway’s Big Beginning.” *Life* 39, October 7, 1955: 161-163.

²³¹ Lynn Slotkin. “Review: The Diary of Anne Frank.” *The Passionate Playgoer* (July 2015).

²³² Cushman, “The Diary of Anne Frank Review: Stratford Production Refocuses from the Diarist to the Diary.”

²³³ Cudworth, “Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Exploration of the Human Heart.”

²³⁴ Ouzounian, “The Diary of Anne Frank: Review.”

²³⁵ Glenow, “BWW Review: Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Honest and Stunning Production.”

²³⁶ As described at length in Chapter 1, the original characterization of Peter van Daan fits into the stock character of the “alienated son” that Krasner argues is one of six archetypal Jewish characters found in traditional Western theatre.

²³⁷ Robyn Godfrey. “Diary of Anne Frank: A Hard-Working Production That Fails to Reach the Heights History Demands.” *The Bard and the Boards* (May 2015).

²³⁸ Robert Reid. “Stratford Puts Fresh Perspective on Familiar Story of Anne Frank.” *Waterloo Region Record* (May 2015).

original characterization as the “alienated son” continue to noticeably color his onstage portrayal and thereby affect public synthesis of his role in the larger story.

The reviewers’ treatment of Alfred Dussel remains equally entrenched in the stock characterizations of the past. Among the descriptors of his character were words such as “obnoxious,” “dyspeptic,”²³⁹ “grievance-hugging,”²⁴⁰ “tiresome,” and “incessantly complaining.”²⁴¹ Further, though certain reviews offered a newfound understanding of his unique position of isolation from his family, they too reflect the persistence of the “impotent father” stereotype into which his character originally fit.²⁴² “Dussel is used to privacy and struggles with having to share a room with Anne, the biggest extrovert in the Annex. He’s completely alone among the two families,” Cudworth wrote, suggesting an improved perspective on the character’s struggle, yet a continued perception of Dussel as pitifully lonely.²⁴³ Further, descriptors of his “nervous fastidiousness,”²⁴⁴ as well as his “awkward humor” that he himself “would likely not see...as funny,”²⁴⁵ recall Krasner’s archetypes and suggest that his original utilization as a stock character continues to affect public understanding of the historical figure being portrayed.

²³⁹ Ouzounian, “The Diary of Anne Frank: Review.”

²⁴⁰ Cushman, “The Diary of Anne Frank Review: Stratford Production Refocuses from the Diarist to the Diary.”

²⁴¹ Reid, “Stratford Puts Fresh Perspective on Familiar Story of Anne Frank.”

²⁴² Krasner, Jonathan. “The Interwar Family and American Jewish Identity in Clifford Odets’ ‘Awake and Sing.’” *Jewish Social Studies* 13 (1), 2006. Indiana University Press: 2–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4467755>.

²⁴³ Cudworth, “Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Exploration of the Human Heart.”

²⁴⁴ Slotkin, “Review: The Diary of Anne Frank.”

²⁴⁵ Glenow, “BWW Review: Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Honest and Stunning Production.”

Reviewers appeared to synthesize the characterization of Edith Frank in a similarly dichotomous manner, with some demonstrating recognition of the character's inner turmoil and others perpetuating the stock characterizations that emerged in the original script. This dichotomy can easily be seen in conflicting descriptions of the character, which range from "vulnerable,"²⁴⁶ or as "a strong woman cracking under unbearable strain,"²⁴⁷ depending upon the reviewer. Further connecting the reviewers' perceptions of Edith Frank to her original character archetype of the Jewish mother are reviews such as Cudworth's, as well as one by Cynthia Strynatka who describe Edith as "a worrier"²⁴⁸ and "an anxious, fretting woman,"²⁴⁹ respectively. Though the discussion of Edith's motivations has been complicated amongst reviewers, she remains almost always described in terms of her role as the mother, this trend moving her out of Krasner's archetype just as it draws her back into it. For example, Cudworth stated that Edith "wings her hands and frets, but she would go to battle fiercely for her children,"²⁵⁰ suggesting an improvement from the emotionally driven Jewish mother archetype yet still allotting her to a very specific maternal role.

