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Anne Frank Is Dead and Is Living in New York

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It was too late to be alive now. I was a saint [...] Child Martyr and Holy Saint isn't a position I'm really qualified for any more.¹

Nobody wants a live Anne Frank. They want a martyr [...] that goddamned smiling child.²

Following the publications of the 1947 Dutch and the 1950 German and French translations of the *Diary of a Young Girl*, Anne Frank's father Otto, wanted to introduce it to American readers as well, but had a hard time finding a publisher in the United States. The manuscript was rejected by several publishers, including Alfred Knopf, who wrote in his rejection letter of June 1950 that "it is not in any way a literary achievement, and would not add prestige to a publisher's list."³ Finally, a relatively small edition was published by

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- 1 Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979), 150; 154.
 - 2 Shalom Auslander, *Hope: A Tragedy* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012), 72.
 - 3 Eric Colleary "How the *Diary of Anne Frank* First Made It to the U.S." *Time*, October 24, 2015, accessed April 10, 2023, <http://time.com/4081483/how-the-diary-of-anne-frank-first-made-it-to-the-u-s/>.

Doubleday on June 12, 1952 – Anne Frank’s birthday. The publisher did not have high expectations. Nevertheless, an enthusiastic review by the American writer Meyer Levin in the *New York Times Book Review* (Sunday, June 15, 1952) led to dramatically increased sales and also laid the cornerstone for the transformation of the diarist into the uncontested iconic Holocaust symbol in the United States.

The successful book soon became a Broadway play (1955) and its adaptation into an Academy Award-winning film (1959)⁴ further increased the *Diary*’s popularity and its diarist has become “the poster child of the Holocaust.”⁵ Anne Frank’s portrayal on Broadway was regarded as too universalized and too sanitized, while her Jewishness was too little emphasized; Holocaust deniers questioned the *Diary*’s authenticity doubting whether it could have been written by a “young girl.”⁶

Cynthia Ozick, in her essay entitled “Who Owns Anne Frank?,” criticizes the projections of Anne Frank as a contemporary figure.⁷ Ozick refers to such projections as “unholy speculation [...] [that – author’s note] tampers with history, with reality, with deadly truth.”⁸ The presence of Anne Frank as a fictional living character in American-Jewish literature is not merely a reflection of the tremendous reception, to the point of idolatry, of Anne Frank and her diary. The abrupt ending of the *Diary*, the uncertainty surrounding the date of her death and burial place – which stands in sharp contrast to the sharing of her most intimate thoughts – frustrates the readers’ curiosity, invoking a panoply of feelings such as anger, guilt, disappointment, even a sense of betrayal, denial, and fantasy. Ozick writes:

A story may not be said to be a story if the end is missing. And because the end is missing, the story of Anne Frank [...] has been bowdlerized, distorted, transmuted, traduced, reduced; it has been infantilized, Americanized, homogenized, sentimentalized, falsified, kitschified, and in fact, blatantly and arrogantly denied.⁹

4 Edna Nahshon, “Anne Frank from Page to Stage,” in *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2012), 59–92; Leshu Torchin, “Anne Frank’s Moving Images,” in *Anne Frank Unbound*, 93–134.

5 Sanford Pinsker, “Anne Frank and the ‘What If’ School of Fiction?,” *Sewanee Review* 122 (2) (2014): 340–344; 341.

6 *Ibid.*, 341.

7 Cynthia Ozick, “Who Owns Anne Frank,” *The New Yorker* 73 (1997): 75.

8 *Ibid.*, 76.

9 *Ibid.*, 77.

This paper deals with Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer* and Shalom Auslander's *Hope: A Tragedy*,¹⁰ two works that phantasize the "revival" of Anne Frank by summoning her as a fictional character. In *Freud and Klein on the Concept of Phantasy*,¹¹ Elizabeth Spillius Bott argues that Freud's notion of phantasy denotes a scene presented to the imagination that stages an unconscious desire. Although Freud characterized various types of phantasies, he thought that the basic trigger of phantasy formation is an unconscious wish that is blocked from fulfilment. Anne Frank is in fact dead. The phantasy is a disguised expression and partial fulfilment of the unconscious wish that she be alive. In Freud's theory phantasies that are formed in the conscious system or are allowed into it – that is, if they are daydreams – they are known not to be true. If they are formed in the system preconscious or if they are repressed into it, they will be descriptively unconscious but formed according to the everyday logic of the secondary process.¹²

Roth's and Auslander's novels fulfill their protagonists' phantasies by offering an alternative scenario in which Anne Frank survived Bergen-Belsen and is living in America. These novels pertain to the "What if?" school of fiction that explores imaginary alternative scenarios of "real" people and events.¹³ The phantasmic summoning of Anne in both works not only suggests the prominence of Anne Frank and her *Diary* in the legacy of the Holocaust, but also attempts to probe the boundaries of the authors' hyphenated identity as Jewish-Americans.

Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer*

Roth's *The Ghost Writer* takes place in the year 1956. It was published in 1979, some two decades after the immeasurable breakthrough of Anne Frank's *Diary*, which had gained a mythic status within the Jewish-American public. The scholar Sara Horowitz points out that the novel "was among the earliest works to push against the Holocaust's centrality in Jewish American self-perception and the concomitant fear of anti-Semitism that governs Jewish American anxieties."¹⁴

10 Roth, *Ghost*; Auslander, *Hope*.

11 Elizabeth Bott Spillius, "Freud and Klein on the Concept of Phantasy," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 82 (2) (2001): 361–373.

12 *Ibid*, 371.

13 Pinsker, "Anne Frank," 341.

14 Sara R. Horowitz, "Literary Afterlives of Anne Frank," in *Anne Frank Unbound*, 215–253; 234.

The Ghost Writer, the first of Roth's novels narrated by his alleged alter-ego Nathan Zuckerman who is, at this point, a young aspiring author who was invited to the home of the established Jewish author E. I. Lonoff (modeled on Bernard Malamud).¹⁵

Set in a snowy New England landscape and featuring Lonoff's wife, Hope, of an old established American family [...]. The landscape of the novel offers the sort of *goyische living* [...] it is within this bastion of gentile old money that Zuckerman finds Amy Bellette, Lonoff's young lover about whom Nathan writes a fiction within the fiction of her as Anne Frank, alive and sexy.¹⁶

Zuckerman learns that the "striking girl-woman"¹⁷ Amy Bellette, Lonoff's former student and assumed current lover, engaged in organizing Lonoff's manuscripts, lived in England, asked Lonoff to assist her to settle in the States, and presented herself as: "a highly intelligent, creative, and charming sixteen-year-old who was now living with a not very intelligent, creative, or charming family in Bristol, England."¹⁸ Zuckerman becomes enchanted, even obsessed, by the resourceful if not manipulative young woman.

Zuckerman's first meeting with Bellette follows a rift with his father over a story he wrote that "borrowed from our family history instances of what my exemplary father took to be the most shameful and disreputable transgressions of family decency and trust."¹⁹ His father, who disapproved of revealing shameful information and argued that it would contribute to the already extant antisemitism in America, consulted an old Jewish judge, Leopold Wapter, to convince Nathan that his stories were problematic. The judge writes Nathan a lengthy letter, recommending him to see the Broadway play of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and closes with a questionnaire entitled "Ten Questions for Nathan Zuckerman." The questions, meant to lead Zuckerman to acknowledge that his story amounts to the defamation of Jews and might play into the hands of Nazis and antisemites, opens with: "If you had been living in Nazi Germany in the thirties, would you have written such a story?" and concludes: "Can you honestly say that there is anything in your short story that would not

¹⁵ Pinsker, "Anne Frank," 341.

¹⁶ Brett Ashley Kaplan, *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth* (New York, London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 36–37.

¹⁷ Roth, *Ghost*, 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

warm the heart of a Julius Streicher or a Joseph Goebbels?"²⁰ When Nathan's anxious mother phones him and asked about his reaction the letter, he tries to convince her that there is no relation between the persecution of Jews in Europe and Jewish life in America.

We are not the wretched of Belsen! We were not the victims of that crime! [...] Ma, you want to see physical violence done to the Jews of Newark, go to the office of the plastic surgeon where the girls get their noses fixed. That's where the Jewish blood flows in Essex County, that's where the blow is delivered— with a mallet!²¹

Zuckerman's black humor seems to be a reaffirmation of the safe and prosperous Jewish life in America. Yet the "ten questions," also reveal the extent to which the Holocaust, tinted with allusions to Anne Frank's tragic fate, is ever-present in the lives of American Jews.²² In 1956, Zukerman's allusion to Belsen as a symbol of the Holocaust, and Judge Wapter's recommendation, attests that Anne Frank – who was "only dimly Jewish"²³ – her book and the play have already become a point of reference for American Jewry.

In Zuckerman's counterfactual scenario Amy Bellette is the postwar Anne Frank, who has survived but has resolved to remain "dead" in order to empower her *Diary* – the book and the play.

They wept for me, [...] they pitied me; they prayed for me; they begged my forgiveness. I was the incarnation of the millions of un-lived years robbed from the murdered Jews. It was too late to be alive now. I was a saint.²⁴

Despite Amy/Anne's acknowledgement that her value rests in her remaining dead, yet she longs to claim an identity apart from the one created by popular culture's representation of the Holocaust and in particular its rendering of her life. "I'd like at last to be my own. Child Martyr and Holy Saint isn't a position I'm really qualified for any more."²⁵ Once retrieved, Anne is no longer a child

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102; 103–104.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²² Aimee Pozorski, "How to Tell a True Ghost Story: *The Ghost Writer* and the Case of Anne Frank," in *Philip Roth: New Perspective of an American Author*, ed. Derek Parker Royal (Westport, Conn.: Prager Publishers, 2005), 89–103.

