

Digital and Posthuman Narratives in Literature

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[. . .] a form of cheap sentimentality at the expense of great catastrophe.

Hannah Arendt

There is no proportionality between the compassion we feel and the dimensions of the sorrow that gives rise to compassion. A single Anne Frank arouses more emotion than the myriad others who suffered like her but whose images have remained in the shadows. Maybe things are this way out of necessity; if we had to and could suffer the suffering of everybody, we would be unable to live.

Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*

Introduction

This chapter aims at exploring how narratives for children and their transmedia adaptations can be a crucial part in the production of meaning of our time. By investigating the Western notion of childhood not as a neutral status, but one which is an idealised trope in which is embedded our sense of posterity and which embodies aspects of political nature that have profound educational and ethical implications, children's narratives can thus be interpreted as one of the privilege sites from where to disclose and critically rethink what can be counted as human and the role of the humanities. In particular, this chapter asks how transmedia children's narratives are able to protect, promote and transmit European texts as global heritage, and how they are able to reshape cultural memory and ethical principles by fostering children's and youths' education. The analysis addresses these issues by exploring *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947) as an exemplary case of children's literature that has generated a great variety of transmedia narratives and highlights how its complex and multi-layered status in our global culture can contribute to pursue an understanding of our cultural orientations towards the future and towards a new ethical territory where the humanities converge with digital technologies and the politics of the form.

Why Children?

The image of the child is a powerful cultural trope that shapes the logic within which the question of the human itself can be thought. As I will explore in the following sections, the image of the child is to be understood as a historical notion whose meanings depend on culture and whose political symbolism can be thought as the pre-history of the humans – as those who are not-yet-fully-humans – but also as an ontological state of potency where

a culture embeds its idea of the future: the child represents the potential. As I will argue, the logic that shapes the political symbolisation of the child is also shaping our forms of literature and education to be transmitted to children, and it compels us to be politically responsible for the future and affectively committed to the sense of promise to the future that the image of the child is able to solicit. Finally, as I hope to demonstrate, this cultural reading of the image of the child will help us to explore how the complex transmedia narratives generated by the *Diary* of Anne Frank are still haunting our contemporary globalised culture.

According to Peter Hunt, children's literature has only recently become a subject able to be *thinkable*. This process has been helped by a change in attitudes to childhood 'bound up with a revolution in critical thinking' (Hunt 1992: 3). As the recent scholarly debate in the West about childhood studies demonstrates, the notion of childhood is a modern invention that emerged from the beginning of the sixteenth century and its development as a concept was 'class-specific, reflecting the values and practices of a rising European middle class that increasingly differentiated adults and children, girls and boys' (Kehily 2009: 6). Books, along with toys, artefacts and the material culture made specifically for the use of children, emerged in the West in response to the creation of childhood as a special category of people that set them apart from adults.

Understood more as a historical construction than a stable concept, which changes from place to place, from time to time, many of the issues that concern contemporary studies of childhood have a historical trajectory that elucidates and informs the present and leads to the problematisation of what today is understood as infancy. Sociological approaches have also been concerned with issues of socialisation proposing that, if childhood is a biological fact of life that can be seen as an apprenticeship for adulthood that can be charted through stages relating to age, physical development and cognitive ability, nevertheless 'the ways in which it is understood and made meaningful is a fact of culture' (James and Prout 1997: 7).

The European ideals that underpin contemporary understandings of childhood can be traced back to two main cultural discourses that are worth investigating to stress how these two historical philosophical paradigms of childhood involve the construction of what is still culturally, politically and ethically considered as human. The first is the cultural discourse that reads childhood as the pre-history of humanity, sees the child as still lacking intellectual skills that make him or her fully human, but also understands and shapes childhood as a form of investment – especially emotional, educational and moral – that can contribute to fulfil a bourgeois ideology. The idea of the *tabula rasa* or the romantic notion of the pure child, drawn respectively upon the philosophy of John Locke and the work of the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762), proposed the child as pure, free, innocent and close to God and the child as a blank slate who could, with guidance and training, develop into a rational human being, under the responsibility of adults who provide the appropriate education and control. These cultural discourses involve the notion that childhood is the condition of being not-yet-fully-human, as lacking intellectual capacity from which one should emancipate, and consequently education plays a crucial role in the moral development and social integration of human beings, where education takes the shape of a familial investment but also the shape of a social aspirational investment by the collective for the future society. Yet, different forms of education are proposed according to class and sex differences since not all human beings are equal and not everybody, such as women personified by the character Sophie, should be entitled to be part of the public sphere. This tradition that reads childhood as

a state we grow away from, a state 'of being minor', has been crystallised by Immanuel Kant. In his 1784 essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, Kant established the parameters of what counts as human – the use of reason and rationality – to the detriment of childhood (Kant [1784] 1999). With his famous definition of *Unmündigkeit* to describe the state of self-incurred minority of mankind to identify those who do not use their own understanding and therefore are condemned to remain in a state of barbarism, Kantian argumentation inevitably raises the question about one of the limits of mankind in classical humanism: what does humanity consist of?

The recognition of the universal symbol of childhood as the condition of lacking intellectual capacity from which one should emancipate had the consequence of pinpointing the status of children as not-yet-fully-humans, which had not only analytical implications but also ethical and political ones. The child has also served to define social groups perceived as inferior: colonised people, slaves, women. Among the sections of the human population who did not have this privilege of being considered fully human, children can in fact be counted as one. The 'negating universalism' of the Enlightenment has been based on the creation of 'sexualized, racialized and naturalized' others, and has contributed to 'the de-humanizing effects of structural injustice and exclusions [based] upon entire sections of the human population who have not enjoyed the privileges of being considered fully human' (Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018: 11). These notions, either if they read children nostalgically as innocent and as the Lost Eden, or as incomplete and (still) lacking capacities and skills, have however conceptualised childhood in contrast to adult life, where the infant is entirely voiceless and non-agential. These limited conceptions of childhood can be placed at the origin of some of the paradoxes that still traverse the current debates on what counts as human and the role of the humanities.

A possible way to retrieve this question is to reset it in the broader conceptual constellation disclosed by the complex symbolism of the image of the child for its potential to appeal to the future by looking at a different meaning that co-exists in the same concept, but with a distinct nuance. This second cultural discourse offers more nuanced readings of the contours and contents of the concept of childhood without the attempt to colonise its otherness (Benjamin 2010). In fact, much of the symbolism around childhood in Western culture is also derived from the fact that 'children have most of their choices before them: they represent potential' (Reynolds 2007: 2). Childhood is thus an ontological state of potency, that is forward focused to a fully humanised adulthood, where a culture embeds its idea of the future. For queer theorists such as Kathryn Bond Stockton and Jack Halberstam, 'childhood as many queers in particular recall, is a long lesson in humility, awkwardness, limitation, and what Kathryn Bond Stockton has called "growing sideways"' (Halberstam 2011: 27). Childhood represents a privilege space where hetero-reproduction and capitalist production and re-production find an opposition and resistance in a wonderfully childish territory of revolt. The figure of the child is therefore the vehicle for the transgression of boundaries. More than that, the concept of childhood is perceived affectively: childhood is deeply embedded to cultural affective components that are implied within this sense of possibility of what can be called a promise for the future (Berlant 2011).

If the critical re-vision of the notion of childhood discloses it as an idealised trope that can shed new light to the humanist concept of what can be counted as human, in the following section I will draw upon both perspectives to argue that children's narratives also can be interpreted as one of the privilege sites to rethink our understanding of humanities for it is a highly ideological and political field to social matters – especially for education,

due to its potential to inform, educate and influence children's behaviour – and it is also a genre in which is embedded our sense of posterity whereby humanities can investigate our cultural orientations towards the future.