Otto Frank, meanwhile, appears to remain largely within the sage elder archetype in the public perception of his character. A man with "the patience of Job,"²⁵¹ Otto has clearly been isolated by reviewers as the character most responsible for the play's tone and ultimate impact

²⁴⁶ Ouzounian, "The Diary of Anne Frank: Review."

²⁴⁷ Reid, "Stratford Puts Fresh Perspective on Familiar Story of Anne Frank."

²⁴⁸ Cudworth, "Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Exploration of the Human Heart."

²⁴⁹ Cynthia Strynatka. "Not a Dry Eye in the Audience at Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank.'" *Examiner* (May 2015).

²⁵⁰ Cudworth, "Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Exploration of the Human Heart."

²⁵¹ Slotkin, "Review: The Diary of Anne Frank."

and indeed, appropriately so, as his closing speech disclosing the hidens' fates to the audience carries perhaps the most weight in the entire show. However, the character's importance does not save him from falling directly into the stock characterization originally ascribed to him that, though not necessarily unflattering, is narrow and one-dimensional nonetheless. To reviewers, Otto unequivocally remains the moral shepherd of the production, for characters and audience alike. Cudworth described him as "a sensitive moderator," going further to state that "he is a man who can be counted on to do the right thing."²⁵² These glorifying descriptions may be found in nearly every review, with Richard Ouzounian stating that he is "the man you turn to when moral conscience is needed,"²⁵³ echoed by Reid, who referred to the character as "a model of intelligence and dignity under duress."²⁵⁴

Reviewers' reactions to Otto Frank's characterization once again amplify those to the character of Herman van Daan, suggesting that the trend of audiences placing the two as direct foils to one another has continued since the original production. As suggested in the reviews of the 1997 adaptation, the public has grown in sympathy for both Mr. and Mrs. van Daan since they were first immortalized in Goodrich and Hackett's script. However, it should be noted that some unflattering perceptions of the couple,²⁵⁵ and particularly of Herman, have carried over to the present day, largely surrounding the fictitious scene depicting his theft. Though some reviewers demonstrated understanding toward the character – such as Glenow, who describes the van Daans as "relatable, yet flawed human beings who struggle under the conditions they are

²⁵² Cudworth, "Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Exploration of the Human Heart."

²⁵³ Ouzounian, "The Diary of Anne Frank: Review."

²⁵⁴ Reid, "Stratford Puts Fresh Perspective on Familiar Story of Anne Frank."

²⁵⁵ For example, modern-day reviews described the pair as "insufferable" (Reid) and "dysfunctional" (Portman).

forced into”²⁵⁶ – much of the verbiage used in these reviews indicates an ongoing reluctance to perceive Herman outside of the archetype of gluttony first ascribed to him. For instance, Godfrey refers to Herman as “the weakest-willed of the men” and expresses amazement at the actor’s ability to elicit the audience’s empathy,²⁵⁷ echoed by other reviewers’ descriptions of a “venal,”²⁵⁸ “impatient, and pitiful”²⁵⁹ man “desperate for a cigarette [and] more food.”²⁶⁰

Interestingly, the character of Petronella van Daan is increasingly afforded more of the reviewers’ sympathy than her husband, yet it cannot be said that the public perception of her character has entirely evolved past the original *belle Juive* archetype of Krasner’s article. For instance, words such as “histrionic,”²⁶¹ “grandiloquent,”²⁶² and “pampered”²⁶³ arose within the critiques of the character; however, much as they did in their assessments of Edith Frank, reviewers occasionally offered some perspective into her situation. “Mrs. van Daan...has much difficulty leaving her old life and is easily irritated by the people in the Annex...but when it matters, her love and ability to forgive rise above any misery,” wrote Cudworth, placing

²⁵⁶ Glenow, “BWW Review: Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Honest and Stunning Production.”