²³ Roth, *Ghost*, 144.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 154.

victim, but rather a *femme fatale* “longing for somebody else’s husband, begging him to leave his loyal wife to run off with a girl half his age.”²⁶

Zuckerman realizes that the conflict with his parents over the short story he wrote implicates him in the defamation of the Jewish people as a whole. The phantasy about Anne Frank in turn enables him to reconcile with his family. Hence, Anne’s revival in Zuckerman’s phantasy can be seen as both the rewriting of the Holocaust and a way of patching together the ruptured family. Moreover, he knows that his phantasy about Anne will end his mother’s incessant nagging him to date a nice Jewish girl. Zuckerman addresses the invention of his imagination by her full name, Anne Frank, in order to show that he wishes to marry not clandestine Amy/Anne, but rather the true public iconic Anne Frank:

Oh, marry me, Anne Frank, exonerate me before my outraged elders of this idiotic indictment! Heedless of Jewish feeling? Indifferent to Jewish survival? Brutish about their well-being? Who dares to accuse of such unthinking crimes the husband of Anne Frank!²⁷

When Nathan phantasizes’ introducing his wife Anne Frank/Amy Bellette, he visualizes how his father will recognize his misinterpretation of his son’s story and will express his forgiveness “*Well, this is she... Anne, says my father – the Anne? Oh, how I have misunderstood my son. How mistaken I have been!*”²⁸

Amy/Anne’s sanctification “enables the fulfillment of her desire for her words to live on,”²⁹ thus enhancing her sainthood also in the phatasmic fictive novel. “One way or another, art challenges the connection between the generations, refuting or reinventing traditions and conventions.”³⁰

Brett Ashley Kaplan argues in *Jewish Anxiety and the Novels of Philip Roth* that this counterfactual fantasy enables Roth to explore differing layers of innocence and abuse; Anne Frank, the ultimate symbol of the Suffering of the Innocent has been threatened by the sexuality intrinsic in the diary – famously “censored” by Otto Frank, her father and the *Diary* editor; this corruption is intensified by her further sexualizing and exploitation as being the only person capable of exonerating Nathan from other Jews abuse and hostility.³¹

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 170–171.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 159 (italics in original).

²⁹ Horowitz, “Literary,” 233.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

³¹ Kaplan, *Jewish*, 40.

Roth's engagement with Anne Frank's mythic stature in American public culture suggests, through the "What-if" scenario, that Anne survived the war but realized she was of greater value to the world as a martyr. As such, Roth's book anticipates Cynthia Ozick's demythologizing critique of the appropriation of Anne Frank and her revival as an iconic Holocaust symbol in the US.

A Portrait of a Young Girl Diarist as an Old Woman

Some three decades after Roth's *The Ghost Writer* was published, Shalom Auslander, a young Jewish-American novelist published a counterfactual novel in which Anne Frank, whose worldwide fame and idolatry had reached new peaks, lives in the attic of a house owned by a Jewish family in upstate New York.

There, on the [attic's – P. R.] floor behind the boxes, lay the huddled blanket-wrapped body of an elderly woman [...]. He stretched his arm toward the old woman [...] [as – P. R.] he reached out one more time [...] that ancient bony hand, as if rising unbidden from the grave swatted angrily [...]. Who are you? Kugel asked [...] I am Anne Frank, she grumbled [...] Kugel thought he'd never seen anyone so old.³²

This is the first encounter of Solomon Kugel (whose name references both wise King Solomon of the Bible and a traditional Ashkenazi Jewish dish) with the yet unidentified old woman, whose noisy and annoying "Tap. Tap-tap-tap,"³³ coming from the attic, bothers him. The Kugels (Solomon, a salesman in a recycling solutions company, his wife Bree, and their ailing three-year-old son Jonah) desire "a new start"³⁴ and so search "for a home unburdened by the past."³⁵ They purchase a farmhouse in Stockton, in upstate New York, where a local arsonist is on the loose, but which otherwise is "famous for nothing."³⁶ Ironically the house was previously owned by the elderly German-American Mr. Messerschmidt (whose name recalls the German fighter aircraft of Second World War). The house's forced-air heating system, which "carrie[s] sounds [...] from every room [...] in the house" and functions as "a ghostly

³² Auslander, *Hope*, 26; 28; 29 (emphasis added).

³³ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

intercom system,"³⁷ transmits the tapping noises from the attic. The Kugels, Solomon's mother, a lodger, and the "old women" (who turns out to be Anne Frank), all live in the house.