Why Children's Literature?

These critical perspectives on the concept of childhood and the opening-up to wider debates in cultural studies have shed new light on the condition of children's literature. The relationship between childhood and children's books is often marked by contradiction, diversity and complexity (Jenks 1996; Heywood 2001; Garhart Mooney 2000). Far from being unsettling, this complex relationship makes it more important to investigate it and to adopt a critical reflection on the notion of childhood.

At the heart of literature for children lies the consideration of the role of literature in its double relationship to education and imagination. In its attempts to address young readers, on the one hand children's fantasy animates a host of imaginary that draws the boundaries between truth and fiction, where the subversive elements of these fictions possess a generative power that can help to cultivate imagination and empathetic understanding as essential components of human beings. Children's books are able to develop individual potential suited to a future in which societies could be different in significant ways, and where the future is still an unknown and the self is in formation. As Kimberley Reynolds argues, the subversive and radical components should not be overlooked:

[c]hildren's literature has also provided a space in which writers, illustrators, printers, and publishers have piloted ideas, experimented with voices, formats and media, played with conventions, and contested thinking about cultural norms (including those surrounding childhood) and how societies should be organised. Because writing for the young has a future orientation, there is often a freshness and urgency to the storylines of children's fictions that correspond to the fact that their target readers are generally encountering ideas and experiences for the first time. Many children's books offer quirky or critical or alternative visions of the world designed to provoke that ultimate response of childhood, 'Why?' 'Why are things as they are?' 'Why can't they be different?' (Reynolds 2007: 3)

However, while nurturing children's meaningful lives, within our cultural landscape the growing centrality of children's literature is also to be ascribed to its key role in the personal, social and moral development of children in order to make children 'fully humans'. In spite of the paradox that in Western societies childhood has become more luminous even in the absence of real children (Gillis 2002), children's narratives are increasingly playing a central role in the socialisation, 'enculturation', or as some critics would argue, in the 'civilization' of children (Zipes 1991: x). According to Jack Zipes, fairy tales, and by extension children's literature, have been implicated in transmitting cultural values and 'civilizing' children (1991: x), and this idea has been further elaborated by Robyn McCallum, who sees much of children's literature as part of an ideological mechanism that seduces readers into accepting a liberal humanist worldview (McCallum 1999). Far from being an innocent form of literature free of concerns of gender, race and power dynamics, books for children 'have been at the centre of ideological activity and children's narratives have been put into the service of those who were trying to disseminate new world views, values, and social models' (Reynolds 2007: 2).

The recognition of the moral/didactic role of children's fiction is now recorded as its ideological role and it brings up against a series of questions widely debated: Which books are 'best for children' – and how to define what is 'best'? What are the ethical, cultural and political values worth transmitting for the rearing, socialisation and education of children, understood as culture bearers, in order to make them 'fully humans'? Who are the members of the culture who are in the position to accord these values? What is more appropriate and suitable for the child's upbringing in order to develop a fully human status? Rather than representing the cultural consensus about what children are, children's narratives should be explored as stories that portray cultural attitudes to childhood or propose a model of how adults think it should be, or wish it was; or a demonstration of what it should not be; or a picture of how adults wish it had been or remember it to have been.

Since the eighteenth century, children's literature has been deeply animated by the negotiation between its moral purpose and didacticism on the one hand, and fantasy and imagination on the other. Far from being unsettling, this area of critical tension has proved productive, suggesting how children's fiction can offer sophisticated interventions into debates about the importance of storytelling, narratives and literature. Despite having achieved an institutional legitimisation, despite having gained a critical and cultural praise and despite having become a successful, enticing and best-selling commodity in the global market, children's literature has tended to remain a marginalised province (Hunt 1999). However, this marginalisation can also be considered through the lens of the 'minor literature', which 'doesn't come from a minor language [. . .] it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language' (Deleuze and Guattari [1975]: 18). Because it has been culturally low-profile, children's literature has not become the property of any group or discipline, breaking down barriers between disciplines, and between types of readers, and it has much in common with the emergence of other 'new' literatures (national, ethnic, feminist, postcolonial) that are becoming part of the institutional/cultural critical map. '[. . .] As a body of texts, as well as a body of criticism, it does not fit into the dominant system's hierarchies or classifications, and consequently, like colonial or feminist literatures, it has presented an irritant to established thinking' (Hunt 1992: 2).

These tensions can be further problematised if we look at the impact of digitalisation on children's cultural industry, where market forces are one of the most important cultural factors that have been contributing to shape our conception of what children's narratives are – or should be. Even a cursory glance around the world reveals that children's literature is also 'a product of historical circumstance, ideology, and market forces' (Reynolds and Tucker 1998: xi). In the last decades, economic forces have in fact exerted a dominating influence both in the globalisation of children's literature and in creating technological innovation (Taxel 2011). This has led some critics to read the current situation as an antagonism between children's cultural industry versus the potential subversiveness of children's books. While marketing and merchandising are undoubtedly exploiting the auras surrounding fantasy characters as a central component of the commodification process to children (Zipes 1997), it would not be a fully adequate framework of analysis to examine cultural phenomena and the impact of technological innovation without reference to human agency and to the degree of emotional interaction and empathy that digital technologies can foster (Taxel 2011). On the contrary, this paradoxical relationship makes it more important to investigate this trend and to adopt a critical reflection on the impact of digital technology.

As observed by Henry Jenkins, one of the crucial emerging paradigms is transmedia storytelling defined as 'a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed

systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience' – a definition that has been referred to and further developed by other scholars (Christy Dena, Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca (2004), Carlos Alberto Scolari (2009) and Renira Rampazzo Gambarato (2013)). The category of transmediality has become part of a series of phenomena where the media are composed by wide socio-technological constellations, within (and through) which contents circulate and intertwine and where one of the main aspects is convergence, namely the multiplication of relationships between different media contents and the platforms through which these contents circulate (Jenkins 2006: 93). Therefore, the category of transmediality will be useful in order to investigate the impact of the digital revolution on the adaptation, circulation and reception of the *Diary* of Anne Frank.

Why Anne Frank's *Diary*?

Why is it still so important today to reconsider the figure of Anne Frank and her diary, along with the transmedia intertextuality it has generated since the first publication of the book in Amsterdam in 1947? There are several points to consider. The first point of departure of my analysis, though it may seem obvious, is that Anne Frank's *Diary* can be regarded as one of the key texts in twentieth-century literature. The many editions, and translations from the original Dutch, which have reached millions of readers, contributed to shape our understanding of the Shoah and its 'politics of testimony'. The book in fact has been used to introduce and connect young people to the Shoah since the use of personal materials, such as a diary, has long been considered an effective method in schools, museums and, more recently, in digital educational platforms to educate about the past and transmit it to young people to help them to be responsible global citizens. The text is undoubtedly playing a special role in transmitting the European cultural memory from the past and in awakening an ethical awareness among future generations. Though I emphasise the importance of this text in the contemporary world, I do not intend to limit my analysis only to the purely pedagogical function, which is in many ways still the predominant one but which runs the risk of obfuscating other elements that potentially are more creative.