²⁵⁷ Godfrey, “Diary of Anne Frank: A Hard-Working Production That Fails to Reach the Heights History Demands.”

²⁵⁸ Ouzounian, “The Diary of Anne Frank: Review.”

²⁵⁹ Cushman, “The Diary of Anne Frank Review: Stratford Production Refocuses from the Diarist to the Diary.”

²⁶⁰ Slotkin, “Review: The Diary of Anne Frank.”

²⁶¹ Godfrey, “Diary of Anne Frank: A Hard-Working Production That Fails to Reach the Heights History Demands.”

²⁶² Ouzounian, “The Diary of Anne Frank: Review.”

²⁶³ Portman, “Reviews from Stratford, 2015: Jillian Keiley’s ‘Diary of Anne Frank’ is Sadly Misconceived.”

Petronella as the recipient of her husband's antagonism.²⁶⁴ Lynn Slotkin echoed this sentiment, describing the character as having "a wounded heart, frustration, and a need to cling to things that are comfortable."²⁶⁵ Particularly when examined in contrast with the perception of her husband, it appears that the public has become exponentially more forgiving of Petronella than of Herman, though many are quick to relegate her to her original flirtatious and materialistic archetype.

Though some of the reviewers demonstrated improved understanding of the story behind the dramatization, their reactions to Anne's characterization, in conjunction with director Jillian Keiley's nontraditional treatment of the production, are perhaps most telling. Unlike the reviewers' reactions to Natalie Portman's 1997 incarnation of Anne Frank, those who reviewed the Stratford performance were very complimentary of actress Sara Farb, who disclosed in an address to the audience before the play that she was the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor.²⁶⁶ However, the verbiage they used in lauding her performance, as well as the general sense of frustration they presented about the play's avant-garde format, recalls the same public possessiveness of Anne Frank indicated in the reviews of the 1950s and the 1990s.

Overwhelmingly, Keiley's interventions into the production were the most cited points of contention among the reviewers, though not all found the approach to be offensive. Indeed, J. Kelly Nestruck even stated, "Keiley's refreshing and devastating staging should be used as a template to introduce this astonishing document of the Holocaust to a new generation."²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ Cudworth, "Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank is an Exploration of the Human Heart.'"

²⁶⁵ Slotkin, "Review: The Diary of Anne Frank."

²⁶⁶ Per Farb's testimony, her grandmother survived the Stutthof concentration camp.

²⁶⁷ Nestruck, "Stratford's 'Diary of Anne Frank' is Hard-Hitting and Deeply Entrenching."

However, many more reviewers reacted strongly against what they perceived to be an imposition on a beloved story. An additional statement by reviewer Lynne Slotkin reads as follows:

I think *The Diary of Anne Frank* is one of the greatest books documenting a coming of age of a thirteen-year-old girl named Anne Frank, set against the backdrop of the Nazi invasion in the Netherlands. And the play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett and adapted by Wendy Kesselman do the source material proud. I just wish that director Jillian Keiley did the play and got out of the way.²⁶⁸

What is perhaps most telling about the aforementioned quote is not Slotkin's distaste for what she perceived to be an intrusion into the diary's theatrical retelling, but rather her concept of the story itself. Slotkin's view of the diary as a coming-of-age story with the contextual threat of the hidiers' eventual fate only serving as a background hints at the modern perception to which the story has evolved. Indeed, this is corroborated by Lawrence Langer, who states in his essay, *The Uses – and Misuses – of a Young Girl's Diary*, that Anne's story would be more appropriately viewed as a coming-of-age story than a Holocaust document, largely because of the diarist's own obliviousness to her fate when writing her entries.²⁶⁹ Langer's analysis provides some insight into the larger public perception that the diary is as much as an account of Anne's teenage maturation as it is a story of the Holocaust – or perhaps even more the former than the latter.