Kugel's mother, who was born in postwar Brooklyn and whose family has been living in the United States for generations, identifies herself as a Holocaust survivor whose own mother died at Auschwitz. Mother, the only character with a generic name, is obsessed by her fabricated past and perceives herself as a martyr. In her attempts to rectify the familial history she is "adopting" – or rather appropriating – Holocaust victims as her relatives:

She had a large book [...] *The Holocaust*, and she showed [young Solomon – P. R.] the photographs inside: of a mass grave, starved prisoners, piles of naked corpses. That's your uncle, she would say. That's your grandfather's sister. That's your cousin's father.³⁸

This obsession creates comic situations as when Mother explains to her son that a certain lampshade was once Kugel's Zeide (grandfather in Yiddish):

This is Zeide? he asked.
Mother nodded, composed herself.
You see what they do to us? she said.
There's no peace. Wherever we go, wherever we hide. Terror and more terror and more terror [...].
It says Made in Taiwan, Kugel said.
Well, they're not going to write Made in Buchenwald, are they? she snapped.
No, said Kugel.³⁹

As this passage indicates, Kugel's Mother who "suffers from massive Holocaust envy [...] adopted the behaviors of traumatized survivors, [and had – P. R.] accordingly rewritten her life story."⁴⁰ In order to authenticate her pedigree she prepares an album and amidst family photographs she inserts newspapers clippings and photographs from the Holocaust, "until

³⁷ Ibid., 36–37.

³⁸ Ibid., 77 (italics in original).

³⁹ Ibid., 77–78.

⁴⁰ Susanne Rohr, "Trauma and Taboo: The Holocaust in Recent American Fiction," in *Wor(l)ds of Trauma. Canadian and German Perspectives*, ed. Wolfgang Klooss (Münster, New York: Waxmann, 2017), 185–197; 192.

these terrifying images of history's tragic victims equaled, and soon outnumbered, the photographs of actual Kugels."⁴¹ Mother, who moved from her Brooklyn apartment, has not unpacked her baggage, except for a large gilt-framed picture of prominent U.S. constitutional and criminal law expert, Alan Dershowitz, "which she hung, as she always had, on the wall above her bed."⁴² For Mother, Dershowitz is "the ultimate protector" who would defend her; eventually, he does save the aging Anne Frank from the Kugel's burning attic.⁴³

Kugel's discovery that the elderly woman is the famous Holocaust diarist is marked by dark comedy. He complains that "while there is never a good time to find Anne Frank in your attic; this was a particularly bad time,"⁴⁴ and wishes to get rid of her before Mother notices her. Yet he hesitates whether or not to denounce her to the police, mainly for fear of Mother's probable sardonic reaction: "My son, she would say [...]. What's the matter, you didn't have Dr. Mengele's number? He doesn't make house calls? You want Elie Wiesel's address? Maybe you can turn him in, too?"⁴⁵ This comic-sarcastic text dialogues with *The Ghost Writer's* tenth question of Judge Wapter to Zukerman concerning his story's presumed effect on Julius Streicher and Joseph Goebbels. Despite not believing that the old woman is indeed Anne Frank, skeptical Kugel realizes that there is "definitely something Anne Frankish about her"⁴⁶ so he pursues his inquest: "*Anne* [...]. Why does everyone think you died in Auschwitz?" to which she replies: "Bergen Belsen [...]. It's a lot easier to stay alive in this world [...] if everyone thinks you're dead."⁴⁷ This statement is based on her experience when she was eighteen and still in Europe, she learned from a newspaper about the popularity of her published *Diary*. Frank went to Amsterdam to meet the publisher, who presumed that she was yet another imposter who wanted a share of the royalties. Yet once she mentioned her father's censorship of the *Diary*, the editor realized she was not a fraud and said:

41 Auslander, *Hope*, 128.

42 *Ibid.*, 44.

43 Roberta Rosenberg, "'Diasporadic Humor' and Jewish-American Identity," *Shofar* 33 (3) (2015): 110–138; 130.

44 Auslander, *Hope*, 41.

45 *Ibid.*, 36.

46 *Ibid.*, 67.

47 *Ibid.*, 69 (italics in original).

[...] nobody wants alive Anne Frank. They want a martyr [...] [he – P. R.] went to his desk [...] held a copy of that goddamned diary, with that goddamned smiling child on that goddamned cover, and said: They do not want you. They want *her*.

