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"I see the eight of us in the Annex as if we were a patch of blue sky surrounded by menacing black clouds. The perfectly round spot on which we're standing is still safe, but the clouds are moving in on us, and the ring between us and the approaching danger is being pulled tighter and tighter. We're surrounded by darkness and danger, and in our desperate search for a way out we keep bumping into each other."[1]

Lines like these have made Anne Frank one of the most significant individuals of the twentieth century, as her diary became recognized as a powerful expression of the fate of European Jews during the Holocaust. For two years, beginning in July, 1942 the four members of the Frank family, the three members of the Van Pels family, and Fritz Pfeffer were in hiding in the back rooms of a house in Nazi-occupied Holland. In August 1944, Anne Frank and the others were arrested and transported to concentration camps, where they all perished, with the exception of Otto Frank, Anne's father. Anne Frank's diary was discovered after the raid, published in Holland in 1947, and, in the subsequent half-century, sold more than twenty-five million copies in almost sixty languages.

Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy is an effort to understand the significance of this person and her document. The thirty-one essays are arranged into the following categories: "History, Biography, and Authenticity" provides biographical material about Anne Frank beyond what is contained in her diary. "Writer and Rewriter" examines the character and quality of Anne Frank's writing. "Anne Frank on Stage and Screen" provides reviews and responses to theater and film depictions of the diary. "Memorializing the Holocaust" explores the ways the Holocaust has been understood in terms of the experiences and expressions of Anne Frank.

The essays examining performance versions include discussions of stage adaptations by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (1955) later revised by Wendy Kesselman (1997), the film version produced and directed by George Stevens (1959), as well as the documentaries "The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank" (1988) and "Anne Frank Remembered" (1995). All of the essays have been previously published, and some have been abridged for this collection. In addition to the thirty-one essays, the book contains a chronology of Anne Frank's life and legacy, an explanation of the versions of the diary, an appendix listing Anne Frank's other published writings, and a bibliography of works about Anne Frank, her diary, and the Holocaust.

The selections in the first section provide descriptions of the life and death of this young girl. First-hand accounts of Anne Frank are provided by her cousin Bernd Elias, by childhood friends Laureen Nussbaum and Hannah Elisabeth Pick-Goslar, by Miep Gies and others who helped to hide the Frank family, and by Otto Frank's own recollections of the family's deportation and his efforts to find his family members. These selections offer details beyond those included in the diary. Harry Paape describes the day, August 4, 1944, when a German sergeant and several Dutch officials raided the hiding place. After reviewing investigations by the Dutch judiciary after the war, Paape concludes that someone must have betrayed the families to the German security service, but it is "no longer possible to reconstruct exactly what happened" (p. 42).

The grim details of Anne Frank's final months are

also described by first-hand witnesses. Pick-Goslar described how she found Anne Frank after she had been shipped from Auschwitz to the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen. Fearing that both her mother and father had been killed, Anne Frank was overwhelmed by a sense of despair: "We don't have anything to eat here, almost nothing, and yet we are cold; we don't have any clothes and I've gotten very thin and they shaved my hair" (p. 50). Pick-Goslar was able to share some food received in Red Cross packages, but then Anne Frank was transferred to another section of the camp, where she and her sister Margot were infected with typhus. Lin Jaldati describes both women as too ill to get out of their bunks, yet Anne remained "friendly and sweet," and determined to stay with her sister as long as possible. When Jaldati returned a few days later, however, their shared plankbed was empty: "We knew what that meant. Behind the barracks we found her. We placed her thin body in a blanket and carried her to a mass grave. That was all we could do" (p. 54).

The first section includes incredibly moving, but relatively straightforward accounts of Anne Frank's life. The other three sections, though, address more complex questions – how to interpret Anne Frank as a writer, as a character in theater and film depictions, and as a symbol of the Holocaust itself. Strong consensus exists on the power of the diary, which is described by various authors as the source of truths about humanity, as "an intimate account of adolescence" (p. 73), and as a window into the soul of a "young, eager, difficult, lovable self" (p. 75) whose diary tells the story of "her growth as an artist" (p. 90). In the words of poet John Berryman, the diary is "vivid, witty, candid, astute, dramatic, pathetic, terrible – one falls in love with the girl, one finds her formidable, and she breaks one's heart" (p. 77). The common question in these accounts is what kind of a writer Anne Frank could have become, and the common refrain is the tragedy that so much obvious potential was destroyed at such a young age.