To grasp the importance of Anne Frank's *Diary*, I take a critical distance from the prevalent interest in this traditional pedagogical use of the texts written during the Shoah, since I am convinced that what makes the *Diary* constitutively relevant today is firstly its capacity to disclose the socio-cultural paradigms of what can be considered human in a de-humanising context. In the section 'Anne Frank and her Diary: Who is Entitled to be Human?', I will draw on what some critics have defined as the two conflicting but strictly interconnected tendencies of Western and European culture – namely classical humanism and brutal inhumanity – to argue that Anne Frank's writing can provide us with new insights on what the debate over the last decades has questioned regarding the limits of the tradition of European humanism: Who is entitled to be a human subject? By exploring the historical context, and the specific geographical and political circumstances in which the diary was written, not to mention the complex writing process through which the diary was articulated and rearticulated, I argue that the *Diary* can be read as an *indirect critique* of – and an *act of resistance against* – the ethical categories and the social and political conditions that classified Anne Frank as less-than-human: as a child, a girl, Jewish. This reading raises literary, historical and political questions regarding the ways in which the *Diary* can be considered a space of reflection on the historical conditions

of de-humanisation suffered by Anne Frank and by an entire category of heterogeneous people. More importantly, beyond its historical interpretation, I want to suggest that the *Diary* is still able to interpellate the readers about new forms of segregation, marginalisation and apartheid that are replacing the old ones, because the very writing process is able to reveal how the text is a place of production of subjectivity.

What might be less obvious in exploring the effects of the *Diary* since its publication is that over the years Anne Frank and her book not only turned into a global symbol of the Jewish persecution, but also became a complex cultural narrative *cosmos*. The text's exceptional uniqueness is shown in its capacity to exceed the realm of literature and to penetrate into different cultural spaces. The *Diary* of Anne Frank in fact has been the object of several musical compositions, it has been adapted for the screen and as a theatre play with hundreds of productions annually and, more recently, in thousands of YouTube videos. Around the *Diary*, and around its writing process and the history of the author, the Anne Frank museum in Amsterdam has been created, which has been visited by millions of people, along with several other research and memorial centres around the globe. Not to mention the growing number of works of fine art, biography, fiction, poetry and dance, as well as films, radio and television broadcasts, and websites that are proliferating every year. The book has also been the object of diverse cultural tributes in the form of memorial sites and organisations around the world, eponymous streets, schools and institutions, coins and stamps, and in 2009 it was included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. Such a proliferating and pervasive presence of the *Diary* reveals how this book should not be considered only as a text but, together with its writing history and its author, as a complex cultural narrative phenomenon marked by cultural, social, political and economic factors, not to mention affective attachments, as also identified by the editors of the volume *Anne Frank Unbound* who in their 'Introduction' argue that:

The fact that it takes many different forms, is inconsistent in its sense of purpose, varies considerably in quality of execution, and not infrequently proves to be disturbing for one reason or another does not diminish its value. Rather, what makes the Anne Frank phenomenon compelling is precisely its vast sprawl. Indeed, notwithstanding its global character and use of a wide range of media, from works of fine art to MP3 files, the Anne Frank phenomenon can be considered a kind of folk practice, as it is largely the work of individuals or grassroots communities, inspired by this widely available text to forge their own attachment to Anne's life and work. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler 2012: 7)

What we have been witnessing over the last decades is an expanded narrativisation of the *Diary* over different media, generated by a process of 'transmedia intertextuality', a proliferation of narratives across a variety of digital and non-digital platforms (Benvenuti 2018; Kinder 1991, 1999; Kinder and McPherson 2014). The analysis included in the section 'Anne Frank, the Diary and the Transmission of the Shoah', rather than showing the complete list of adaptations, cultural transformations and transcodifications that were generated from the original text, aims to address more specifically the aesthetic, political and ethical implications of the book and the digitalisation process it has solicited.

This process is in fact raising a number of questions that challenge any simplistic answers and it helps to explore the impact of digital technologies within the humanities as a non-linear event. The process of transmedia narrativisation of the *Diary* is in fact reshaping the categories through which we read and interpret the text, its authorship, its

readership and its reception. The advent of technological innovation has made possible the wide-reaching popularity of the book, contributing to new pedagogical and learning approaches in children's narratives and to enhance the potential of a more 'participatory culture' (Jenkins 2006). Second, the reshaping of the *Diary* through digital platforms is not only contributing to democratise the memory of Anne Frank's story but it is also opening up new possibilities for understanding her story and emotionally experiencing it, for it has provoked resistance, irony and, to a certain extent, agency. However, as I will show in the section 'Transmedia Adaptations of the *Diary* of Anne Frank', these processes are also dramatically changing the very structure of the narrative, affecting not only the aesthetics but more importantly the political and ethical dimension of the text, involving new questions about the *ethics of the form* that governs the very representability of the Shoah (Wiesel 1978; Nancy [2001] 2007; Pisanty 2004, 2010; Didi-Huberman 2013; Recchia Luciani and Vercelli 2016).

In other words, the *Diary* of Anne Frank is a key text to understanding our global culture where the increasingly digital imaginary that is shaping our world is converging with questions regarding the value of the humanities, the European cultural memory and its transmission to future generations, and a new ethical territory that interrogates the politics of the form. In order to deal with this rich and complex scenario, in the following sections the *Diary* will be explored by following three converging paths. The *Diary* of Anne Frank can offer alternative readings of the relation between the notion of childhood and the role played by children's narratives (1) in the socialisation, 'enculturation' and 'civilisation' of children to disseminate new worldviews and values; (2) in the critical reflection over the ethical categories and the social and political conditions that have drawn the boundaries between the illegitimate subjects and those who are entitled to be considered human subjects; and (3) in the creation of moral and affective 'obligation' with the readers, who are emotionally bound to respond to the story. By drawing on Kathrine Hayles's distinction between book and digital technologies as 'flat print and deep code', in the final section the analysis will explore the necessity to take very seriously the medium specificity as the key to explore how medium-specific constraints and possibilities are reshaping this text (Hayles 2004).

Anne Frank, the *Diary* and the Transmission of the Shoah

Since its first publication in the Netherlands in 1947 with the Dutch title *Het Achterhuis*, the *Diary* of Anne Frank undoubtedly occupies a unique place among the books through which European culture has attempted to come to terms with the Holocaust's tragic legacy. The *Diary* has been translated into seventy languages with over 30 million copies sold, and it is one of the most widely read and most widely lauded of all writings on the Holocaust. Anne Frank's writing represents a unique text which, along with Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* and Elie Wiesel's *The Night*, has informed the 'politics of testimony' of the twentieth century, where the importance of testimony means highlighting the capacity of writing to make survive an experience destined to oblivion and disappearance.

For many, Anne Frank has become the witness-writer of the destruction of European Jewry by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1945, which is now considered a formative event of the twentieth century and by many is defined as a watershed in European history (Bartov 1996; Diner 2000). The *Diary* has become one of the most important historical documents of the Shoah, being written by a person who suffered the effects of the persecution perpetrated against the Jews. The genocide of over 6 million European Jews, along

with the murders committed by the Nazi regime against many other groups such as disabled people, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti, and the persecution of political opponents, still needs a full understanding: despite having the most minutely detailed information about its historical, material, bureaucratic and legal circumstances, nevertheless the problem of the ethical and political significance of the Shoah still seems today 'profoundly enigmatic' (Agamben 1999: 11; see also Arendt 1958; Bettelheim 1960). The Shoah has now come to be understood as a historical event that represents a 'touchstone in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good', as the civilisation break of modernity and the dividing line to barbarity. As such, the mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis has been considered not only as a German–Jewish tragedy but as a tragedy of reason, Enlightenment and modernity (Horkheimer and Adorno 1999; Arendt 1963; Bauman 1989).