[...] I told him I was working on a novel [...]. Do you know what Mr. Editor did then? [...] He laughed. Stay dead, he repeated, stay dead. I am a writer, Mr. Kugel! I am not a child! I am not some goddamned diarist! I am a writer! Thirty-two million copies, Mr. Kugel [...] I will leave this attic when I finish this book, and not one moment sooner!⁴⁸

Thus Auslander is giving a concise account on the metamorphosis the *Diary* underwent from the initial Dutch publication to its numerous versions, and criticizes the Anne Frank cult industry, which for commercial and financial reasons prefers Saint Anne to the “real” person who, in his counterfactual fiction survived adolescence passed in hiding and became an old woman. The Anne Frank industry prefers *her* to be the dead girl winner of the gold medal and champion of the “Misery Olympics.”⁴⁹ “I’m Miss Holocaust 1945. The prize is a crown of thorns and eternal victimhood. Jesus was a Jew, Mr. Kugel, but I am the Jewish Jesus.”⁵⁰

Auslander’s Anne, who is a vehicle for ironic and comic critique, recounts to Kugel her arrival in the United States and her relegation to attic after attic. In contrast to her popular image as a martyred girl and promising young writer who recounts in her diary her faith in humankind, the elderly Anne Frank levies a sardonic critique against Kugel, his mother, and others like them, who buy into popular reductive narratives of the Holocaust. If at first, Kugel’s realization that Anne Frank is actually alive and living among them excites him and his family, ultimately, it tears them apart and literally burns their house down.

Following the discovery of Anne’s presence in the attic she unfolds an account of her postwar nomadic life exploiting gentile and Jews’ sense of guilt. After the war Anne looted an attic in a former Nazi’ son’s house; yet once she was discovered the owners who “hated themselves, you see, and so they took pity of me” supplied her with food and clothing.⁵¹

48 *Ibid.*, 72–73 (italics in original).

49 *Ibid.*, 92.

50 *Ibid.*, 322.

51 *Ibid.*, 295.

Years later, when they moved to America, they arranged for my own safe passage [...] [and – P.R.] to a new family, a new attic, and so I went, here and there, house to house, family to family, a Polish family at first [...] then an elderly Austrian couple...until finally I came here, thirty or forty years or so ago, where the Messerschmidts took over my care. I have been the blessed beneficiary of sixty years of humanity's guilt and remorse.⁵²

Thus by purchasing the Messerschmidts' house the Kugels inherited Anne and inevitably became her current "hidiers." Mother, who urges Solomon to let Anne stay, undergoes significant changes: "she seemed rejuvenated, revived, energized."⁵³

Daily deliveries of "boxes of matzos and jars of borscht [...] books on death camps or how to be your best editor,"⁵⁴ all of which Anne considers indispensable for her writing, arrive. In order to avoid strangers and neighbors' suspicions, Mother suggests buying Anne an e-book reader so "she could download anything she wants."⁵⁵ Anne Frank thus becomes the "objective correlative of the mother's fear and anxiety, and the personification and justification of her paranoia and as such [...] needs to keep her alive and in the 'attic' of their imagination."⁵⁶ Yet, tension arises among Anne's "helpers." While both Mother and Kugel are obsessed with protecting Anne Frank, Bree moves out with Jonah after Kugel's refusal to evict the old woman from the attic, originally meant to be Bree's study room. For her part, Anne, who does not reveal any gratitude to the Kugels, mercilessly criticizes them: "I do not know what's worse, Mr. Kugel [...] your mother's auto-hagiography or the people like you who permit it to be written."⁵⁷

Mother and Solomon's relationship with Anne deteriorates. Kugel admits not reading the *Diary* because "I'm sick and tired of that Holocaust shit."⁵⁸ Mother in turn becomes hostile: she blames Anne for wrecking the family: "you let this woman come between your wife and your child – and still defend her? This [...] phony, this, this [...] Nazi!" and criticizes Anne's adult

52 *Ibid.*, 295 (emphasis added).

53 *Ibid.*, 227.

54 *Ibid.*, 232.

55 *Ibid.*, 232.

56 Rosenberg, "Diasporadic," 128.

57 Auslander, *Hope*, 252.

58 *Ibid.*, 296.

autobiography: "Anne Frank would never write those things. Anne Frank would never *think* those things."⁵⁹

Furious and hostile, Mother burns the stack of pages which set the attic ablaze: "The pages were swirling around the room, spreading fire and ash. Nearby the scrapbook and boxes of family photos has also caught fire and their ashes were also beginning to spread."⁶⁰ Kugel manages to evacuate Mother, but it is Alan Dershowitz, who "is carrying Anne Frank in his arms [...] through the window"⁶¹ and functions as a kind of *deus ex machina*, that is, a figure of divine intervention, a miraculous savior. Rescued Anne mocks Kugel's failed attempts to save himself: "You would have never made it, Mr. Kugel! [...] You would never have lasted five minutes in Auschwitz! I'm a survivor, Mr. Kugel."⁶² Kugel himself was caught in the flames and died in the attic.

