

**Anne Frank: The Role of Secularism, Life Affirming Lessons and
Gender in the Making of an Iconic Symbol**

by
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Introduction

In the 61 years since its first publication in Holland in 1947, The Diary of Anne Frank has been translated into 55 languages and sold over 25 million copies. Alvin Rosenfeld remarked that if people have read one book about the Holocaust it is The Diary of Anne Frank. He stated that “As a consequence, it is no exaggeration to say that more people are probably familiar with the Nazi era through the figure of Anne Frank than through any other figure of that period with the possible exception of Adolf Hitler.”¹

In 1946, a year before the Dutch edition of the diary and nine years before the highly successful and romanticised 1955 play adapted from the diary by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, a review by Jan Romein of the as yet unpublished diary in the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* had already declared Anne Frank a symbol of what Romein termed “the real hideousness of fascism.”² For Romein, Anne’s individual life, suffering and death were secondary to her role as a symbol of German crimes during the Third Reich. Romein states, “How she died, I would rather not know ... The way she died is not important.”³ Romein concludes that what is important about Anne Frank and her diary is that it illustrates what he calls the worst crime, “the crushing [of] the resources of culture, the destruction of life and talent merely for the sake of mindless destruction.”⁴ Even before her diary was published, Anne Frank had become more than a young girl, trapped inside for over two years, prey to fear and anxiety, who died of typhus and starvation in Bergen-Belsen. She became a symbol of the values the post-war world wanted to restore without admitting that those values had incurred any permanent damage during twelve years of persecution, war and murder.

It is an interesting phenomenon that while Anne Frank has become the symbol of the Holocaust, the most well-known survivors and writers of the Holocaust are men. Elie Wiesel’s Night and Primo Levi’s If This Is A Man feature prominently in syllabi for

¹ Rosenfeld, Alvin, “Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank,” Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1991), p.255.

² Romein, Jan, “A Child’s Voice,” *Het Parool*, 3 April 1946.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

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university courses on the Holocaust. While The Diary of Anne Frank is usually considered appropriate for 8th, 9th, or 10th graders – despite the many questions it raises about the memorialisation and popular narrative of the Holocaust, such as the focus on help extended to Jews by non-Jews and the insistence on finding life affirming lessons. There are many reasons for the popularity of Anne Frank as a symbol of the Holocaust – including the lack of direct violence in the diary itself, her affiliation with Western democracy, the presence of non-Jews helping Jews, Anne’s apparent lack of self-pity and the misuse of her statement on the goodness of mankind. This paper will examine three of these issues – the representation of Anne’s secular relationship to Judaism, the misuse of her statement on the goodness of mankind and her gender.

Secularism

Anne Frank’s relationship to her Judaism is one which we can only surmise from her writings. We cannot put a label on her religious beliefs or assume that the entries in her diary represent the depth or complexity of her relationship with God, Judaism and her cultural Jewish heritage. It is commonly assumed that Edith Frank and Margot were the more religious members of the family, going to synagogue regularly while Otto Frank and Anne often stayed at home. Otto Frank seems to have had a relatively secular relationship to his Judaism – although this is based on impression and the opinions of others since Otto Frank never publicly articulated his religious views or his relationship with God. The Frank family observed Jewish holidays, sometimes alongside Christian ones, and despite what could be termed Otto Frank assimilated understanding of himself as a Jew – the family seem to have been proud of their Jewish heritage.

Anne’s age inhibits our ability to quantify or qualify her level of religious feeling or her relationship to Judaism – she was a young girl with a developing intellect and deep curiosity about life caught up in extraordinary circumstances – all of which suggests that her opinions and beliefs would have changed and evolved over time if her life had not been cut short. Anne looked up to her father, often placing him on a pedestal above all others, and it is therefore possible to suppose that at her age she would emulate him in his religious beliefs as she tried to emulate him in other areas. Her conflicted relationship

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with her mother could have pushed her away from a more active engagement with her religion – but for personal reasons as opposed to any beliefs she may have held. The Anne of the diary identifies her self with the Jewish people, feels deeply for their suffering from which the family is temporarily spared, refers to her Jewish faith and God and enjoys the familiar rituals of the holidays.

