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Adult Influences in the Construction of Youth War Diaries

Amanda Slater

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, it has been estimated that “2 million children have been killed in situations of armed conflict, while 6 million children have been disabled or injured” (Filipović and Challenger v). Despite the high number of children who have been exposed to death and destruction in recent years, the horrors of war are typically kept silent from Western society’s youth. It is thought that their “innocence” could be shattered through simple exposure to reality. In 2013, Pippa Seichrist, president and founder of the Miami Ad School – an accredited advertising institution in Hamburg, Germany – stated the following in an interview conducted by the U.S. National Public Radio: “Anything bad that happens is worse if it happens to a child because they’re fragile and they don’t have control over anything. They’re at the world’s mercy. So we have this feeling to protect them and to want to make something better” (qtd. in Shapiro).

Exploiting this prevailing Romantic perception of childhood “innocence,” politicians have been known to use children as a persuasive tool, most recently in the controversies surrounding gay marriage, immigration, and gun control (Shapiro). Government officials and advocates understand that the general public pays attention to youth figures in the news – not because the young are more knowledgeable on the subject, but rather because these childlike individuals, according to adult assumption, fail to grasp the situation at hand. Stated otherwise, adults merely use the image of the “child” to emphasize or gain support for their own views on the subject. By granting these children only a moment’s notice with little chance to communicate freely, we are, ultimately, showing the world that their “purity” is unharmed and that the adults in their life know best. As Perry Nodelman suggests, “Of course, we may claim to believe that the inability of children to speak for themselves is not an inferiority at all, but a wonderfully ideal state of innocence” (29). When children are “unable to communicate” – a characteristic weakness in the adult population – it is deemed appropriate, for we as a society do not want to admit that a portion of the younger generation understands and has already experienced hardship greater than our own. We want their situation to appear better than ours; we want to be viewed as the experts.

This method of using the “child” to amplify adult knowledge and experience also extends to the genre of diary writing, where journalists commonly seek out children in war-torn areas of the world to tell their side of the story. This is difficult to accomplish, however, as many of these “children” could be considered “adolescents” or “young adults.” Additionally, rather than allow the youth figure to speak for him or herself, adults leave their mark, selecting individuals who are not representative of the whole (older, female, from middle to upper-class families, educated, etc.) and editing the work in a way that becomes “attractive” to the reading audience. As a result, the public fails to hear from those youths who do not find themselves in the above categories – ultimately removing the experiences of younger, male, lower-class, uneducated individuals from the pool of chosen stories. Once again, we are protecting the “innocence” of childhood –

allowing a glimpse of the hurt and heartbreak to be seen but avoiding those instances where youths' purity has, in fact, been entirely shattered by the effects of war.

In her article, "Youth Voices in the War Diary Business," Susan Honeyman argues that interviews with children and youth – although influenced by the adult population – "resist being reducible simply to war propaganda or protectionist sentimentality" (74). This is especially true for award-winning author and peace activist Deborah Ellis, whose recent nonfiction – *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees* (2009), *Off to War: Voices of Soldier's Children* (2008), and *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children* (2004) – tend to lack "imposing adult interpretation" (Honeyman 82). While this may be accurate within the work of Ellis as well as the realm of private journaling, most, if not all, published children's/youth diaries are significantly tainted by adult propaganda and protectionist influences – from their initiation clear through the editing process. The following essay will consider this influence, whether intentional or otherwise, beginning with society's questionable definition of a "child." Then, by examining a collection of recently-published war diaries, it will be determined how these influences ultimately remove a side of the war story in the attempt to protect ourselves from facing the true horrors of worldly conflict.

"CHILD" OR "YOUNG ADULT"?