In light of this analysis, the public's protectiveness of Anne becomes even clearer. As particularly evidenced in the reviews of the 1997 Broadway production, the public has increasingly ascribed individualistic and personal meanings to the story in the generations that passed since the diary's publication, creating and "appropriating" her image, in the words of

²⁶⁸ Slotkin, "Review: The Diary of Anne Frank."

²⁶⁹ Lawrence Langer. "The Uses – and Misuses – of a Young Girl's Diary: 'If Anne Frank Could Return from Among the Murdered, She Would Be Appalled.'" In *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy*, edited by Hyman Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer, 198-202. (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

Cynthia Ozick.²⁷⁰ Examining the Stratford reviewers' rhetoric makes clear that this trend has only continued in its intensity and frequency in recent years. For instance, many of the reviewers who emphatically opposed Keiley's approach did not do so because of a lack of technical success but because of what it symbolized: the undoing of the orthodox method of retelling the story.

Those who were off-put by Keiley's production included reviewers such as Richard Ouzounian, who stated in his review, "If there ever was a story that needed no adornment, no sentiment, and no fixing of any kind, it's that of Anne Frank," claiming that "it's a work of great power that can't help but wring the heart...unless it's meddled with."²⁷¹ Ouzounian's view that creative interventions into the original script diminish the story was echoed by reviewer Jamie Portman, who interpreted Keiley's approach as largely self-serving, "wrong-headed, and misconceived...render[ing] a profound disservice to a powerful and affecting story."²⁷²

As Ouzounian and Portman's reviews suggest, a traditional production may well have been more pleasing to audiences. Indeed, even reviewers who enjoyed the overall tone used language familiar to the rhetoric of universalization, optimism, and spiritual triumph usually associated with the script's earliest incarnation. One reviewer lauded the approach of the audience members' recording of diary entries for "universaliz[ing] Frank's story even as the company of actors particularize[s] it,"²⁷³ while another mourned the production's reworking of

²⁷⁰ Ozick, 100.

²⁷¹ Ouzounian, "The Diary of Anne Frank: Review."

²⁷² Portman, "Reviews from Stratford, 2015: Jillian Keiley's 'Diary of Anne Frank' is Sadly Misconceived."

²⁷³ Nestruck, "Stratford's 'Diary of Anne Frank' is Hard-Hitting and Deeply Entrenching."

the closing “good at heart” line, stating that it was ineffective because it was not read “with laughter, a kind heart, and optimism” as it was originally intended.²⁷⁴

Further, reviewers’ reactions to Anne’s portrayal invoked much of the language usually ascribed to the idealized American version of the character, with descriptors including “abundantly alive,”²⁷⁵ “totally real,”²⁷⁶ “highly relatable,”²⁷⁷ and “indomitable spirit.”²⁷⁸ Reviewer Laura Cudworth even described her as “the girl we all know so intimately...a young girl who cannot stop living a life even in the most difficult circumstances.”²⁷⁹ Another still refused to provide a true review, as “it seems entirely inappropriate,” given the revered subject matter.²⁸⁰ However, it is Laura Glenow’s review that is perhaps most telling of all, as it offers insight into the public’s complex relationship with the heroine:

Any of us could have been Anne. That is why can all relate to her diary. That is why it does not matter whose voice is reading it to us. It is this shared humanity that is so necessary in ensuring that a story like hers does not continue to be repeated throughout history.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ Slotkin, 2015 – The line, which is indicated in Kesselman’s script as a voiceover, recorded by the actress portraying Anne, to be played directly before the Nazis break into the hiding place (see Chapter 2 for a full dissemination). However, in Keiley’s staging, the actress portraying Miep Gies read the line aloud to the audience as the hidiers were being arrested onstage behind her.

²⁷⁵ Portman, “Reviews from Stratford, 2015: Jillian Keiley’s ‘Diary of Anne Frank’ is Sadly Misconceived.”

²⁷⁶ Ouzounian, “The Diary of Anne Frank: Review.”