The real impact of the question of Anne’s secularity in her emergence the symbol of the Holocaust appears in the representation of the diary in the 1955 play and 1959 movie which created the sentimental and romanticised version of Anne Frank that still dominates today. The play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett omits direct references Anne’s Jewish identity, alters passages to delete Jewish content and takes away the depth of the expressions of Jewishness that do appear in the play. These decision were purposefully taken to make Anne seem less Jewish and therefore less ‘foreign’ and to sidestep any resistance to claims of exceptional Jewish suffering. Otto Frank was pleased about the universal appeal of the diary, stating “The wonderful thing about Anne’s book is that it is really universal, that it is a book, an experience, for everyone.”⁵ Otto Frank did not view Anne’s book as a specifically Jewish book and wanted it to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

In the discussion about transforming the book into a play, Otto Frank opposed choosing a Jewish director. He stated, “I always said, that Anne’s book is not a war book. War is in the background. It is not a Jewish book either, though the Jewish sphere, sentiment and surrounding is the background. I never wanted a Jew writing an introduction for it. It is ... read and understood more by gentiles than in Jewish circles ... So do not make a Jewish play out of it.”⁶ Non-Jewish readers found Anne’s universalism comforting. Her arguments with her sister and parents reminded them of their own teenage selves or daughters. The 1962 edition of the major high school, textbook, The Growth of the American Republic, referred to Anne as a young “German girl.” Not until the 1969 edition did Anne become a “Jewish girl.”⁷

⁵ Garver, Lawrence, An Obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and the Diary, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995), p.71.

⁶ *ibid*, p.54.

⁷ Korman, Gerd, “The Holocaust in American Historical Writing,” Societas, 2 (1972), pp.251-270, p.270.

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Anne's universalism was intentionally emphasised in the 1955 play in order to play down any threat of Jewish particularism. During the first two post-war decades, the persecution and extermination of the Jews had not yet been singled out from other Nazi atrocities against civilians and labelled as the Holocaust. The perception of the extermination of European Jewry as part of a wider pattern of civilian atrocities, which developed during the war and was articulated at Nuremberg, continued to dominate the discourse on the war. Formerly occupied Europe, Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union all avoided recognizing exceptional Jewish suffering – largely because it threatened to undermine their national myths of the war which were based on two primary notions – the collective suffering of soldiers and civilians alike and universal resistance.

The director of the play, Garson Kanin, urged Goodrich and Hackett to omit lines from the diary entry that pointed specifically to Jewish suffering. The passage concerned recorded a conversation with Peter, in which he says that they are being hunted like rabbits just because they are Jews. Anne responds, “We’re not the only Jews that’ve had to suffer. Right down through the ages there have been Jews and they’ve had to suffer.”⁸ Kanin thought this reference to specific Jewish suffering sounded like “special pleading.”⁹ Consequently, the final version of the play omits Peter’s reference to their persecution as Jews and changes Anne’s response to: “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.”¹⁰ By emphasising that the Jews were only one of many peoples to suffer, the play allowed the audience to empathize with Anne and also to see in her suffering a reflection of their own. One spectator in Europe said that he was extremely touched “because the play reminds us of our own fate ... After all, we too lost so much during the war.”¹¹

The fact that the diary of another young teenager, Moshe Flinker, has remained largely unknown illustrates the impact of the secularisation of Anne Frank. Moshe, a

⁸ Frank, Anne, The Diary of a Young Girl, (Penguin Books, London, 2000), p.260.

⁹ Novick, Peter, The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience, (Bloomsbury, London, 1999), p.118.

¹⁰ Goodrich, Frances, and Albert Hackett, The Diary of Anne Frank, (Samuel French Limited, London, 1958). p.95.

¹¹ Garver, p.130.