Relatively few authors consider the significance of gender in shaping both the production and reception of the diary. According to the Dutch scholar Berteke Waaldijk, Anne Frank's diary should be read "as a women's text" (p. 111). Waaldijk calls particular attention to passages in Anne Frank's diary, many of which were left out of the published versions, which dealt with sexuality, the position of women in society, and her own troubled relations with her mother. By examining the many different layers contained within the diary, Waaldijk concludes that the combination of public observations with private introspection, all the more remarkable given the age of the author and the context of the Holocaust, should serve as "a mode of writing for women writers" (p. 120). The argument that gender shaped the content of the diary is supported by Anne Frank's own statements about the position of women in society, including the following lines deleted from the original Dutch publication of the diary: "One of the many questions that have often bothered me is why women have been, and still are, thought to be so inferior to men. . . Fortunately, education, work, and progress have opened women's eyes. In many countries they've been granted equal rights; many people, mainly women, but also men, now realize how wrong it was to tolerate this state of affairs for so long. Modern women want the right to be completely independent! . . . I believe that in the course of the next century the notion that it's a woman's duty to have children will change and make way for the respect and admiration of all women, who bear their burdens without complaint or a lot of pompous words!" This passage, which is also quoted by Waaldijk, supports the argument that a better understanding of the Holocaust requires greater recognition of the influence of gender on the attitudes and experiences of victims as well as perpetrators.[2]

Significantly more attention is devoted to the question of the "universality" of Anne Frank's diary. In particular, Judith Doneson concludes that the diary, the Pulitzer Prize winning play, and then the very popular American film meant that this one text "evolved from a European work written by a young Jew hiding from the Nazis in Holland to a more Americanized, universal symbol: indeed, it became one of the first enduring popular symbols of the Holocaust" (p. 124). The impetus for this transformation came in part from the climate of post-war America in which Jews and other minorities sought to become more integrated into mainstream culture. Yet, Anne Frank's own father also contributed to this redefinition. In the mid 1950s, during the preparation of the script of the play, Otto Frank asserted that more emphasis on the common elements of the story-the anxieties shared by young people, the conflicts with parents, and the challenges of love affairs-would do the most to achieve "Anne's wish to work for mankind, to achieve something valuable after her death, her horror against war and discrimination" (p. 128). In the process, as Doneson documents, specific features of the diary were removed in order to "Americanize" the Frank family, with the clear intent of making their lives more universally appealing.

More recently, according to Ben Brantley's review of the substantially revised stage version, depictions of Anne Frank have devoted renewed attention to "Judaism, and the ways it is perceived, as the Franks' central defining identity" (p. 151). In a similar fashion, the essays by Alvin Rosenfeld, James Young, and Denise de Costa suggest that better understanding of the diary itself will support the claim that "a specifically Jewish story" is ultimately more true to Anne Frank's own feelings and to the experience of the Holocaust than are the "vague, universalistic qualities that now surround her story" (p. 209).

One important factor that made Anne Frank's experiences more susceptible to "universalization" was the particularly "western" orientation of the author. As they slowly and reluctantly pulled themselves away from their attachment to German culture, the Franks were increasingly oriented toward the language, literature, and ideals of their "new" Dutch homeland and their anticipated English liberators (the Frank family understood the western front solely in terms of the British army, and paid almost no attention to American forces).

Yet one of the consequences of making Anne Frank into the most recognizable victim of the Holocaust is to distort the overall contours of this historical process. As Rosenfield points out, concentrating on events in Amsterdam draws attention away from Eastern Europe, where ninety percent of the total Jewish deaths in the Holocaust occurred.[3] While certain elements of the Holocaust were the same-the laws requiring the wearing of the Star of David, the forced relocation to ghettoes and camps, and ultimately the deportations to death camps-the Jews of Eastern Europe also had to deal with far more immediate threats, including mass executions carried out by German soldiers, the "raids" organized by Nazis and their sympathizers which often resulted in brutal killings, and the betrayal of Jews by citizens of occupied lands desperate for some relief from the German forces. In this respect, the recollections of young Polish children are far more revealing of the extreme horrors of the Holocaust and need to be considered in combination with the very different tone set by Anne Frank's diary.[4] Unfortunately, none of the essays in this collection address the ways in which American understanding of the Holocaust has been "geographically" distorted by the dominant influence of this particular account.