From the outset we learn that Kugel's allegedly peaceful refuge is threatened by an arsonist, who is eventually caught by the local police, and is none other than Wilbur Messerschmidt Jr. (son of Anne's former lodger-carer), a volunteer fireman. Though the Kugels' house is not damaged by the younger Messerschmidt, it is eventually set ablaze by Mother. Ironically, Anne Frank and her manuscript are at fault. Although Kugels' successful attempt to prevent the publication of the "fictitious new memoir"⁶³ cost them dearly, nevertheless by scarifying themselves they managed to keep the (American) legacy of *The Diary of a Young Girl* intact. In keeping with the prevalence and growth of the Anne Frank myth in Jewish-American Holocaust remembrance culture in the twenty-first century, the novel portrays Kugel's ephemeral existence as opposed to Anne Frank's perpetual mythic transcendence: "[Kugel's – P. R.] life is destroyed when his house goes up in flames [...] [whereas – P. R.] Anne Frank survives, of course, and makes her way to the next attic."⁶⁴

Auslander's Anne is growing older while duplicating her life in the Amsterdam attic, always secluded from the hostile world and helped by non-Jews until the Kugels got in her way. The Kugels doubted her identity mainly because of their own fabricated identity as Holocaust survivors; they could not accept the reincarnation of the mythic Young Girl as an old gray-haired woman who

59 Ibid., 337; 336.

60 Ibid., 342.

61 Ibid., 344; 345.

62 Ibid., 344.

63 Rosenberg, "Diasporadic," 130.

64 Rohr, "Trauma," 194.

uses a laptop for typing her memoirs instead of a pen and a checkered album. The image of the iconic Anne seems incommensurable with its contemporary phantasmic reincarnation. Anne, who is aware of her iconic counterpart, the dead Young Girl whose published diary became a worldwide bestseller, is also aware of her *Catch 22* syndrome: "I want to be Anne Frank without the Holocaust, but I use the Holocaust to subsist, to get what I need: shelter, food a place to work."⁶⁵

Anne, like the mythological Phoenix, is reborn and gains new life by arising from the ashes, thus reflecting the *Diary's* own cyclic revival(s). Iconic Anne comes to life because of her *Diary* and her widespread image, as well as the attic's surroundings, including the horse chestnut tree, which have become universal and American myths. The original ailing tree, which grew near the hiding place in Amsterdam, collapsed in 2010 and cuttings from it were replanted in U.S. parks, museums and Holocaust remembrance centers, serving as (Saint) Anne's metonymic relics.⁶⁶

Clifton Spargo's suggestion that Roth's "invention of Anne Frank [...] recalls several layers of cultural memory through which Anne Frank has been made a property of the American popular imagination,"⁶⁷ can also be applied to Auslander's *Hope: A Tragedy*. Auslander, through his novel's phantasy, critiques how the iconic Anne, and more broadly American popular culture's reductive engagement with the Holocaust, holds devastating consequences for Jewish-American life.

Anne Frank: Popularized Icon / Popular American Culture

Alvin Rosenfeld's seminal article "Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank"⁶⁸ seeks answers to Anne Frank's "return from her place among the *anonymous dead* at Bergen-Belsen and assume a posthumous existence within popular culture of such unusual force and magnitude."⁶⁹ As the author follows the *Diary's* first publications (late 1940s and early 1950s) he compares its

65 Auslander, *Hope*, 295.

66 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Epilogue: A Life of Its Own – The Anne Frank Tree," in *Anne Frank Unbound*, 324–338; 334–336.

67 Clifton R. Spargo, "To Invent as Presumptuously as Real Life: Parody and the Cultural Memory of Anne Frank in Roth's *The Ghost Writer*," *Representations* 76 (1) (2001): 88–119; 89.

68 Alvin H. Rosenfeld. "Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank," in *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in the Changing World*, ed. Peter Hayes (Louisville, KY: Evanston, 1991), 243–278 (emphasis added).

69 *Ibid.*, 245.

rather modest reception in postwar shattered Europe vs. its huge success in the United States, enhanced by its 1955 Broadway play adaptation by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, who

took some large liberties with the text of the diary and, by playing down or simply suppressing outright the darker, more foreboding entries and highlighting more affirmative ones, they shaped an image of Anne Frank that varied more than a little from the girl's self-image in the diary.⁷⁰

Hence it is not surprising that critics found that the play “brought about the *reincarnation* of Anne Frank – as though she’d *never been dead*.”⁷¹

Thus the American public was exposed, from the early days, to Anne Frank as a vivacious attractive ‘young girl’ who believes ‘that in spite of everything people are really good at heart.’ This pseudo-optimistic image was nourished and cultivated by an efficient advertising/public relations machinery that eventually turned Anne Frank into a “commodity” in the popular culture.⁷²