²⁷⁷ Strynatka, “Not a Dry Eye in the Audience at Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank.’”

²⁷⁸ Reid, “Stratford Puts Fresh Perspective on Familiar Story of Anne Frank.”

²⁷⁹ Cudworth, “Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Exploration of the Human Heart.”

²⁸⁰ S. James Wegg. “Not a Review but a Remembrance.” *James Wegg Review* (May 2015).

²⁸¹ Glenow, “BWW Review: Stratford Festival’s ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Honest and Stunning Production.”

This quote brings to the forefront the pervading attitude of universalism suggested in the rhetoric of many reviews that emerged following the Stratford Festival performance. Perhaps now more than ever, reviewers – who have in all likelihood grown up reading the diary and supplementary texts such as the play script – have begun to intimately identify with Anne, recalling the correspondence between Cara Wilson and Otto Frank that so affronted Cynthia Ozick in 1997.²⁸²

Though the public's relation to Anne Frank as a cultural figure is likely born of innocent intentions, instances such as Laura Glenow's review and the letters of Cara Wilson certainly raise complicated questions. Namely, how can a theatre reviewer living in the relative safety of twenty-first century North America and a young woman coming of age in the postwar years in California begin to forge a connection with the young girl whose very diary is the product of her persecution and, ultimately, murder? Is it plausible – or even appropriate – for Glenow to make the statement that “any of us could have been Anne?”²⁸³ Further, why do reviewers speak of the character with the type of familiarity usually reserved for a longtime friend or loved one, rather than a historical figure of over seven decades past, and what motivations lie behind the deep offense so many seemed to take with the director's nontraditional staging of the beloved story?

Though it is impossible to ascertain the personal significance of Anne Frank's story for each audience member, the aforementioned questions may be answered by examining these reviews within the larger progression of the symbiotic relationship between the theatrical retelling and public consciousness of the story. In Alex Sagan's article, “An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank's Canonization in Postwar Culture,” the scholar credits the play's optimistic tone and, more broadly, its Americanization with its success among a wide range of audiences. In

²⁸² Ozick, 80-82.

²⁸³ Glenow, “BWW Review: Stratford Festival's ‘The Diary of Anne Frank’ is an Honest and Stunning Production.”

illustrating his point, Sagan recalls a letter sent to producer Kermit Bloomgarden from a junior high school class that had been invited to a showing of the 1955 production, in which the instructor disclosed, “It gave us all the feeling of how lucky we are to live in America, the land of the free.”²⁸⁴ This letter, Sagan argued, epitomized the American response to the play’s general tone, a moral lesson typical of John Elsom’s Cold War-era theatre that emphasized the triumph of good over evil. “In Anne’s belief in goodness, Americans heard an affirmation of their own self-image as a freedom-loving people who had restored peace in Europe,” Sagan concluded.²⁸⁵

While the American collective consciousness has shifted since the time that this letter was written, what has not changed is the symbolism of the good-versus-evil binary that initially made the original production so appealing. In Gene A. Plunka’s *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity*, the author recalls Edward R. Isser’s perception of Goodrich and Hackett’s play as “a Jewish version of the Swiss Family Robinson: danger exists outside the shelter, but inside it is safe, warm, and full of love.”²⁸⁶ Building upon this concept, Plunka states that Anne, “saintlike and unsullied,” is emblematic of the ideal family member, the “peacemaker and caregiver.”²⁸⁷ Plunka also cites Anne’s conciliatory closing line, stating, “In short, the affirming message of the play is closer to an idealistic *It’s a Wonderful Life* than to the reality of the Holocaust.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Alex Sagan. “An Optimistic Icon: Anne Frank’s Canonization in Postwar Culture.” *German Politics and Society* 13, no. 3 (1995): 95-107. Accessed February 9, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23736492>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, 100-101.