A complex work of memory and transmission has been called for and has given rise to a process of institutionalisation of memory in order to deal with the effects and implications of the Shoah, which was ratified in January 2000 by the Intergovernmental Conference on the Holocaust that institutionalised the role of the Shoah. In a unified Europe, the Holocaust was defined as the civilisational foundation, for it 'fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning' (for the entire text, see: <http://www.Holocaustforum.gov.se/>). This process of institutionalisation of memory did also include the pedagogisation of the Shoah, in which educational programmes and events took on a central role not only in the transmission of the genocide and in understanding how the Holocaust was possible, but also as a form of antidote aimed at new generations to prevent forms of genocide and violence in the future, and as a way to critically consider the broader issues of agency and responsibility. This process was further ratified by Resolution 60/7 on 1 November 2005, in which the UN General Assembly designated 27 January as Holocaust Remembrance Day. The aim was to urge the nations of the world to observe the day so that future generations will be spared acts of genocide by encouraging countries to develop educational programmes about the horrors of genocide in order to prevent future acts of genocide.

Within this complex historical framework imbricated in power dynamics, the *Diary's* destiny became extremely complex. The processes of transmission, circulation and reception of the book, and its appropriation and re-mediation, can testify how the *Diary* came to be recognised as exceptionally significant not only for its power as witness, but thanks to its potential to go beyond the limits of first-hand chronicle and to its ability to embrace wider reflections on the human spirit and experiences; it became the symbol of the Holocaust itself, as numerous scholars suggested. The circulation and reception of Anne Frank's narrative soon became the barometer of the values that were invested not only in the *Diary* as a single work, but more broadly in the legacy of Nazism and the Shoah, in the transmission of European values of promoting tolerance and democracy, and more recently in the operations of the cultural industry. As a result, the symbol of Anne Frank became entangled in the cultural politics of different national contexts and responded to the specificity of different places: it was appropriated for diverse political ends in the post-war world and it informed the understandings, and the diverse responses, of different national contexts in order to make sense of their own history and politics. Different receptions were first evident in the Netherlands where the Frank family moved in 1933, fleeing Germany in an attempt to escape the anti-Jewish decrees aimed at excluding Jews from all areas of public life, and especially in Amsterdam, where the house in which the Frank family went into hiding in July 1942 is now a museum. The reception of the book has been particularly complex in Germany, not only because the family were natives of Frankfurt,

but also after the diary's publication and its dramatisation, when Anne emerged in the mid-1950s as a key figure for Germans coming to terms with the political responsibility of the Nazi era, with separate histories for East and West Germany (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler 2012).

Seen in this way, it is true, of course, that the case of Anne Frank constitutes a representative episode of European history that cannot be dismissed as such, and that should also be protected, promoted and transmitted as part of European cultural history. However, the creation of a common European cultural memory is not the only cultural response that the Jewish genocide has engendered. The Shoah, and Anne Frank's *Diary*, with its representations that produced shared memories, can also be placed within nation-transcending dynamics – as Arjun Appadurai has argued in relation to local-global intersections – where the two levels are in constant symbiosis; micro-histories and events of each nation related to the Shoah have interweaved highly specific national discourses of culture, history and politics with the Shoah as an emerging transnational phenomenon (Appadurai 1996; Gordon 2007). Consequently, there has been the emergence of cosmopolitan memories with an extra-territorial and global quality that has transformed the Shoah into a political-cultural symbol that provided a meaningful framework to face an uncertain future in an age of ideological uncertainty (Levy and Sznajder 2002). Along with authors from other single national contexts who were taken up and who spread into the supranational, such as survivor-writers like Elie Wiesel, Paul Celan, Tadeusz Borowski and Primo Levi, Anne Frank's *Diary* is today part of a global heritage.

As the popularity of *The Diary of a Young Girl* brings Anne Frank and her writing to an increasingly globalized readership, the story of the girl in the Annex refracts into intersecting sets of cultural meanings. As a literary figure, Anne comes to stand both for herself and for the interpretations, values, and messages imagined onto her. Given the power and circumstances of her writing, it should not be surprising that her narrative fuels other writers, who merge her historical moment with other times and places. (Horowitz 2012: 253)

In the USA, 'the 1955 Broadway play *The Diary* of Anne Frank quickly became an international success, even as some critics chafed at its Americanness. Indeed, this play is the first major example of an American work about the Holocaust to have a significant impact on the remembrance of this event abroad, including in countries where it took place' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler 2012: 15). In countries such as South Africa, the book and its author became significant and resonated in relation to the suffering of and the struggles against the anti-apartheid movement, where political prisoners on Robben Island read Anne's diary as an inspirational work. 'During one of his first public addresses as president of a newly democratic South Africa in 1994, Nelson Mandela declared that Anne's diary had "kept our spirits high and reinforced our confidence in the invincibility of the cause of freedom and justice"'. The portrayal of Anne underwent several dramatic shifts during the apartheid period and after the transition to a non-racial political system, from a 1950s play foregrounding the young diarist's Jewishness to a 2009 exhibition promoting tolerance and democracy' (Gilbert 2012: 366).

Precisely because of its capacity to raise the most profound questions regarding the ethical and political significance regarding the human suffering in a de-humanising reality, the text's complex destiny is still unfolding. From being now the centrepiece of educational programmes dedicated to universal concerns about tolerance and human rights, it is also

the contested object of a series of transmedia appropriations which are posing a complexity of questions that were identified by Cynthia Ozick in her essay 'Who Owns Anne Frank?':

The story of Anne Frank in the fifty years since 'The Diary of a Young Girl' was first published has been bowdlerized, distorted, transmuted, traduced, reduced; it has been infantilized, Americanized, homogenized, sentimentalized; falsified, kitschified, and, in fact, blatantly and arrogantly denied. (Ozick 1997: 77)

It is not therefore surprising that the *Diary's* public presence has been, on one hand, extensively promoted and, on the other hand, carefully regulated. After Otto Frank oversaw it throughout his life, the *Diary* is today an object to be safeguarded: as a work, the text is protected by the Anne Frank Stichting, established in Amsterdam in 1957, and the Anne Frank-Fonds, which was inaugurated in Basel in 1963, indicating the unusual status of the text both for its commercial success and its ethical implications. Some scholars defined the *Diary* as akin to a sacred object, 'a sacred relic, capable of effecting redemption. Its very presence purifies and saves a corrupted world' (Horowitz 2012: 219).

Another relevant factor has played a decisive role in the circulation, transmission and reception of the *Diary*. Unlike other texts written by witness-writers who survived the genocide, the uniqueness of the *Diary* lies also in its author's destiny: Anne Frank did not survive the concentration camp, therefore the memory of her life and that of her writings were, are and will remain inextricably linked to Anne as a young girl (Anderson 2007; Stier 2015; Mariani 2018). We cannot isolate the reading of the *Diary* from the author's image and the photographic visual records that were left behind, a series of portraits that represent her as a child and that will never be altered. This apparently simple fact constitutes the core of her authorship and of the creation of Anne Frank as an icon, as Alvin Rosenfeld recognised: 'It is no exaggeration to say that Anne Frank is very likely the best-known child of the twentieth century' (Rosenfeld 2004: 3). This also contributed to shape the *Diary's* reading, its cultural circulation and transmission, and the process of its reception and its transmedia re-mediations crystallised around the figure of a child-author (Mariani 2018: 112).