In view of the Diary’s adaptation into the Pulitzer-prize winning play (soon made into a film [1959]), this reveals Philip Roth’s Anne Frank/Amy Bellette – and even more, Auslander’s cynical, exploitative, and vicious old woman – as a subversive and revisionist response to the sentimentalized, sugar-coated “young girl” image engraved in the American collective memory. Rosenfeld argues that the “symbol of martyred innocence”⁷³ was “produced in America along conventional American lines [...] and the [...] American version of Anne Frank quickly took hold elsewhere.”⁷⁴

Conclusion: Anne Frank and the Jewish-American Myth: 1950s / Twenty-First-Century

The phantasmically revived Anne proves a crucial figure for the protagonists of both literary works examined in this paper. In *The Ghost Writer*, Zuckerman

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁷¹ *The New York Post*, October 8, 1955, quoted in Rosenfeld, “Popularization,” 252 (note 14) (emphasis added).

⁷² On popular culture/popular fiction see: Matthew Schneider-Mayerson. “Popular Fiction Studies: The Advantages of a New Field,” *Studies in Popular Culture* 33 (1) (2010): 21–35 (mainly 22–24).

⁷³ Rosenfeld, “Popularization”, 260.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

imagines himself as her ghost writer in an attempt to absolve himself from the allegations of antisemitism made by his family and Judge Wapter. Through Zuckerman, Roth uses Anne Frank as a projection of the fears and hopes common to many Jews. The idolatry of Anne Frank and the creation of a happy ending for the *Diary* and for her particular case reflect the feeling of guilt that is deeply ingrained in Jewish culture and tradition.⁷⁵

Auslander's Anne is an aging, cynical woman who is not too shy to boast of her *Diary's* worldwide success, even as she criticizes it, claiming that she is a real author and not an essayist or a diarist. Though she is a far cry from Roth's femme fatale, she manages due to her sheer egocentrism to break up Kugel's family, the only Jewish-American "helpers."

Both Solomon Kugel, Auslander's comic-tragic protagonist, and Roth's Nathan Zuckerman encounter Anne Frank in New York state, yet there is a crucial difference between the two Annes. Roth's 1979 story refers to the Young Girl as immortalized by the *Diary's* 1950 English (American) translation and the Broadway play. Auslander's novel, written a generation later (2012), presents the Jewish-German diarist after the passage of time: in the twenty-first century she has become an old, cranky, and troublesome woman. Auslander's oxymoronic aging Young Girl seems to be the third generation's critical response to Anne's increasingly sanctified and idolized image, a sainthood promoted and encouraged by the commemorative industry. This machinery prefers perpetual recycling of uncontested cliché-like symbols rather than confronting the singular multifaceted and vibrant young woman who struggled to maintain her youthful joviality, to nourish her intellectual aspirations, and to solidify her feminine identity as a coming-of-age young woman in modern and cruel times. Hence people like Kugel's Mother who assume a false identity, and are self-appointed Holocaust victim-saints, cannot accept a different and alternative narrative, which has not been tested, approved, popularized, and canonized.

Roth and Auslander share with other Jewish-American authors the theme of guilt. In Simon Dein's article "The Origins of Jewish Guilt" he observes that according to Freud, guilt plays a fundamental role in the psyche and that it mainly works unconsciously and it emanates from a violation of a law, such as the murder of the primal father. This guilt, transmitted across generations, drives Jews to religion to mitigate their emotions.⁷⁶

75 Simon Dein. "The Origins of Jewish Guilt: Psychological, Theological, and Cultural Perspectives," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 15 (2) (2013): 123–137.

76 Dein, "Origins," 126–127.

In his article *The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost*,⁷⁷ the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman pointed out the concept of 'the survivor's guilt' that denotes psychical ailment ascribed to the survivors' pondering on why and how they survived while others perished.⁷⁸ Survivor complex is a psychological wound that comes about through constant trauma. At the core of survivor's guilt is self-blame operating as a defensive omnipotent phantasy. Bauman describes our world as a haunted house where the ghosts, namely, the social repercussions of the Holocaust, still haunt individuals and collectivities. Some of these ghosts reflect this survivor's guilt.⁷⁹ For Jewish Americans, guilt is invoked when Jews seem overly assimilated and let go of the perception of constant threat. So in Roth's novel Zuckerman writes a realistic yet unflattering vignette of his family, which has allegedly become untethered and estranged from Jewish history and tradition. In Auslander's novel, in turn, Anne Frank's insight captures this in a nutshell: "because you are Jewish [...] you feel guilty for *not* suffering atrocities."⁸⁰