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sixteen year-old deeply religious Orthodox Jew, wrote his diary while in hiding with his family in Belgium. The family was betrayed and Moshe and his parents were killed in Auschwitz – his younger brother and older sisters survived. In his diary, Moshe struggles to reconcile his faith in God with what is happening to the Jewish people. The diary is primarily a powerful exploration of his belief, his spirituality and his relationship God and the Jewish people. In his introduction to the diary, Geoffrey Wigodier states that an obvious comparison can be made with The Diary of Anne Frank, “Her diary is perhaps more universal in appeal and has won fame for its simplicity, psychological insight and historical circumstance. Moshe Flinker’s diary is essentially a Jewish document ... Anne Frank probably made more people feel the tragedy ... In the Jewish context, the impact of Moshe Flinker is even stronger.”¹² Moshe Flinker’s diary is considered “too Jewish” for popular appeal – but it is important to note that even among Jews Moshe Flinker is largely unknown. It’s interesting that Wigodier seems to see The Diary of Anne Frank as removed from the Jewish context, illustrating how the symbol of Anne Frank has overtaken the real child and her actual writings.

The Need for Life Affirming Lessons

The representation of Anne’s diary throughout the last sixty has focused almost exclusively on Anne as symbol of “the unbreakableness of the human spirit’ and the misuse of her statement that “In spite of everything I still believe people are good at heart.” The versions of the diary presented in the 1955 play and 1959 film, offered a message of faith in mankind that appealed to each post-war society’s desire for unity and healing. Anne’s statement that “people are good at heart,” came to represent the lesson that everyone should learn from their suffering during the war – despite brutal atrocities against the Jews and other civilians, mankind was not depraved and could be trusted to bring peace and humanity in the post-war age.

Goodrich and Hackett’s play closes with Anne’s voice floating out over the audience as Otto Frank reads her diary upon his return from Auschwitz, “In spite of

¹² Wigoden, Geoffrey, “Introduction,” in Flinker, Moshe, Young Moshe’s Diary: The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy and Nazi Europe, (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1965), p.15-16.

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everything, I still believe that people really are good at heart.” The character of Otto Frank responds, “She puts me to shame,”¹³ suggesting that those who give up or do not find the moral strength to move forward with an optimistic outlook have failed in some way. Anne’s statement on the ultimate goodness of man became so popular that many, including the Oxford Companion to American Theatre (2007) and the Cambridge Guide to American Theatre (2007), still present it as the last line of her diary, when in reality and her diary cuts off abruptly and the passage appears much earlier and in the middle of many entries discussing the cruelty of the world outside her window.¹⁴ The popular belief that the diary ends with that positive statement detracts from the realization that the end of the diary means Anne’s imminent death. Bruno Bettelheim commented on the use of Anne’s statement in 1960, “Her seeming survival through her moving statement about the goodness of men releases us effectively of the need to cope with the problems Auschwitz presents. It explains why millions loved the play and movie because while it confronts us with the fact that Auschwitz existed, it encourages us at the same time to ignore any of its implications ... If all men are good at heart, there never really was an Auschwitz; nor is there any possibility that is may recur.”¹⁵

Walter Kerr’s review of the play in the *New York Times* in 1955 focuses on Anne’s refusal to blame all of mankind for her situation, “Self-pity gets no foothold in this tense, miniature world.”¹⁶ Kerr presents Anne’s world as a reflection of our own. By highlighting her lack of self-pity and reluctance to condemn mankind, he suggests that the audience should follow Anne’s example. The Soviet review of the play, performed in the Soviet Union in 1963, in *Sovetskaya Kultura* also emphasises her purported faith in mankind. The review discusses a scene in which Anne, who is referred to throughout as an “evreiskaya devochka” – a Jewish girl - comforts Peter after a fight with his parents: “It is difficult to fathom where such a young girl found such strength. Anne tells Peter how beautiful the sky is through the dormer window, how wonderful the people are who are risking their lives to help them. ‘Nevertheless, I still believe that people are good,’ -

¹³ Goodrich and Hackett, p.98.