This process through which the *Diary* came to be inextricably linked to its author as a child, as a young girl who never had the chance to grow and develop her potential in a life on her own, became inevitably instrumental to introduce and connect young people to the Shoah. First, in order to transmit European history as global heritage and to develop imaginative skills through empathy and compassion, the use of personal materials such as the diary has long been considered an effective method in schools, museums and in digital educational platforms. The *Diary* therefore has been transmitted for educational purposes to facilitate identification with the younger generations and to enhance the understanding of the victims. Second, the author's voice as unequivocally that of a child makes the text particularly rich and valuable because it also expresses the bewilderment of the position of the victim in the face of experiences that exceed the possibility of comprehension. The child's naïve gaze emulates the distance between the majority of the audience and the experience of those who lived or died in the Holocaust (Modingler quoted in Pisanty 2019: 124). Third, from being a child victim of the genocide, Anne Frank became in the cultural imaginary 'the emblem of victimization', the innocent victim *par excellence* whose suffering was ignored and is part of those whose history was not taken into account. Fourth, the capacity of Anne Frank's text to talk to a high-, middle-, and low-brow audience lies precisely in its capacity at 'personalising the trauma' and its characters. By portraying

the events in terms of small groups, families and friends, parents and children, brothers and sisters, the story of Anne Frank is able to affectively engage a wide-ranging audience (Alexander 2002: 35). It is with this in mind that the words of Primo Levi should be read, who devoted an illuminating passage to Anne Frank in *The Drowned and the Saved*:

the single Anne Frank arouses more emotion than the myriad others who suffered like her but whose images have remained in the shadows. Maybe things are this way out of necessity; if we had to and could suffer the suffering of everybody, we would be unable to live. (Levi 1986: 9)

In this quote from *The Drowned and the Saved* Levi reflected on the reception of the *Diary* and expressed the risk – but also the affective necessity – of identifying the single and unique story of Anne Frank as a form of substitution of the millions who died. The analysis of Günther Anders seems to proceed in a similar direction, who reflects on the emotional but consequently political impact of the rather conventional cinematic narrative TV mini-series *The Holocaust* on the German national conscience. According to Anders, the representation of the extermination had to be ‘shrunk’ or ‘miniaturised’ to the human perceptive measure in order for the victims to regain the features of individuals. It is precisely this act of reducing the disproportion of the tragedy that allows it to find an extraordinary emotional impact which is able to reach an opaque zone of the German national conscience (Anders 2014). Likewise, the *Diary* of Anne Frank is therefore able to reach a global and diversified audience, becoming a highly canonised, and enormously successful, book across the globe through its emotionally calibrated narration of the unimaginable (Mariani 2018: 113–14).

Anne Frank writes her *Diary*: Who is Entitled to be Human?

I would like now to move the perspective of analysis and focus on exploring the very writing process behind the *Diary* in order to reveal an aspect that could be pedagogically more creative and productive. This new perspective departs from the reading of the book as the narrative of an innocent victim that has today become so pervasive and imperative. The importance of retracing the extremely complex history of the book might help to reveal the reality of Frank as a self-conscious writer, who revised her diary for publication. As Berteke Waaldijk pointed out, ‘Anne Frank’s symbolic value as an innocent victim of fascism should not prevent us from reading her diaries as a literary work. The outrage of her death is in no way diminished by taking her seriously as a writer’ (Waaldijk 1993: 328). More recently, Francine Prose explains: ‘Like most of Anne Frank’s readers, I had viewed her book as the innocent and spontaneous outpourings of a teenager. But now, reading it as an adult, I quickly became convinced that I was in the presence of a consciously crafted work of literature’ (Prose 2010: 5). As I will show in this section, this aspect may help us to rethink Anne Frank as an artist, not simply as a victim. By exploring the capacity to use her writing process as a defining moment of her agency, the figure of Anne Frank can also be interpreted as an active agent able to resist the political conditions that imposed a dehumanisation process upon her. The importance of Anne Frank’s *Diary* lies in its capacity to be an *indirect critique* of – and an *act of resistance against* – the ethical categories and the social and political conditions that established those who are entitled to be considered human subjects from those who are classified less-than-human and are therefore considered to be an *illegitimate subject*.

As a child, a girl, Jewish, Anne Frank was an illegitimate subject. In the times during which she was writing, a legitimate subject position was not available for Anne Frank. As a child, she was – and still is – considered not-yet-fully-human. Her writings have been read through the parameters of infantilisation and her diary is often dismissed as ‘a child’s diary’, diminishing its value. Still praised for its great clarity and honesty, for its uniquely tragic quality, the diary is nevertheless defined ‘by no means a war document as such [but] . . . purely and simply the diary of a young girl’ (Waaldijk 1993: 328). It is also condemned to literary irrelevance: ‘A child’s diary, even when she was so natural a writer, rarely could sustain literary criticism’ (Bloom 1999: 1). Behind these prejudices lies the assumption that traditional Western conceptions of children are based on the notion that childhood is the condition of being not-yet-fully-human, as lacking intellectual capacity from which one should emancipate.

Anne was also considered an illegitimate subject as a girl. As such, classical humanism did not recognise her with a subjectivity – being maleness beyond the supposedly universal subject invoked by humanist rhetoric (Lloyd 1984; Irigaray 1985a, 1985b, 1994; Braidotti 1991, 1994). Many comments, such as the following, speak of the process of inferiorisation that the diary suffered throughout the years: ‘Anne may have been a bright and admirably introspective girl, but there is not much in her diary that is emotionally demanding, and her reflections on the world have the quality of banality that one would expect from a 14-year-old’ (Prose 2010: 10). The widespread circulation of Anne’s diary in popular culture and in schools has also attracted the interest of feminist academic discourse in literary and cultural studies, becoming the object of analysis within the traditions of women’s writing. According to Waaldijk, many of the reflections with reference to the experience of Anne as woman were omitted from the first editions of the book as they were considered to be irrelevant, or they worried the publishing house (Waaldijk 1993). The *Diary* therefore represents an opportunity to investigate the centrality of the female experience, of the body ‘as a source of subjectivity’, of the experience of menstruation and sexuality, of the relationship of Anne with her mother (Monticelli 2012: 5).

Thirdly, as a Jew, Anne Frank was deprived of German citizenship and the rights it entailed by the anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws (1935), which also banned sexual relationships and marriage between Jews and non-Jews, legally, and divided people into categories that determined who qualified as a Jew, a German, or to have mixed descent. However, anti-Jewish policies and actions did not have their beginning in 1933. For many centuries, throughout Western history and in many countries, Jews had been victims of destructive action and the first anti-Jewish policy started in Rome in the fourth century after Christ (Hilberg 1961).

Taking into critical consideration Anne Frank’s writing requires us to understand ‘the very narrow take on the human of the humanities that legitimized exclusionary and derogatory social practices, phallogocentrism and eurocentric cultural imperialism’ (Åsberg and Braidotti 2018: 5). From this point of view, the *Diary* becomes a key text which enables us to think about new forms of humanities in which subjects do not coincide with Eurocentric humanistic Man, but are on the contrary based on complexity and diversity, and with the recognition of different power positionings.

Drawing on what some critics have defined as the two conflicting but strictly interconnected tendencies of Western culture, classical humanism and brutal inhumanity, the debate over the last decades has provided new insights into the limits of the tradition of European humanism, which is manifested also in Anne Frank’s writing: Who is entitled to be a human subject? By adopting a Foucaultian reading, which questions the figure of

the 'human' around which the classical humanities are shaped, the critical analysis of the *Diary* can bring forth the understanding of how 'modern barbarism sprang, in some intimate, perhaps necessary way, from the very core and locale of humanistic civilization' (Steiner 1967: 167).