The parodic-satiric revival of Anne Frank by means of creating a counterfactual reality in Roth's and Auslander's novels takes place in two different timelines. "Roth traces the [...] extravagant fiction to the particulars of the 1950s American cultural memory of Anne Frank as it was shaped by the Broadway and Hollywood representations of her story."⁸¹ Auslander's 2012 novel pursues the theme of the mythification and idolization of the Young Girl, alongside the issue of "Shoah business" – one of whose hallmarks is false appropriation of identity as Holocaust survivors. On one hand Auslander's novel can be regarded as an expansion of and ironic "homage" to that of Roth, as can be seen for instance when Lonoff's wife's name, Hope (in *The Ghost Writer*) became Auslander's book title; or the similar antisemitic allegations accusing Nathan Zuckerman and Solomon Kugel. Judge Wapter questions Zuckerman whether his novel is not a virulent Nazi propaganda piece that might "warm the heart of a Julius Streicher or a Joseph Goebbels,"⁸² while Kugel suspects that Mother might regard his eviction of Anne Frank as a murderous delivery to Dr. Mengele. Yet,

77 Zygmunt Bauman, "The Holocaust's Life as a Ghost," in *Social Theory after the Holocaust*, ed. Robert Fine and Charles Turner (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000), 7–18.

78 Bauman, "The Holocaust," 8.

79 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

80 Auslander, *Hope*, 64 (italic in original).

81 Spargo, "To Invent," 89.

82 Roth, *Ghost*, 104.

Auslander adds a new dimension while introducing Mother, who suffered from what Geoffrey Hartman termed “memory-envy”⁸³ – adopting a false identity as a Holocaust survivor. What is more intriguing is Salomon Kugel’s “acceptance” of and collaboration with Mother’s charade, is the fact that from his adolescence he was already aware of Mother’s false allegations – during his sixth-grade visit to a museum his history teacher, Mrs. Rosengarten, corrected his “identification” of one of the Holocaust victims as his own mother: “That’s not your mother [...]. Your mother’s my age, Solomon [...]. She was not even born when the photograph was taken. And she was born in Brooklyn.”⁸⁴ The acceptance of the contradicted information may allude to the son’s fascination with the fabricated Holocaust past which is part of the Holocaust industry built on instrumental misappropriation of history.⁸⁵ Shoah Business also resonates in Tova Reich’s book *My Holocaust*,⁸⁶ which seems as one of the muses of *Hope: A Tragedy*. Susanne Rohr points out in “Trauma and Taboo: The Holocaust in Recent American Fiction” that Reich’s and Auslander’s books represent meaningful stages of development of the genre that the philosopher Slavoj Žižek has termed “Holocaust comedy” or “camp comedy,” a genre that dares to marry humor and the Holocaust.⁸⁷ Reich’s book humorously criticizes the Jewish-American commercial instrumentalization of the Holocaust as primarily manifested at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. The protagonist, Maurice Messer, is the chairman of the museum, as well as the owner of Holocaust Connections, Inc., a successful firm that sells approval certificates to companies that are Holocaust Correct. With its critical portrayal of Messer and his entourage, the witty text of *My Holocaust* serves as an:

unremitting attack [...] on Holocaust-Business [...] an elaborate and professionally structured company where everyone, in their own self-interest, wants to secure their share of the profit [...] largely sustained by the clever (self-) marketing of the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust.⁸⁸

83 Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 111.

84 Auslander, *Hope*, 80.

85 Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (New York: Verso, 2000), 61.

86 Tova Reich, *My Holocaust* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

87 Rohr, “Trauma,” 185.

88 *Ibid.*, 191.

The novels of Roth and Auslander reflect Peter Novick's arguments concerning the reasons that the Holocaust memory became an essential part of the American Jewry. While Roth portrays a Jewish community a few years after the war, whose identity is threatened by secularization and assimilation (the Lonoffs are a mixed marriage) and thus Holocaust memory became a defining center of American Judaism on the verge of disappearance of traditional forms of community,⁸⁹ Auslander's *Hope: A Tragedy*, reflects American Jewry much later in a society preoccupied with victimization. Thus, in an age of identity politics, when being a victim is a mark of distinction, the Holocaust gives Jews a perverse preeminence, setting them apart as the secular equivalent of the "chosen people."⁹⁰

Abstract

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Anne Frank Is Dead and Is Living in New York

Cynthia Ozick speculates whether it would have been better if Anne Frank's *Diary* would have remained lost, thus preventing the creation of the diarist's canonization as a saint in Jewish-American culture. Similar criticism can be traced in the "What-if" novels *The Ghost Writer* by Philip Roth (1979) and Shalom Auslander's *Hope: A Tragedy* (2012), that revive Frank and place her in America. Although Roth's diarist is an attractive young brunette and Auslander's is a gray-haired elderly woman, both conclude that for the benefit of their American public and Frank's major role in the "Shoah business" she had better stay dead.

Keywords

Jewish-American Literature, Holocaust, Anne Frank, "What-if" fiction

⁸⁹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1999), 7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.