²⁸⁶ Gene A. Plunka. *Holocaust Drama: The Theater of Atrocity*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁸⁷ Ibid, 112.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

Though Wendy Kesselman diluted the rose-tinted tone of the original script with her 1997 intervention, adding contextual details to remind audiences of the grim fate that awaited the hiders, her contractual limitations meant that the large majority of the text remained unaltered. Thus, a new generation of audiences were exposed to palpable traces of the idealized and Americanized Anne Frank, exacerbated by the growing personal familiarity with the diary. This trend, which began to emerge in the 1990s, has only continued, as audiences continue to identify Anne Frank's story as a coming-of-age drama rather than a Holocaust document and perpetually venerate her as a moral and intellectual touchstone – even an ideological aspiration.

In light of these scholars' analysis, and in keeping with the longstanding trend of American attitudes toward Anne Frank's onstage treatment, the motivations behind the 2015 reviewers' reactions become clear. The simplified answer lies within what Cynthia Ozick perceived to be the diarist's appropriation: audience members, particularly those who attend the production with preconceived notions of the diarist based upon their personal experience with the diary, still place their own unique demands upon the character and will react vehemently if that perception is challenged. Because the play has traditionally been presented in a manner that never allows its grim context to come to the foreground, it is easy for audience members to view Anne's story as one of a girl's tentative steps into womanhood, one that is relatable to even the most sheltered adolescents. If the play were presented primarily as a Holocaust document, it requires no stretch of the imagination to hypothesize that the audiences' claims of a personal identification with Anne would diminish significantly. "Any one of us could be Anne," stated Glenow's review.²⁸⁹ Would this have been the case if the script had included more contextual details of the events that forced the Franks, van Pelses, and Fritz Pfeffer into hiding? Though

²⁸⁹ Glenow, "BWW Review: Stratford Festival's 'The Diary of Anne Frank' is an Honest and Stunning Production."

this type of speculation is, of course, impossible to definitively answer, it certainly reveals complications in the public's relationship with the theatrical retelling.

This leaves the question of why audiences were so defensive in the face of a production that challenged their perception of the diarist. The answer, as it did in the 1990s, lay in their aforementioned identification with Anne Frank. The idealized heroine, and the shining example of good in the struggle against evil (in both the conceptual form of her Nazi oppressors and the more immediate form of her "immoral" housemates), Anne Frank's onstage character may easily be viewed by audience members in terms of how they would react in such situations. Offering consolation to Herman van Daan after the exposure of his theft leaves him ill, Anne is the pinnacle of forgiveness; providing insight to Peter about their persecution, she is worldly. When the families decide to go downstairs and face their captors, she calms the group with her quiet bravery.²⁹⁰ There is scarcely a moment in the play in which the saintly Anne is not the model of how many would believe themselves to act in such a situation, no matter how unrealistic these perceptions (and her portrayal) truly are. Exacerbated by the audience's inherent identification with the diarist, it becomes clear why many would not react kindly to the reimagining of her character, regardless of whether it better aligned with the historical story.

Examining the larger historical context of the play's existence in America illuminates the adoption of Anne's image into American moral sensibilities. As previously discussed, disseminations by scholars such as Alex Sagan and John Elsom suggest that the diarist's optimistic portrayal was the key to its success among a postwar American audience that demanded the triumph of good over evil in their entertainment outlets. Thus, the Americanized image of the diarist persisted in the 1990s, largely due to the theory proposed by Peter Novick,

²⁹⁰ Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. (New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1955).

who argued that Americans increasingly wished to see moral lessons contained within the Holocaust depictions of the time. It is within these analyses that Americans' identification with the Anne Frank of Goodrich and Hackett's play may be better understood: in a culture which continues to value idealized concepts of good versus evil, as well as the heavily moralized stories that accompany them, American audiences wish to view themselves as the "good" within the binary, a concept no better reflected than in the original characterization of Anne Frank.