Childhood, according to Karen Sanchez-Eppler, is widely recognized as "a life stage that stretches from birth until the taking on of adult competence and responsibility" (36). The completion of this phase is difficult to pinpoint, however, as situations differ from one individual to another and within socioeconomic cultures. Where one child may have two parents to offer guidance and protection throughout their primary years, another may have to fend for him or herself emotionally, economically, and socially from an early age – forcing adulthood to arrive at a faster rate. In Elizabeth Peters and Claire Kamp's book entitled *Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities*, it is explained that societies outside Northwestern Europe marry their children young, often arranged as part of a contract (1943). Although this is commonly unacceptable in the United States, other cultures view women in their early to mid-teens as mature enough to start families of their own. As a result, a differing opinion of "child" is certain to exist. Diarist Hadiya validates this by writing at age seventeen: "I was so surprised this year when I heard that two girls from my class got married and another two got engaged...am I the only one who still has a pink room with bears on the bed and Barbie toys in her drawer?...I am not a little girl anymore and I am not a woman. I am in between" (Hadiya *IraqiGirl* 126). Historically, the idea of "child" has varied quite a lot, too – and is class-dependent. During the era of slave-trading, for instance, "most children suffered experiences similar if not equal to the adults traveling alongside them" (Vasconcellos). Because these youth were low-class, of a different race, and able-bodied, they were forced early in their lives to undertake tasks unknown to children of white, middle- to upper-class families.

There is also the argument that childhood is merely a social construct developed to validate characteristics of adulthood. The majority of grown persons, for instance, like to perceive themselves as well-mannered, knowledgeable, and capable of managing their everyday

lives independently. Children, consequently, are alleged to encompass opposing traits: immaturity, ignorance of their surroundings, and dependency on others. In a similar fashion, children are commonly thought to suffer from “short attention spans” by their parents who wish to appear calm and composed in social interactions. As stated by Nodelman, “The major effect of these ‘eternal truths’ is, obviously, to confirm our own eternal difference from the other” (31). By giving contrasting characteristics to the younger generation, we are, ultimately, saving ourselves from having to admit our weaknesses. If, for example, a mother has become financially unstable due to the purchase of unnecessary items and/or experiences (concert tickets, nails, a new handbag, etc.), she has an immediate escape route. Her children depend on her to provide them with clothes, food, and an education – no wonder she is broke!

These situational differences must be acknowledged when contemplating the age of published diary writers from periods of armed conflict. Previous explanations would suggest that youth who encounter the effects of war are removed from childhood – having to face reality at a much earlier age than usual. Additionally, well-known diarists are commonly between the ages of 15- and 20-years-old, hardly children but youths, teenagers, or young adults; this holds true for both Western and Non-Western cultures. Yet, of all published works that result, the majority is typically categorized within the genre of “Children War Diaries” rather than “Young Adult” or “Adult War Diaries.” In *Stolen Voices*, a culmination of journals from World War I to the Iraqi War, chosen writers range from 11-year-old Zlata Filipović to 21-year-old William Wilson (viii-ix). One could easily argue that the latter is hardly a child, or adolescent for that matter, but rather a full-grown adult risking his life on the battlefields of New Zealand. Why, then, do we insist on calling them children? Could it be the fact that situations of pain and suffering typically seem worse if they happen to a three- or four-year-old opposed to a 16- or 17-year-old? When we place the title of “child” rather than “youth” on the cover, we are merely highlighting this drama – drawing potential readership and creating dialogue. Without even turning to the first page, we are drawn in emotionally to the author’s sorrowful experience and feel the need to learn more.

DIARY ORIGINS

American author Marilyn French writes, “There is power-to, which refers to ability, capacity, and connotes a kind of freedom, and there is power-over, which refers to domination” (qtd. In Trites 6). There are, without a doubt, youths who have the “power-to” think critically for themselves and delve wholeheartedly into diary writing without being subjected to adult bias and intervention along the way. They have the freedom to explore the world around them, develop their own beliefs and opinions, and express themselves emotionally through the written word – all on their own accord. Take, for instance, the case of 19-year-old Ed Blanco who served in the United States military during the Vietnam War. His reasoning for keeping a journal was self-imposed, as evident by the following entry: “Whether it’s my fault or not, this journal hasn’t been what I wanted. But it’s written mainly for me and as little as one sentence might rekindle a memory, filling my mind with things” (Filipović and Challenger 191).