Beyond these discussions of "universalization," the authors repeatedly ask whether the popularity of Anne Frank's diary reflects a desire to find an "optimistic understanding" of the Holocaust. The fact that the diary ends with the Frank family still safe in hiding means that the reader is never confronted with the death of any of the major figures. Rachel Feldhay Brenner argues that the diary depicts the "anticipation of Holocaust persecution" and "the inexorable awareness of the Final Solution," but is "not a testimony of the Holocaust atrocity" (p. 86). Making a similar point more broadly, Rosenfeld argues that Anne Frank's diary makes it possible for Americans to know just a little about the Holocaust, "yet keep from confronting the Nazi horrors at their worst" (p. 209). According to Lawrence Langer, part of the appeal of the diary, and particularly the stage and film versions, is that "they permit the imagination to cope with the idea of the Holocaust without forcing a confrontation with its grim details. . . No one dies, and the inhabitants of the annex endure minimal suffering" (p. 200). Arguing that the popularity of the diary is actually due to the way it shields the reader from the reality of the Holocaust, Langer explicitly denies that this diary, or the fate of any victims, can be read in an optimistic or reaffirming manner, because the Holocaust contains "no final solace, no redeeming truth, no hope that so many millions may not have died in vain. They have" (p. 199). Most emphatically, Langer states that "if Anne Frank could return from among the murdered, she would be appalled at the misuse to which her journal entries had been put" (p. 204).

Bruno Bettelheim takes an even more controversial position by declaring emphatically that "[t]he Frank family's attitude that life could be carried out as before may well have been what led to their destruction" (p. 186). Responding more to the stage and film versions than to the diary itself, Bettelheim complained that the wrong lesson had been derived from Anne Frank 's life and death. Instead of "eulogizing how they lived in their hiding place," Bettelheim calls attention to what the Franks failed to do: hide out separately and thus reduce the chance of all being exposed, construct an escape route from the secret annex, or prepare for self-defense so that "they could have sold their lives for a high price, instead of walking into their death" (pp. 186-187).

Charging that the deaths of the Frank family may have been due to their own failure "to believe in Auschwitz," Bettelheim concludes that any attempt to derive idealistic lessons from Anne Frank's life denies the real implications of the Holocaust: "If all men are good at heart, there never really was an Auschwitz; nor is there any possibility that it may recur" (p. 189). While Bettelheim has been strongly criticized for suggesting that any Jews were to blame for their own deaths, his article nevertheless stands out in this collection for its assertion

that understanding the Holocaust requires asking about the variety of responses to persecution, repression, and extermination.

"I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart."[5] This line, taken from Anne Frank's diary entry for July 15, 1944, has become the focal point for debates about the "meaning" of this young woman's legacy. This phrase is used at the end of the play and film, where it serves, in the words of Doneson, as "the affirmation of post-Holocaust civilization" (p. 133). This use of the famous phrase is strongly denounced by critics. Bettelheim declares emphatically that "this statement is not justified by anything Anne actually told her diary," and is particularly offensive given what we know was the young girl's impending destruction (p. 188). Warning that this sentence is "the least appropriate epitaph conceivable" for the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, Langer calls attention instead to Anne Frank's own "somber vision," including her references to seeing Jews on Amsterdam streets "join in the march of death" and her warning that "There's in people simply an urge to destroy, an urge to kill, to murder and rage. . ." (p. 201).

Yet this line about human goodness, when examined in context, actually says a great deal about the complexity of Anne Frank's life and legacy. The phrase comes in the middle of one of Anne Frank's characteristically thoughtful evaluations of both the small world of the secret annex and the "larger" world of the war and the campaign against the Jews: "It's difficult in times like these: ideals, dreams, and cherished hopes rise within us, only to be crushed by grim reality. 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. [para] 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 will return once more. In the meantime, I must hold onto my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I'll be able to realize them."[6] From this perspective, we see how hard it was for Anne Frank to preserve any sense of hope and how desperately she wanted to escape the surrounding world of "chaos, suffering, and death" as well as "the approaching thunder that, one day, will destroy us all."