¹⁴ Garver, p.95.

¹⁵ Bettelheim, Bruno, “The Ignored Lessons of Anne Frank,” *Surviving and Other Essays*, (Thames and Hudson, London, 1979), p.251.

¹⁶ *New York Herald*, 23 October 1955.

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and she infuses Peter with her belief, with her hope.”¹⁷ Both the Soviet and American reviews demonstrate the insistence in post-war society that former Nazi victims do not wallow in self-pity or blame all of mankind for the actions of a few.

The representation of Anne as eternally optimistic goes hand in hand with the theme of her faith in mankind. Garson Kanin, the director of the 1955 play of the Diary, stated that Anne’s diary is really about the “life force” – the triumph of the spirit in the face of adversity. Kanin even goes so far as to assert that Anne’s death is somehow mitigated by the performance of her diary, stating “I never looked at it as a sad play. I certainly have no wish to inflict depression on an audience ... I never thought the original material depressing ... Anne Frank’s death doesn’t seem to me a wasteful death, because she left us a legacy that has meaning and value to us as you look at the whole story.”¹⁸ Kanin adds that Anne “is not going to her death; she is going to leave a dent on life, and let death take what is left.”¹⁹ A statement that embraces the symbol and ignores the suffering and death of the real child Anne Frank

The play focused on Anne’s exuberance for life, ignoring the undertone of fear that flows through her diary and the family’s ultimate fate. In his review of the play for the *New York Herald* in 1955, Walter Kerr wrote that review ends with the statement that the play “leaves a shimmering image behind it because, in a way, it gives no thought at all about tomorrow, cares not a whit for the obvious tears to be wrung from the plight of its characters. It only wants to tell you what Anne’s todays were like – and, as it happened, they were wonderful.”²⁰ The Soviet review also focused on the life-affirming lesson and the “life force” that the play conveyed. It states, “Anne Frank’s main characteristic is her intense spiritual inner life, that strength of the soul, that helped this young girl support the morale of the others and which the cruel and tragic circumstances of her life could not break.”²¹ The life affirming messages of resilience and strength of spirit held as much appeal in the Soviet Union as in the West. The post-war world preferred to ignore the dark lessons the Holocaust held for its faith in the enlightened

¹⁷ *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 27 April 1963.

¹⁸ Rosenfeld, p. 253.

¹⁹ *New York Herald*, 23 October 1955.

²⁰ *New York Herald*, 23 October 1955.

²¹ *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 27 April 1963.

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nature of Western civilisation. Resilience and courage, attributes that Anne embodied, signalled the triumph of man's inner freedom over those that strove to crush him.

Although Anne's anxiety about the discovery of their hiding place appears frequently in her entries – she writes extensively about her fear, loneliness and depression approximately 23 separate times - the representation of Anne Frank ignores the fear of discovery and death that runs throughout the diary. And the symbol of Anne Frank as a lesson on the 'unbreakableness of the human spirit' has become so pervasive that readers, especially younger readers, don't absorb the fear and loneliness that lurks behind the purposefully bright words. Their own preconceptions of what they will find in the diary colour their reading and help to perpetuate the myth that whitewashes Anne's actual experiences in hiding.

The Role of Gender

The role of Anne's gender in her popularity as a symbol of the Holocaust is inherently tied to society's understanding of victimhood and heroism and the importance of the twin issues of passivity and resistance in the discourse on the Holocaust. The Diary of Anne Frank came to prominence during the post-war period, a time when accusations of alleged Jewish passivity dominated the discourse on the persecution and extermination of European Jewry. Episodes of resistance such as the Warsaw ghetto uprising were therefore frequently emphasised in response to these allegations. In his study of Holocaust testimony, Lawrence Langer argues that these accusations of passivity arose from the fact that the concept of an individual being rendered completely powerless and unable to act "is so alien to the self-reliant Western mind (dominated by the idea of the individual as agent of his fate) that its centrality, its blameless centrality to the camp experience continues to leave one disoriented."²²

On the part of the formerly occupied peoples of Europe, accusing the Jews of passivity deflected the knowledge that only a small minority of any national group had

²² Langer, Lawrence, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1991), p.85.

