

Public-Private Tensions: Anne Frank's Diary Reconsidered*

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Abstract

My paper considers public-private tensions in relation to Anne Frank's diary. To escape Hitler's genocide of Jews during the Second World War, Anne Frank, her German Jewish family, and four other Jews hid in a secret annex in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. These eight were eventually arrested by the Nazis and sent to concentration camps, with Anne's father, Otto Frank, the sole survivor. After the war, he edited and published the diary Anne had kept while in hiding. An important historical document, the diary has received much scholarly attention. This paper takes new approaches to exploring the public-private tensions involved in the diary's editorial history and Anne's fugitive experience. I compare three versions of the diary,

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focusing specifically on passages present in version A (Anne's original writing), absent in version B (her self-edited version), and reinstated in version C (Otto's edited version), i.e., Anne's de-emphasis of her adolescent development, which Otto considered essential elements of the narrative. I draw on Michel de Certeau's theory of everyday life for textual analysis to argue that public-private tensions are key to understanding the diary and offer new insights into it (inter)textually and theoretically.

Key Words: Anne Frank, Otto Frank, diary, version difference, everyday life