Investigating the *Diary's* narrative progression, it is difficult to deny how the narration is clearly based on a female narrator who is becoming highly aware in her attempt at reflecting on the condition of women and of her own. As Waaldijk pointed out, 'a very interesting omission that received no attention from editors or reviewers was an entry dealing with the social position of women. Written in June 1944, it considers an issue "that has been raised more than once and that gives me no inner peace . . . why did so many nations in the past, and often still now, treat women as inferior to men?"' (*Diary*, p. 678). In this entry, Anne discusses a book on the history of childbirth and condemns men's lack of respect for the "important, arduous, and in the long run, beautiful part women play in society . . . It is stupid enough of women to have borne it all in silence for such a long time, since the more centuries this arrangement lasts, the more deeply rooted it becomes. Luckily schooling, work and progress have opened women's eyes" (*Diary*, p. 678)' (Waaldijk 1993: 330).

Furthermore, to Anne Frank the very act of writing a diary constitutes an intellectual and affective journey of self-exploration. Throughout the years of hiding, the diary shows how the reappraisal of language is in itself a constitutive way of remaining/becoming human in an extreme situation of dehumanisation. The diary in fact illuminates the extent to which the agency of language is for Anne bound up to the agency of becoming a subject. The *Diary* is a text which comprises ethical and aesthetic issues since Anne Frank felt the question of the condition of language for becoming and remaining human. Although writing a diary is a practice influenced by culture and even by technology, the diary represents one of modernity's most important sites of freedom, a place where individuals can be alone to amuse themselves, to develop their creativity, but also to ponder the deepest questions of human existence (Lejeune 2009).

The diary is also a literary space that enables the writing subject to come to terms with subject position, with her family ties, but also with the historical, political and dramatic events of her time, as a young woman. It is precisely the narration of the lived experience, the 'autobiographical practice' to be found in the diaristic form, that becomes a way to build a path of awareness of the individual and the collective, that enables Anne to shape her authorial voice and to begin to become subject to herself.

From this point of view, the *Diary* is a key text that can enable us to think about the *new illegitimate subjects* of the present and to consider the new social and political conditions that deprive subjects of the rights to be considered fully humans. From this point of view, it is interesting to ask to what extent the process of digital transmedia adaptations of the *Diary* is leading to a critical reading of new forms of apartheid, segregation and marginalisation that under various guises are replacing the old ones, and are paving the way to create new *illegitimate subjects*? To what extent are the digital adaptations of the *Diary* able to critically consider the perspective of Anne Frank as a young woman, with her body and sexuality?

Another crucial aspect that has been shaping the global reception of the text and is also to be connected to the status of the author as young girl is to be found in the affective belonging that the *Diary* has been able to mobilise within its readership. The story of the writing process of the diary is telling about the cultural reception of the book and how Anne Frank was an author aware of the ethical and aesthetic obligation of her writing,

despite the historical circumstances in which she wrote it. Since her thirteenth birthday on 12 June 1942, Frank started writing her life and later documenting her hidden existence with her family in Amsterdam. This text represents version A of the diary. When she heard an appeal on the radio *Orange* on 28 March 1944 from Dutch minister Gerrit Bolkestein, in exile in London, to hold on to war diaries and personal documents, Anne became aware of the possibility that her writing might find readers in the future and was inspired to rewrite her individual diaries into one running story, titled *Het Achterhuis* (*The Secret Annex*) – known today as version B. She started working on this project on 20 May 1944 and was able to rewrite a large part of her diary, omitting some texts and adding many new ones, envisioning it as a work for publication. She transformed her original entries into a memoir in the form of an epistolary novel. The book is thus not, strictly speaking, what we think of as a diary – a journal in which events are recorded as they occur, day by day – but it is rather a memoir in the form of diary entries. The *Diary* is in fact a ‘conscious diary’ that was scrupulously revised by its author, who intended it to be read. However, her reworked diary remained incomplete because Anne was arrested along with the rest of the group in their hiding place by the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*) on 4 August 1944, and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and later to Bergen-Belsen, where she died of exhaustion in February 1945.

The extreme complexity of her writing process shows that the *Diary* of Anne Frank is what Philippe Lejeune defined as a ‘text that is part work of art and part document’ (Lejeune 2009: 237). And it also shows that her conscious literary sensibility transformed the first manuscript into a narrative in order to bear witness aimed directly at the future, enabling the diary to preserve an orientation towards potential readers (Cavaglion 2019). While the very act of writing a diary is a gesture of self-understanding, the process of self-re-vision she undertook from March 1944 until the day she was arrested at the beginning of August 1944 can be read as a gesture deliberately meant to bear witness to the posterity to make the world aware of the annihilation she was suffering. Anne Frank became a writer for bearing witness for the posterity.

The emotional reception of the *Diary* is therefore based on a twofold affective belonging. On the one hand, the *Diary* – written by an author who is projecting herself into the future – has been able to open up a form of affective temporality in which the writing subject does not entirely coincide with her own time – she is not firmly located or situated within the present moment. The reception of the text has thus taken the shape of a cultural atonement that has contributed to spread Anne Frank’s diary in an impressive variety of cultural forms. On the other hand, the reception of the *Diary* written by an author who is a child has been deeply affected by her young age, and by her capacity to aspire to the future, and by being a child who held potential for the future. Her aspirations for the future – which have remained unfulfilled – and the ‘unlived years that have been robbed from her life’ have contributed to create a form of moral and affective obligation with readers, who have been morally and emotionally bonded to her writing. The temporal perspective which is involved in the concept of childhood as an idealised trope in which is embedded our sense of posterity that is forward-focused to a fully humanised adulthood, and, more importantly, which is perceived affectively, is essential for understanding the cultural response to Anne Frank’s *Diary*.

Transmedia Adaptations of the *Diary* of Anne Frank

The list of works that have been inspired by Anne Frank's text is impressive: several movies and documentaries; a dramatisation given hundreds of productions annually; a number of musical compositions; works of fine art, biography, fiction, poetry and dance; as well as radio and television broadcasts, and thousands of YouTube videos and websites. Digital and social media have undoubtedly offered new and creative opportunities for mediating the text by reworking and combining the *Diary* with images, and sound or video recordings. A Facebook page was created for her in 2008, then an Instagram account; finally in 2020 a web series in fifteen episodes in the form of a video diary was launched online on YouTube with the title *Anne Frank Video Diary*, whose copyright is owned by the Anne Frank Stichting and Every Media, and develops from the question 'What if Anne Frank had a camera instead of a diary?'

The Anne Frank House Museum, visited by more than a million people each year, now has a large online virtual tour section, which is entitled the *Secret Annex Online*, and it also offers educational products and programmes for young people across the world; among them are digital lessons to learn more about the story of Anne Frank. Finally, there are numerous tributes in the form of commemorative coins, stamps, memorial sites and organisations around the world, and eponymous streets, schools and institutions. In 2009 the *Diaries* (which includes the first diary, along with the second and third versions of it and the several hundred loose sheets on which Anne Frank rewrote the diary from May 1944, as well as her 'Tales Book' and 'Favourite Quotes Notebook') were added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, which is the World Heritage List for documents.