That stated, youth diaries that typically become published *do* have a “power-over” feel to them – whether political in nature or not. Upon examination of popular youth diarists, I discovered four factors indicating adult influence. These included the diarist’s family situation, their educational background, exposure to media/propaganda, and journalist intervention. Most, if not all, of the diarists analyzed were females raised in middle- to upper-class households who, from an early age, had been receiving an education of high quality. With the ability to comprehend their surroundings and write remarkably well for their age group, these individuals were eventually sought by journalists who wished to work with individuals of academic caliber. Philippe Lejeune questioned similar findings in his essay, “The Practice of the Private Journal: Chronicle of an Investigation,” by asking the following: “The great mass of private journals are written with no intention of publication; if one doesn’t investigate this great mass of unpublished journals, how can one be sure that the published elements are representative of the whole?” (30). For instance, under-privileged children who are unrecognized by the reading community may have something entirely different to say about the situation than those who are slightly better-off financially. Yet, we will never hear their side of the war experience if publishers repeatedly choose the stereotypical diarist and if adults continue to shape the narrative.

Factor One: Family Situation

When war strikes, the results are devastating: destroyed buildings, loss of employment and financial stability, the death of loved ones, and nowhere to turn for assistance. Most families struggle to scrounge up enough money for food and critical living expenses – making it difficult to focus on anything other than survival. Typically, only youth from middle- and upper-class families are capable of putting together written records during such dire times. Comfortably well-off, their parents are able to afford the essential materials for diary keeping, specifically writing utensils and paper, as well as provide an education for their children. It is common among published war diaries to discover that the youth author comes from a family that meets or exceeds this economic criterion; typically, their parents hold well-educated positions in society working as doctors, chemists, scholars, or the like.

The most recognizable of cases is that of Anne Frank whose diary continues to be taught in classrooms, especially throughout the United States, as part of both World History and Language Arts curricula. Born into a Jewish family during Hitler’s years of leadership, she spent the latter part of her teenage years in hiding. This was characteristically unheard of, as most families could not afford to hide; doing so not only required strong ties to willing Germans but also large sums of money. The Franks were well off financially due to Otto’s small but successful business, *Opekta Works*, which was located within Amsterdam; it was here in the upper portions of the building that the Franks, along with the van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer, concealed themselves for a little over two years. Non-Jewish employees of the business, including Miep Gies, Jo Kleiman, and Victor Kugler aided in the family’s survival by providing food, medicine, clothing, and other essential items. The children’s education was also supported by the helpers who would bring textbooks and materials for writing if the opportunity arose. Frank is aware of these privileges when she states, “I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed, while

my dearest friends have been knocked down or have fallen into a gutter somewhere out in the cold night. I get frightened when I think of close friends who have now been delivered into the hands of the cruelest brutes that walk the earth. And all because they are Jews!” (54).

Also displaying family benefits is Nadja Halilbegovich, a young girl who documented Bosnian War efforts in Sarajevo between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Evidence within her published work, *My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary*, portrays the family as an upper-class household, able to sustain themselves even during the most financially devastating of times. Her mother, a business manager at the National Bank, and her father, an employee for a large book company, provided their children with a comfortable and fulfilling life. While weekdays were spent in an apartment in Sarajevo, weekends were reserved for relaxing at their cottage in the countryside or touring throughout Bosnia, France, and Italy to witness Halilbegovich’s performances as a member of Palcici, Sarajevo’s internationally-known children’s choir. This group, of which Halilbegovich had been a part of since the age of nine, often taped their songs for use on the radio as well as produced videos to be shown on television. Stated simply, Halilbegovich was a child of privilege.