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resisted the Nazi occupation – a knowledge which threatened to undermine the rapidly developing national myths of universal resistance. Triumphant after their victory over Nazi Germany, the allies celebrated their achievements in newspapers, newsreels and books, emphasising the heroic acts of soldiers and civilians alike. It was a time of heroes and martyrs. In his study of the Holocaust in the American collective consciousness, Peter Novick points out that in the 1940s and 1950s victimhood “evoked at best the sort of pity mixed with contempt. It was a label actively shunned. The self-reliant cowboy and the victorious war hero were the approved masculine ideals.”²³ As early as 1944, the head of the American Jewish Committee, John Slawson, expressed concern over the equation of Jews with victimhood, which many thought fanned anti-Semitism. He stated that Jewish organisations “should avoid representing the Jews as weak, victimised and suffering ... There needs to be an elimination or at least a reduction of horror stores of victimised Jewry ... war hero stories are excellent.”²⁴

Returning Holocaust survivors therefore frequently found themselves accused of somehow contributing to their own persecution. On a visit to a displaced persons camp after the war, David Ben-Gurion told Holocaust survivors, “Hitler was not far from Palestine. A terrible tragedy may have transpired, but what happened in Poland could never happen in Palestine. No one could have slaughtered us in the synagogues; every boy and girl would have shot every German soldier.”²⁵ It is telling that the first Yad Vashem Conference on the Holocaust chose Jewish resistance as its theme. This conference also marked the beginning of shift in the discourse, which began to consider spiritual and moral resistance on par with physical resistance.

In this post-war atmosphere, the engaging diary of young girl struggling to keep her spirits up by relating her experiences and those of the inhabitants in the annexe struck the right chord in the complicated discourse on victimhood and heroism. In the socio-cultural expectations of women and especially young girls, the question of their ability to resist and defend themselves was not considered relevant. In her 1962 study, *Male and Female*, Margaret Mead observes that little girls were taught and expected to be passive,

²³ Novick, p.121.

²⁴ *ibid*, p.121.

²⁵ Zertal, Idith, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1998), p.221-222.

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raised to accept and adjust to the situation presented to them. Boys, on the other hand, were raised to be the masters of their fate. Boys “must be manly, they must not be sissies, they must stand up for themselves.”²⁶ Men and even boys were, and in the predominant cultural discourse still are, expected to protect and defend the women and children. As a young girl, Anne Frank’s safety rested primarily in the hands of her father and secondarily in those of her mother. She was not expected to fight off the Gestapo and police who came to arrest them, or join the underground or escape to the partisans as many boys of her age did or were expected to do. As a defenceless girl, Anne Frank is blameless in her own death and her victimhood seen as acceptable and even natural under those circumstances. Anne Frank was not expected to change the fate Nazi Germany imposed on her, her role came in fulfilling society’s expectation of moral and spiritual strength. An expectation that led to the misrepresentation of the diary as a testimony to the unbreakableness of the human spirit and the essential goodness of all men.

Several diaries of teenage boys who also perished in the Holocaust have been published, a few in the post-war period and others in the 80s and 90s, but they remain on the sidelines of popular consciousness. None of these boys participated in a resistance or underground movement, but struggled as Anne did to study and retain their faith in a better future while in hiding or living under the terrible conditions in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. But the editors of these diaries often feel the need to explain or comment on the young author’s lack of physical resistance. Yitshok Rudashevski kept a diary in the Vilna ghetto until he was shot at the age of 15 in Ponary, the execution ground for Vilna’s Jewish community. Originally published in Yiddish in 1953, the introduction by Tsvi Shner emphasises that although Yitshok spent a lot of his time studying and writing, this did not mean that he was a “recluse.” Shner states that he had “close friends and helped them in every way.”²⁷ Shner enumerates the various ways Yitshok practised spiritual or moral resistance, stating “this form of resistance surpasses that of armed revolt.”²⁸

²⁶ Mead, Margaret, Male and Female, (Pelican Books, London, 1962), p.281.