This great variety of appropriations and mediations has led some critics to talk about 'Anne Frank as a phenomenon' to indicate the extensive, complex and diverse widespread interest in her life and work that contributed to give her an iconic status (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler 2012: 1). This complex and widespread phenomenon, which spans the manuscript to printed book to stage adaptation and film dramatisation to digital social media, is filtered both through collective memory, history and popular culture, and it is in large measure the product of old and new media through which the audience has engaged with Anne Frank and her life. The complex destiny of the book and its author within the collective imaginary can be better traced and understood through the notion of *transmedia storytelling* or *narrative ecosystem* (Benvenuti 2018). The *Diary* has become a transmedia narration, expanded over diverse and heterogeneous media, in which the author herself has become part of the narrative ecosystem. Transmediality and mediation are in fact key to understanding the fortune of Anne Frank's diary. Mediation is not simply the reproduction or transfer of the *Diary* into another medium. Instead, mediation produces something related to the source but also different – a new work (or practice or experience), and it creates new relationships: with the creator of this new work, with its new (and old) audience, with its national tradition, and with other transnational works. All these dynamics contributed to articulate complex patterns of mediation between the reception of the *Diary* as a local, national and transnational phenomenon. Not only in parallel, but often intersecting these developments, the central importance of technological mediation – and electronic media in particular in the era of globalisation – has facilitated the encounter, dialogue and clash between national and transnational mediation, which spanned territorial and linguistic borders and mediated moral affairs (Thompson 1995; Tester 1999). Within this culture of the open sharing of information and creative work, the circulation and transmission of her work has also brought about its own ethics.

The impressive fortune of the *Diary* has in fact generated controversy over the years. The best-known stage adaptation of the book, which was premiered on Broadway with the title *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1955 and received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, with its story structure as a coming-of-age narrative, the representativity of her generation and the rekindling of hope in humanity, pervaded mainstream discourse about the *Diary* in the 1950s and beyond and was criticised for minimising the Jewish content in order to achieve a greater universality and hence consolation and commercial success (Zapruder 2002: 5). Since the first US movie adaptation in 1959 more than twenty productions – which include films, television films, films in animated form, Anime adaptations – have contributed to shape the figure of Anne Frank as a ubiquitous emblem of hope and a persecuted victim with the utterance: ‘In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.’ As Hannah Arendt’s 1962 remark outlined, the adoration of Anne Frank took the form of a cultural mode of dubious consolation: a ‘cheap sentimentality at the expense of great catastrophe’ (Arendt 1962). Others, lamenting the uses, misuses and distortions of Anne Frank’s story, regard the appropriation of the text and the popularity and success of the adaptations by the old and new media culture as an attempt to infantilise it or/and universalise its message. In 1997 Cynthia Ozick famously argued that Anne Frank’s diary has been ‘infantilized, Americanized, sentimentalized, falsified, kitschified’ (Ozick 1997: 76).

At the heart of these critical responses to the *Diary*’s adaptations seems to lie the wider debate of the politics of the representation of the Shoah. In fact, *The Diary* seems trapped in the debate about the ‘ethics of the form’ which has come to govern the conversation about representations of the Holocaust organised between, on the one hand, the imperative of representation, the ‘never forget’, and, on the other hand, the impossibility of representing the Shoah, because what happened is unimaginable. Part of the imperative to represent are, for example, the monumental multimedia archives and experimental documentary projects (such as the USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education) which in the last decades have made historical memory digitally available. These narratives, rather than simply emphasising historical knowledge, have also been able to establish readers’ affective connection with the contents. This affective response has also been made possible by an ‘unprecedented degree of intimacy with technological devices’, which is in fact shaping our emotional landscape (Braidotti 2019: 2). Digital technology is part of the trend that is spreading historical knowledge about Anne Frank, stimulating a more complex model of empathy and transmission of pathos that is fostering a sense of intimacy with her story, shaping our emotional landscape. This is the case with the documentary *#Anne Frank: Parallel Stories*. This is a media production which combines different languages and genres as it retells the story of Anne Frank through her diary as read by the British actress Helen Mirren in a room that looks like Anne Frank’s, alongside the accounts of five other women who, as young girls, were also deported to concentration camps but survived. Finally, these parallel stories are connected to the present day by the story of Katerine, a girl who uses her mobile phone to retrace the steps of this terrible story of death and writes a diary of hashtags and text messages. The use of the hashtag in the title of the documentary may refer to the wide use of microblogging and photo-sharing on Twitter and Instagram by younger generations, and the story of Katerine can be interpreted to suggest new contemporary forms of personal writings that remind us of the centrality of the diary written by Anne. Nevertheless, despite the use of the hashtags, the documentary does not provide any form of interaction within the narrative structure and there is no form of tagging that enables the cross-referencing of content sharing the subject or theme.

Another interesting example of transmedia adaptation is the digital section of the Anne Frank Museum, which is part of the 'web and digital section' of the museum's website: <https://www.annefrank.org/en/museum/web-and-digital/>. The 'web and digital section' includes, among others, 'The Secret Annex Online' that allows visitors to explore Anne Frank's house. The section constitutes a tri-dimensional reconstruction of the hiding place at Prinsengracht 263 in Amsterdam, which consisted of a main house and an annex. The spatial dimension of Anne Frank's story, the 'Secret Annex' has in fact become a key element to be explored and reimagined physically, digitally and symbolically, and it contributes to transform the diary from flat text into a fully immersive experience, such as in this case, which on the website hosts 'The Frank family home in 360 degrees'. To what extent this digital transmedia adaptation is able to stimulate a more complex model of empathy and transmission of pathos comprising historical knowledge and the importance of testimony is in fact worth exploring.

The website's sections are organised to facilitate those viewers who want to explore the house and look around to discover the secret annex: the place where Anne Frank lived in hiding for more than two years during the Second World War, and where she wrote her diary. This section comprises different kinds of media and forms of expressions which include:

- the iconographic section of the three-dimensional model of the full house, to orient oneself throughout the navigation, which is divided between 'Front section' and the 'Secret Annex';
- the historical reconstruction of each room of the 'Front section' and a tri-dimensional historical reconstruction of the 'Secret Annex' as they would have looked at the time in which the Frank family lived there;
- each room of the 'Front section', presented also with written explanations, sometimes complemented by archival photographs;
- as far as the 'Secret Annex' rooms, they are reproduced in more complex ways: their tri-dimensional representation allows the viewer to fully explore the rooms in 360 degrees and by clicking on the objects it is possible to open further pages, either a new page for a deeper historical explanation or short videos that explore Anne's *Diary*. The platform consists of a spatial environment and a storytelling environment which are seamlessly integrated with each other. This allows viewers to create links between different types of content.

The digital section of the museum's website thus represents an interesting example of digital storytelling able to enhance the visitor's historical knowledge, his or her experience and assess its impact. The museum has to be able to combine historical sources from archives with the Frank family history, and the diary narration, among the various forms of narratives, in order to create a digital storytelling of Anne Frank's account by starting from the spatial dimension. In this way, this section is able very convincingly to reach a wide range of different audiences.

However, the role of the *Diary* is decentralised in relation to the overall virtual visit, for it is inserted only within short video clips whose narrative is controlled by an unidentified male voice, who masters the point of view of the narration by explaining, introducing and thus orientating the viewers to the contents of Anne Frank's story. By choosing to use a male voice, which gives very little space to the female voice that only reads short quotes from the *Diary*, this digital storytelling is not able to recognise one of the most empow-

ering and unique features of the text, which is Anne's struggle as a young woman to gain control of the word so that her voice can be heard. In fact, Anne's voice appears to be relegated to very short passages that are able to touch the emotions of the viewers (the female voice which personifies Anne is in fact played by a young girl with a girlish tone), while the control of the information is mastered by a mature male-voiced narrator.