Factor Two: Educational Background

However occupied by her career as an entertainer, Halilbegovich never lost sight of the importance of education, reading poetry and writing in her journal whenever the opportunity arose. In fact, the young girl gathered the children from her family’s apartment building to start a newspaper titled *Kids of Sarajevo* to be distributed among the adults (Halilbegovich 42). Because students were unable to meet in person during these years of war, teachers were known to broadcast lessons over the radio. Each Friday was set aside for a weekly radio quiz that required children to call in answers with the hope of winning prizes (Halilbegovich 41). Unlike the majority of families living in Sarajevo at this time, the Halilbegovichs were wealthy enough to afford both a radio and telephone for such purposes, granting the young girl an advantage over individuals her age. In fact, only 55.8 percent of households in 2008 – almost 15 years following the production of Halilbegovich’s diary – reported ownership of a radio (*Country Report – Mapping Digital Media* 16).

As this example suggests, the writing ability of war diarists can be credited to the intermingling of family wealth and an individual’s educational background. Even today, those who are more affluent, or who are in affluent countries, tend to receive “better” academic counsel. In fact, the lack of wide-spread, public education may be the reason so few diaries existed prior to the eighteenth century. Elaine McKay states that by the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558, it was estimated that “literacy rates ran at 20% male and 5% female” (193). Only those from elite social classes were given the opportunity to master the art of reading and writing. This differs greatly from Western society’s education system today, where all students – no matter social standing, gender, or ethnicity – are asked to write essays and analyze their surroundings on a daily basis. Because this was not encouraged back then, men and especially women were not as compelled to keep a diary.

Often times, it is parents who push their children in this direction, as witnessed by the story of Piete Kuhr, a citizen of Germany during the Second World War. At the age of twelve, she was encouraged by her mother to start writing a diary that documented the events she was certain to experience in the months and years ahead. At one point, Kuhr writes down a conversation that has taken place between her and her mother regarding said diary:

Thank you, dear Piete, for the first pages of your diary! How busy you have been! It is already almost a book! But you ought to see the war in a more heroic light – not so much of the ‘down’ side. It clouds the view of the greatness of an event. Don’t let yourself be overwhelmed with sloppy sentimentality. Our enemies want to rob us of our country and our honor. Our men are defending both. And Siegfried Dahlke died the death of a hero! Never forget that! (Filipović and Challenger 21)

In her mother’s eyes, the diary served not only as written testimony of the war but also as a strategy to develop patriotic nationalism within the young girl, concepts highly encouraged within school systems at the time. The very fact that she read her daughter’s private thoughts and then turned around and offered suggestions on how to think differently about the situation is indicative of this purpose. If the diary was to eventually become published – which might have been her mother’s ultimate goal – it would have to be written in a manner that caught the attention of readers as well as supported her mother’s views regarding the ongoing war. That way, if affirmative national attention was given to the young author, it would reflect positively on her mother’s parenting abilities and actions as a citizen of the country. Recognizing her mother’s attempts, however, Kuhr lashed out in the following manner: “I just can’t write otherwise. No, I can’t; do you hear, Mommy? And I won’t! Life with us here is like that, and if I am to describe it differently, then I’ve got to tell lies! I would definitely rather not write any more at all” (Filipović and Challenger 26). Kuhr most likely never wished to keep a diary, let alone receive criticisms from her mother. Yet she continued writing under her mother’s jurisdiction, and her diary was eventually published under the title *There We’ll Meet Again* in 1998 with the assistance of English translator Walter Wright (“A History of the First World War”).