²⁷ in Rudashevski, Isaac, The Diary of the Vilna Ghetto, June 1941-April 1943, (Ghetto Fighters’ House, Tel Aviv, 1973), p.10.

²⁸ *ibid*, p.11.

As recently as 1996, this question of the passivity of men and boys features prominently in the introduction to the diary of Dawid Sierakowiak, who died of starvation in the Lodz ghetto in 1943 at the age of 18. The editor includes an introductory section entitled “The Absence of Jewish Resistance,” which explains at length Dawid’s decision not to join a group dedicated to armed resistance even though he had been invited. Although the editor shows understanding to Dawid’s decision not to join the armed resistance, he ends the section with the statement, “In retrospect, the underground leaders seem upheld in their argument to Dawid that the choice against resistance that he was making was a doomed strategy.”²⁹

Hannah Senesh, the young Hungarian woman who emigrated to Palestine in 1939 and returned to Hungary as a parachutist under the command of the British Army in 1944, became an Israeli nation hero after she was captured, tortured and executed by the Germans. Hannah’s diary was published in Israel in 1945 and she quickly became a symbol of the new Israeli youth. However, her diary was not published in English until 1966, and outside of Israel, Hannah has not received as much attention as Anne Frank despite her active resistance and attempts to help the Jewish population of Hungary. The reasons for this may lie in Hannah’s dedication to Zionism and the future Israeli state – which may have inhibited the presentation of the diary in the same tone of universal appeal applied to The Diary of Anne Frank.

As recognition of moral and spiritual resistance under Nazi persecution came to equal, or at least be considered comparable to physical resistance, the romanticised version of Anne Frank’s “unbreakable spirit” presented in the 1955 play and 1959 movie only added to the popularity of the diary and the figure of Anne herself. Anne’s statement that all mankind is essentially good at heart, originally emphasised to allay post-war guilt at the abandonment of the Jews of Europe and reflect the Cold War need to ‘normalise’ and incorporate Germany into the Western alliance, came to be seen as the embodiment of spiritual resistance – the interpretation being that if a young girl under persecution can show such resilient faith then evil did not triumph despite the murder of millions. Not expected to resist physically, Anne Frank’s youthful attempts to keep her spirits up

²⁹ Adelson, Alan, “One Life Lost,” in Sierakowiak, Dawid, The Diary of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks from the Lodz Ghetto, (Bloomsbury, London, 1996), p.13.

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during her period of hiding made her an ideal example of moral resistance. The fact that the diary ends with the capture of the inhabitants of the annexe and that the English language editions of the diary until 1985 contained only a small post-script stating that Anne was deported to Auschwitz and died in Beslen allowed the theme of the unbreakableness of the human spirit to dominate the representation of the diary.

Anne's idealised relationship with her father and tense relationship with her mother also reflected patterns in patriarchal society that contributed to her suitability as a symbol of the Holocaust. Literary teenage heroines during the post-war decades, and in many cases still today, were presented as have a special relationship with their father while chaffing under the authority of their mothers. Barbara White observes in her study "Growing Up Female," that teenage girls "have good reason to try to resemble, or at least to please, their fathers, who hold privileged positions in society; [while] the girls all dread growing up like their mothers."³⁰