The third example of digital adaptation is the web series entitled *Anne Frank Video Diary*, which is a production element of the web and digital section of the 'The Anne Frank House' that was launched in 2020 as a web series with the intention of searching for 'a new way to introduce young people around the world to Anne Frank's life story [. . .] The whole *Anne Frank Video Diary* series target audience is constituted by young people of Anne Frank's age, from 11 to 17', and the series has had more than 2.2 million views on YouTube. The fifteen episodes of the video, which are free and available in nine different languages, are accompanied by seven educational videos that emphasise the fact that the video diary is based on a true story (*Anne Frank Video Diary*). The seven educational videos deal with socially relevant themes and identify key words such as freedom, discrimination, scapegoat, making choices, who are you?, in order to solicit the young audience regarding the significance of the story in our contemporary world. The educational episodes explain and elaborate on what can be seen in the video diaries and are meant for teachers to use in the classroom and combine with the educational videos and other lesson materials. The attempt is to project the historical meaning of Anne Frank's story for contemporary times.

It is interesting to note that the aim of the production was, in the words of the Anne Frank Museum's director Ronald Leopold, to 'reach out to the story as the [new generations] understand it. We really need to think about new ways to tell this story and against the backdrop of an exploding media landscape.' Around this perspective might be based the decision to keep 'all characters, locations, and events in the series [are] based on Anne Frank's diary letters', while the protagonist, instead of writing her diary, is sharing her life, her thoughts and her feelings with a video camera. Anne Frank is filming herself. And the protagonist, instead of planning to become a writer, as she wrote in her real diary, wants to become a movie director. This change does not only affect the structure of the narration, but it also deeply redefines the authoriality of the *Diary*, reshaping the complexity of the writing process as outlined in the previous section.

This is an example in which transmedia digital narratives are structured by ambivalence and contradictions when they openly undermine the boundaries between fact and fiction, an ambivalence which resonates with the wider debate on the possibility of representing the Shoah. This example suggests provocative and contradictory areas of analysis regarding the possibility to reinforce – or trivialise – the ethical obligation towards the past by bringing to the fore two issues. On the one hand, as already noted, some critics might regard the appropriation of the text by the new media culture as an attempt to infantilise it, with a considerable threat to dignified remembrance: 'all these appropriations, whether cheaply personal or densely ideological, whether seen as exalting or denigrating, have contributed to the conversion of Anne Frank into usable good' (Ozick 1997: 87). On the other hand, according to Elie Wiesel, whose tragic story and moral authority contributed to shape how the Shoah has been memorialised, the compenetration between fact and fiction in representing the Shoah carries implications that are troubling (Wiesel 1978; Wiesel 1989). Lamenting how the ontological nature of Holocaust evil made it impossible to dramatise it, his argument has been followed by many who assert how any 'attempts to portray, represent, explain or narrate the Holocaust in other ways, particularly through

fictionalised accounts (novels, poetry, plays, films), are seen as distortions of Holocaust reality, trivialising and fundamentally negative in their effects, however well-intentioned the aims of the authors' (Lerman 1989: 24).

The diverse range of reactions to the different forms of mediation that are taking shape through the digital narratives of the *Diary* solicit the question of whether or not they are able to assert the general imperative 'we must not forget' and more importantly, *how* they are contributing to remember and imagine the testimony of Anne Frank. Are the digital images, videos, sounds and music which compose the immersive digital experience of Anne Frank's diary able to interpellate a critical perspective on the condition of what is human, and to acknowledge the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the text? Or are they, on the contrary, domesticating her testimony and transforming Anne Frank into a cultural icon and a universalised symbol of suffering and hope?

More broadly, the circulation at a global level of the *Diary* beyond its origins, and its reception more as a visual cultural product, rather than a written text, provoke new questions. How is this very process running the risk of trivialising, homogenising and commodifying such a complex story and text? How is this process developed in the contemporary market economy reinforcing/negotiating/subverting gender and race issues that are present in the text? How can digital media reinforce persistent inequalities by limiting participation due to the digital divide? The question raised by Elie Wiesel begs another: How much at the end of the twentieth century is the Holocaust being consumed? (Cole 1999) Namely, to what extent do new forms of mass culture based on digital imaginaries exploit the traumatic experiences of the Shoah in order to grab the attention of a global audience?

Conclusions

The numerous adaptations of the *Diary* of Anne Frank over the decades have showed the implications of using this text for promoting and transmitting the European memory as global heritage within our contemporary world. In fact, the *Diary* represents an exemplary writing from the Holocaust and it has become one of the most important historical documents of the Shoah. (1) From this perspective, the *Diary* constitutes a key example that can help to educate in cognitive but also creative and affective ways about the past and to transmit it to young people to help them to be responsible global citizens. By understanding the *Diary* as a key text which has informed the politics of testimony of the Shoah and has contributed to reshaping the European cultural memory at a global level, the use of the *Diary* within school curricula, museums and educational platforms has proved to be of crucial importance for its pedagogical adaptations. This unique text, which is at the same time a historical document and a work of art, is indispensable for a systemic and in-depth look at the present: it can teach how to connect to events from the past, and it can help to train the mind to consider the multiple causes of a problem that we are facing in the present. Furthermore, the capacity to 'personalise the trauma' and to portray the events in terms of small groups, families and friends, parents and children, brothers and sisters has enabled the text to talk to a high-, middle-, and low-brow audience on multiple levels: cognitive, experience-based and affective. These multiple levels can open up innovative perspectives to education: the book fosters education for global citizenship, for learning to live together and for inclusive lifelong learning for all.

The importance of the *Diary* lies not only in its capacity to witness the tragedy of the Jewish persecution and the mass genocide during the Second World War, but also in its capacity to address the readership on fundamental ethical principles: Who is entitled to

be human? The Shoah here in fact is also understood as the event that represents a 'touchstone in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good' and as the civilisation break of modernity which interrogates the European cultural legacy of Enlightenment and classical humanism. For its potential to go beyond the limits of first-hand chronicle, for its ability to embrace wider reflections on the human spirit and experiences, and for being written by a young girl who grew up in a dehumanising context, the *Diary* and its adaptations constitute a critical and ethical critique of the social and political conditions that (still) classify who are the legitimate subjects entitled to be human. By considering that Anne Frank was classified as less-than-human – as a child, a girl, Jewish – the reading of the *Diary* as an indirect critique of – and an act of resistance against – that can enable us to rethink the significance of what counts as human in our contemporary context. Therefore, (2) its digital adaptations are a powerful tool to address new forms of segregation, marginalisation and apartheid that can help younger generations to reach gender equity and inclusion in a more just and equal society. This is especially important at a time when all societies at a global level are facing new forms of inequality, discrimination, exclusion, violence and conflicts. Women, adolescents, youth and children, persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, refugees, migrants and minorities experience the highest degree of socio-economic and political marginalization.

In the light of the wider debate of the politics of the (un)representability of the Shoah divided between the imperative of representation and the discourse of the unimaginable, (3) the digital and transmedia adaptations of Anne Frank's writing also prove the means for reconsidering the ethical dimensions of the information society. Despite the fact that the digital revolution has brought enormous opportunities and has created unprecedented and almost unlimited possibilities of access to information, the critical responses to the digital adaptations of the *Diary* seem more broadly to remember how it is not possible to reduce the role of the media as an indispensable tool to rethink social responsibility and the ethical implications of new digital forms in representing the book's contents.

Finally, (4) the global circulation of the text, beyond its historical time frame and its national origins, indicates how literature and children's literature can enable new affective and symbolic belonging, emotions and forms of intimacy with a young audience. Digital technologies are part of the trend that is spreading historical knowledge about Anne Frank, which is also stimulating a more complex model of empathy and transmission of pathos that is fostering a sense of intimacy with her story that is shaping our emotional landscape.

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