Thus, the long evolution of Anne Frank's public image reaches a somewhat frustrating end, an ellipsis rather than a period. Just as scholars and theatre professionals attempt to move past the generalized and often one-dimensional tone of Goodrich and Hackett's script, the public rejects these advancements because of their own complex expectations of the diarist – ironically, expectations that were likely forged due, in part, to the Americanized heroine first manufactured by the 1950s production. Official struggles between entities such as the Anne Frank Fonds and the Anne Frank Foundation/Anne Frank House Museum only complicate the issue, as they are often at loggerheads in the quest to protect Anne's legacy. In this light, the story of Anne Frank's cultural role has reached a frustrating peak, with both private and public entities alike bent on projecting a highly specific image of the diarist, to the point that even the most significant new developments in research and interpretation of her story often fall through the cracks if they do not align with the accepted storyline. The marketable Anne Frank, created by the original playwrights so long ago, has rapidly evolved into a "sacred cow," simultaneously recognized as unrealistic and out of alignment with the Anne presented in the diary, yet paradoxically blocked from developing past its original optimistic stereotype. Thus, though the path that the evolution will take in future years is muddled, it is clear that the growing dichotomy between those who demand a more historically-based retelling and those who seek to protect the

Americanized characterization will undermine public understanding of the historical story if it continues.

CONCLUSION

When Anne Frank penned the now famous line, “I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart,” she could not have foreseen that, less than a month later, her hiding place would be raided and everyone within it sent to extermination camps from which only her father would return. Nor could she have known that her diary – saved from destruction only through the intervention of Miep Gies, who collected it along with a selection of other family belongings before the Nazis could return and clear the building – would ultimately grow to worldwide, multi-generational acclaim. Thus, she could have little expected the extent to which her words, as well as her image, would be analyzed, manipulated, interpreted, and even appropriated in the decades to come. Though her ambitions were set on publishing a revised version of her diary after the war, the famous entry was primarily, like all the rest, the result of a teenager’s need to vent her feelings privately, in an environment in which the ability to do so was a precious commodity.

Similarly, she could have had no idea that, just over a decade later, these words would boom from the sound system of the Cort Theatre and, later, in cinemas all over America, offering a saccharine consolation to audiences who were entirely unfamiliar with the magnitude of her horrific fate. The theatrical script, penned by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, was as American as the playwrights themselves, and offered clearly cut moral lessons of good versus evil and the triumph of the human spirit, using its heroine to epitomize them. Anne was at once

universalized and canonized, created to reflect the audience's own perceived goodness as American citizens. When she wrote the famous line in 1944, it is unlikely that an eventual role as a public figure in any capacity truly crossed her mind, yet the theatrical script elevated her to the status of phenomenon just eleven years later.

In the rapid ascent to this status, the deliberate creation of Anne's universally appealing characterization carried with it many negative ramifications. First, the creative team (notably including Otto Frank) downplayed many references to the characters' Judaism, the very faith for which they were persecuted by the Nazi regime. This move was largely reactionary to the team's anticipation of an audience not yet prepared to accept an entirely Jewish play. As evidenced by Leonard Dinnerstein and Michelle Mart, Jews had barely moved out of the shadow of the anti-Semitism that peaked during World War II, and it would remain a long time before they found widespread acceptance in American society. Thus, the very faith that contextualized the creation of the diary's story was largely whitewashed from the original script.

Secondly, and certainly in accordance with the suppression of the hidings' faith, the play diminished all references to the specific threats of German-occupied Amsterdam, as well as the fate that awaited the hidings after their arrest. In doing so, the play was once again the product of the American society's demands for it. As evidenced by scholars such as Lawrence Langer and Alex Sagan, the optimistic tone and overall downplaying of the Holocaust's true horrors created a specific appeal for American audiences in the postwar world, who were otherwise eager to place the war years behind them. Nazis were transformed into an abstract evil that, though it loomed outside the walls of the Secret Annex, never made its way onto the stage, while Anne became not a Jewish girl who perished for her faith, but an ideological victor in the struggle of good and evil. Her body did not survive, but her spirit triumphed, suggesting to audiences that

good still prevailed in the end – a moral lesson that necessitated the suppression of the grim context of the Holocaust.