But the broader context of this entry also must be taken into consideration when evaluating the meaning of Anne Frank's life and legacy. In the paragraphs that precede this statement, Anne Frank writes with great insight and also despair about how her relations with her parents have changed and even deteriorated. She writes, for example, about how she has "deliberately alienated" herself from her father, to the point where, in her words, "I can hardly bear to have him tutor me, and his affection seems forced. I want to be left alone, and I'd rather he ignored me for a while until I'm more sure of myself when I'm talking to him. . . Oh, it's hard to be strong and brave in every way."[7] In this context, therefore, when Anne Frank writes about "a time when ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when the worst side of human nature predominates, when everyone has come to doubt truth, justice, and God," she is, in a most remarkable way, talking about both the "universal" experience of individual maturation and the historically specific experience of Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Interpretations of Anne Frank need to recognize the extraordinary power of this combination, and seek to avoid evading, diminishing, or denying either aspect.

Perhaps the grimmest irony involving the most famous line of Anne Frank's diary is that her optimism was in fact justifiably increasing. By mid July 1944, a year and a half after the Soviet army began its counteroffensive against the German forces and a month after the British, Canadian, and American invasion at Normandy, the peoples of occupied Europe were becoming increasingly hopeful for liberation. In her subsequent entry, dated July 21, 1944, Anne Frank wrote in response to the news of the attempted assassination of Hitler: "I'm finally getting optimistic. Now, at last, things are going well! They really are!" [8]. At the end of this entry, her next to last, Anne Frank wrote: "the prospect of going back to school in October is making me too happy to be logical!"[9] Two weeks later, the Nazis came to arrest those hiding in the Annex. Most tragically, when the Frank family was transported "to the east" a month later, they were on the last train that left the Westerbork concentration camp for the death camp at Auschwitz. When Anne and her sister Margot died in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen in early March 1945, it was just two weeks before the camp was liberated by British troops. Eleven years after fleeing from Nazi Germany and two years after going into hiding, Anne Frank was killed less than two months before Hitler's regime was completely destroyed by the advancing Allied armies.

Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy would be very appropriate for use in courses dealing with the

Holocaust, particularly in sections dealing with first-hand testimonies, with literary, theater, or film depictions, and with efforts to memorialize this event in subsequent decades. The background information, variety of critical responses, and thoughtful interpretations presented in these different essays are essential for understanding the Holocaust itself and the broader meanings of this event for the contemporary world. The contributions are somewhat uneven in quality, due largely to the differences in intended audiences, the context of their publication, and the issues addressed by the authors, but the essays are arranged and edited in ways that make them easily accessible to anyone familiar with Anne Frank's diary and with the broader issues of the Holocaust.

In the end, however, nothing that an observer, critic, or scholar writes can match the direct power of Anne Frank's own reflections. On December 24, 1943, for example, she made the following entry in her diary: "Believe me, if you've been shut up for a year and half, it can get to be too much for you sometimes. But feelings can't be ignored, no matter how unjust or ungrateful they seem. I long to ride a bike, dance, whistle, look at the world, feel young and know that I am free, and yet I can't let it show. Just imagine what would happen if all eight of us were to feel sorry for ourselves or walk around with the discontent clearly shown on our faces. Where would that get us? I sometimes wonder if anyone will ever understand what I mean, if anyone will ever overlook my ingratitude and not worry about whether or not I'm Jewish and merely see me as a teenager badly in need of some good plain fun. I don't know, and I wouldn't be able to talk about it with anyone, since I'm sure I'd start to cry. Crying can bring relief, as long as you don't cry alone." [10] The tragedy for Anne Frank, as for millions of her fellow victims, was the way the killing machines of the Holocaust took away these desires to "feel young and know that I'm free," to have "some good plain fun," and simply to be understood on their own terms.

Notes

[1]. Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl. The Definitive Edition* edited by Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler, translated by Susan Massoty (New York: Bantam Books, 1997) p. 143.

[2]. Ibid., pp. 313-314. Recent studies of gender and the Holocaust include *Different Voices. Women and the Holocaust* edited by Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (New York: Paragon House, 1993); *Women in the Holocaust* edited by Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

[3]. This estimate is based on figures in Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975) p. 544.

[4]. See, for example, *The Last Eyewitnesses. Children of the Holocaust Speak* edited by Wiktoria Sliwowska, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Alicia Appleman-Jurman, *Alicia. My Story* (New York: Bantam, 1988).

[5]. Frank, *Diary of a Young Girl*, p. 327.

[6]. Ibid., p. 327.

[7]. Ibid., p. 325.

[8]. Ibid., p. 327.

[9]. Ibid., p. 329.

[10]. Ibid., p. 152.

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