Anne looks up to her father, admiring his calm strength, his goodness and his patience. She writes on 7 November 1942, "I cling to Father because my contempt of mother is growing daily."³¹ When Anne rejects her mother's offer of saying her prayers with her one night, Anne hurts her mother deeply. But it is to her father that she turns for counselling and understanding, writing him a long letter justifying her dislike of her mother. It is only when Otto Frank reprimands Anne for her selfishness that Anne begins to think that she may have acted badly. Her mother's opinion and feelings only come into play through the vehicle of Otto Frank. It is her father's opinion that Anne values. She only attempts to change her behaviour to please him. As Rachel Devlin observes in *Relative Intimacy*, in patriarchy the father curbs the adolescent girl's aggressive desire for independence. "The bribe offered to the girl by the father, as representative of the environment, is love and tenderness."³² Anne therefore conformed to what teenage girls should be - she respects and even idealises the privileged place of men while learning to conform to her coming role as a woman. Anne's high spirits and desire for independence

³⁰ White, Barbara, *Growing Up Female: Adolescent Girlhood in American Fiction*, (Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1985), p.157.

³¹ Frank, p.63.

³² Devlin, Rachel, *Relative Intimacy: Fathers, Adolescent Daughters and Postwar American Culture*, (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2005), p.32.

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are seen as charming and non-threatening by post-war society because she accepts the paternal figure of authority and confirms the secondary place of the mother in the home.

Although Anne conformed to patriarchal expectations, especially the Anne of the play and the movie, in her diary she expressed many forward-looking thoughts that have allowed the symbol of Anne Frank to remain contemporary despite the liberating changes in the position of women in society brought about by the feminist movement over the last sixty years. On 5 April 1944, Anne writes, "I can't imagine having to live like Mother, Mrs. Van Daan and all the women who go about their work and are then forgotten. I need to have something besides a husband and children to devote myself to."³³ On 3 May 1944, she writes "I've made up my mind to lead a different life from ordinary girls and not to become an ordinary housewife later on."³⁴ In her longest and most impassioned entry on the role of women in society and her future, Anne writes "One of the many questions that has often bothered me is why women have been, and still are, thought to be so inferior to men ... I'd really like to know the reason for this great injustice ... Until recently, women silently went along with this, which was stupid." But, she says, education has opened the eyes of many women. Anne writes, "Modern women want the right to be completely independent!"³⁵ This entry was not included in the original edited version of the diary, evidently because it was considered too challenging to patriarchal norms. It first appeared in the critical edition of the diary in 1986.

The manipulation of Anne's writing to conform to post-war values allowed her to be represented as spunky and talented girl who still knew how to listen to her father. While the release of the unedited version of the diary in 1986, also allowed the figure of Anne Frank to remain relevant to contemporary readers.

Conclusion

The death of the real child, Anne Frank, in Belsen in April 1944 also played a role in the emergence of the symbol of Anne Frank. She will always remain an innocent and untainted girl, still defenceless in the eyes of the world. She will never grow up and risk

³³ Frank, p.248.

³⁴ *ibid*, pp.278-279.

³⁵ *ibid*, p.316.

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becoming an imperfect woman, wife or mother. Her sexuality, just emerging when she died, will never develop and challenge societal norms. She will never become a woman to either tempt or reject men, an adult open to judgment or criticism. Etty Hillesum, who wrote her diary in Amsterdam at the same time as Anne Frank, has remained a peripheral figure largely because of her complicated sexual relationship with her therapist, her simultaneous affair with a married man and her general non-conformity to society's expectations of a respectable woman.

Anne Frank appeals to a broad audience because it is relatively easy to project onto a symbol of a young girl the pure notions society takes comfort in. Universally, people seem to feel sorry for a defenceless Jewish girl in a way they perhaps might not if the symbol of the Holocaust was a Jewish boy, woman or man. This is illustrated by a disturbing incident related by Theodore Adorno. Adorno reported that after a production of the play in Germany in 1955, a middle-aged German woman, who declared herself to be deeply moved, said to her companion as they left the theatre, "Yes, but that girl at least should have been allowed to live."³⁶

³⁶ quoted in Gilman, Sander, "The Dead Child Speaks: Reading the Diary of Anne Frank," in A Scholarly Look at the Diary of Anne Frank, ed. Harold Bloom, (Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia, 1999,) p.46.