The final byproduct of Goodrich and Hackett's creation of Anne Frank's onstage image was the relegation of the supporting characters into Jewish archetypes in order to further morally elevate the protagonist while introducing Jewish characters to American audiences in a familiar and "safe" format. The effect was ultimately the presentation of wholly one-sided and often unflattering characters, so poorly reflective of their historical counterparts that they led the hidings' surviving relatives, such as Charlotte Kaletta, to cut ties with Otto Frank. The secondary characters' relegation to generalized, often negative depictions furthered the portrayal of Anne as the idealized "good" in the good-versus-evil binary, even rising above her fellow sufferers. However, this portrayal did little justice to the characters the authors had hoped to present.

As evidenced by audience reactions, the story that they synthesized was not a Holocaust story but instead a coming-of-age story about the triumph of optimism over unseen evil, and thus, the unique public attachment to Anne Frank's onstage image was created. This attachment soon evolved into a demand and, by the time that Wendy Kesselman's 1997 reworking of the original script premiered, it became clear that the American public was prepared to staunchly defend their preferred image of the diarist if it was challenged. This trend has persisted to the modern day, in which the public treatment of Anne's image, especially via the theatrical interpretation of her story, has sharply divided into two trends: those who, in light of the developments made in the research of Anne's historical story, attempt to complicate the famous story by demanding it be portrayed more holistically, and those who remain deeply possessive of the diarist's image created by the 1955 production. This is particularly evidenced by public reactions to interventions into the ascribed method of transmitting Anne's image, the split

between the Anne Frank Foundation and the Anne Frank Fonds, and the lack of attention paid to theatrical scripts that attempt to retell her story.

Throughout this evolution, though the American audience has massively evolved in its acceptance of Judaism and of realistic depictions of the Holocaust, their understanding of Anne Frank's character continues to recall the oversimplified and idealized perceptions of the diarist among 1950s audiences. This trend has even persisted in modern audience reactions to the supporting characters, which, though they have notably evolved to indicate a greater understanding of the dichotomy between historical figures and characterizations, still regularly contain the same generalized descriptors that were common in 1950s reactions to them. Thus, American public's continued demand for the diarist's uplifting image has persisted in direct contradiction to the evolution seemingly taking place around it.

Though the public's relationship with Anne Frank is largely formed individually through independent experiences in reading the diary, her image nevertheless occupies a sizable place in American collective consciousness. It is through this consciousness that her original characterization gained its popularity and continues to color the public's interpretation of the diarist over sixty years later. This trend primarily finds its roots in American identity, one in which moralized lessons of good versus evil are still highly valued and personal aspirations of morality are projected upon the characters being presented. Thus, it is within the Anne Frank of the stage – unfailingly optimistic and idealized, remarkable both in her extraordinariness and her universality – that American audiences have perceived themselves since the play premiered in 1955. The character's ideologies, reactions, and outlook reflect the common values of American citizenship, and audiences perceive her actions to be the same that they would choose if placed in her situation.

As America entered the new millennium and scholars and artists began to chip away at the foundation of Anne Frank's optimistic image, the dichotomy deepened significantly between a public whose consciousness of the diarist lay intrinsically within her original portrayal and those who demanded a representation that was more faithful to the historical story. Currently, the bifurcation shows no indication of repair, as the debate over Anne's image remains relevant in both the civilian and the professional sphere. Thus, it is plausible to imagine that the divide will continue to deepen in the coming years, particularly as research continues to complicate the story that informed the diary and its transition to the stage. The reconciliation of these two publics will only become possible through a major unifying event, such as – perhaps – another officially sanctioned theatrical interpretation of the story. However, until such time, trends common among audiences of 1955, 1997, and the 2010s indicate that the prevailing consciousness of the American public favors an Anne Frank that is oversimplified, sanitized, and Americanized: the very image placed into the public consciousness by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett's original dramatization.

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