It can also be acknowledged that these youths are commonly influenced by other child writers they have learned about in their studies as well as the teachers who incorporate these specific texts within classroom curriculum. For instance, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* has regularly made an appearance in classrooms across the world, taught in conjunction with lessons on Hitler and the Nazi regime, Holocaust victimization, and propaganda strategies. After spending multiple weeks learning about Frank and the diary she left behind, a few students are certain to contemplate keeping a diary of their own. In her introduction to *Stolen Voices*, for example, Zlata Filipović states that this was just the case in her own childhood:

A year or two before the start of ‘my’ war, I read the diary of Anne Frank. It horrified me that such suffering and injustice could happen to someone whose words had encouraged me to know and like her, and whose private writings

provided the material for my own self-identification. Anne Frank's diary, as well as that of the fictional Adrian Mole (Sue Townsend's hilarious invention), inspired me to start writing my own diary. I thought that it would be my personal treasure, something to turn back to in the years to come and laugh at my innocence and the happy daily events of my childhood and adolescence. Unfortunately, brutally, and suddenly, war entered my life, and my diary became a war diary, a record of terrible events happening to my family, my neighbors, my city, and my country. (Filipović and Challenger xi)

Her war diary, titled *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Wartime Sarajevo*, remains one of the most well-known youth-written documents to this day. After an inspirational history lesson regarding a girl in hiding, she took to her own writing, and during the summer of 1993, her school teacher had her diaries – eventually combined into one – published by a small press in Sarajevo with the help of the International Centre for Peace (Di Giovanni xxiv). Following widespread release of the text, Filipović was, and continues to be, referred to as the “Anne Frank of Sarajevo” due to the resemblances in their writing style and perception of wartime events. Early on in the writing process, for instance, she decided to follow in Frank's footsteps by giving a name to her diary. On March 30, 1992, she wrote: “Hey, Diary! You know what I think? Since Anne Frank called her diary Kitty, maybe I could give you a name too...I've decided! I'm going to call you MIMMY” (27). From then on, “Mimmy” – similar in structure to “Kitty” – became Filipović's confidant with whom she trusted her deepest secrets.

Factor Three: Exposure to Media and Propaganda

Western society's youths, especially in our day and age, are continuously bombarded with biased information regarding world events. Television shows (specifically talk shows), newspapers, books, online blogs, and radio programs feed political updates, whether accurate or otherwise, to those individuals who are willing to listen. This method of unavoidable propaganda gained popularity within the elementary education system where schoolbooks, according to Eric J. Johnson, were thought to be “ideal vehicles for the transfer of political and martial doctrines from propagandists' pens to children's impressionable minds” (qtd. In Goodenough and Immel 65). During the Second World War, especially, hundreds of books were created with the intention of making U.S. involvement appear positive and an attractive investment. If children later agreed to become “active combatants willing to do whatever it might take to support their state and its social, political, and military aims,” the goal of creating citizens who accept rather than reject government opinion was achieved (Goodenough and Immel 75). Due to these manipulative strategies – likely occurring in Non-Western cultures as well – opinions included within youth war diaries regarding specific political issues are questionable in terms of authenticity. Yes, the words may have been written by the child, but the thought itself was likely planted by the media or discussed in the individual's classroom by an adult figure. Of course, this may also hold true for those of the adult diary-writing population who pay close attention to what is shown or talked about on such sources.

Thura Al-Windawi, in her account of life during wartime Iraq, describes in detail the consequences that have resulted from Saddam Hussein's reign and the eventual appearance of U.S. soldiers throughout the area. Within these reflections, there are several occurrences in which Al-Windawi's seven-year-old sister, Sama, shows evidence that information regarding the war effort have entered her thought process. For instance, when drawing one day, Sama constructed an image of "missiles and planes and soldiers and guns" (83). Al-Windawi rationalizes this account by explaining that the family has "done our best to put these images out of her mind, but the killed and injured children she saw on TV really made an impression on her. She's been full of questions, so somehow we've had to help her understand the new situation" (83). Additionally, the government during this time hoped to maintain long-term loyalty to Saddam Hussein by requiring children in the school system to praise the leader each morning before classes began. "Sama won't understand [when Saddam's reign is over], she'll still say, 'We love Saddam, we will sacrifice ourselves for him' – it's the result of a kind of brain-washing. But where is the sacrifice? Where's the loyalty to Saddam? It's all lies. It's as if we've been teaching our children make-believe things that don't really exist at all" (72). When it comes to American occupation, Al-Windawi holds a slightly less negative opinion:

There are always good and bad people wherever you go – no two people are alike, just like no two fingers of a hand are the same. And that applies to the American troops as well: there are some who like to do their best for people and who don't like waving guns in Iraqi people's faces, but who have to obey orders, and then there are bad-natured ones who are out to hurt people and get revenge. (92)

Could it be reasoned that Al-Windawi's diary initially came to the attention of British publishers *because* of her speaking out against Saddam Hussein and her brief mentioning of the American troops? Perhaps the opinions written about aligned perfectly with the opinions of British citizens or the opinions that the publishers wanted to instill in their readers regarding British – U.S. relations.

Factor Four: Journalist Intervention

As mentioned previously, journalists across the world regularly seek out child writers who they believe will give information about a specific war in an understandable and relatable manner. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of journalist intervention lies in the story of Malala Yousafza – "the girl who was shot by the Taliban" after "stand[ing] up for peace, with knowledge as her weapon" (Yousafzai and McCormick 191). The young girl's father, Ziauddin Yousafza, had always been an activist for girls' educational rights, believing that a "lack of education was the root of all of Pakistan's problems" and that "ignorance allowed politicians to fool people and bad administrators to be reelected" (Yousafza and Lamb 41). Early on in his professional career, he started a primary school in Pakistan as well as a high school for boys and another for girls, which he named The Khushal School for Girls. One day, Ziauddin was approached by Abdul Hai Kakar, a radio correspondent based in Peshawar, who was looking for a female teacher or schoolgirl who would write an online blog about life under the Taliban. Of the teachers who were asked from within the school system, all were too afraid of the potential

consequences that could result if word spread of their “resistance” to Taliban rulings. Yousafza took her father aside and explained that she would be a good candidate for the reporting position due to her previous experience giving speeches and making public appearances with him; he agreed, as he had been contemplating asking her himself.

At first, Yousafza had little knowledge of what to include in her online blog: “I had never written a diary before and didn’t know how to begin” (Yousafza and McCormick 77). So, Abdul Hai Kakar guided Yousafza through the process, asking her questions about each day as well as her future hopes and dreams. Once permission was granted, he would write up these stories in understandable English and post them to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Urdu website. So, what appeared to the reading community as blog/diary writing was essentially the product of multiple interviews between Yousafza and Kakar. At one point he asked “for more news from Swat for the next diary post. I didn’t know what to tell him. He asked me to write about the killings. It seemed so obvious to him that this was news. But to me, what you experience every day is no longer news” (Yousafza and McCormick 79). In other words, had the journalist not offered advice on what to include, Yousafza’s posts – and ultimately, her opinions and experiences – would not have incorporated the very aspects of war that tend to be highlighted the most in published accounts. Specifically, the disrupting sound of bombs and machine guns, the restrictions and challenges placed on citizens, and the accumulating number of injuries and deaths. Without such prompts, Yousafza may have focused more on friendships, relationships with family members, and daily activities that were not the direct result of living under warfare, giving a more nuanced sense of life in war.

Journalists were also of influence in the case of Thura Al-Windawi. After coming into contact with Janine di Giovanni, a British reporter for *The Times*, who “encouraged [Al-Windawi] to continue writing [her] diary,” Al-Windawi was asked if a portion of the text could be featured in an upcoming issue of the newspaper (Al-Windawi iv). Word soon traveled of Al-Windawi’s writing and first-hand experience with the Iraqi war, and the BBC – headquartered in London – quickly became interested in developing a film concerning her life in tandem with the published material (84). After being exposed in such a manner through both *The Times* newspaper and BBC film, Al-Windawi held the expectation that her work would someday be recognized in full, stating, “but I’ll keep writing my diary, and maybe one day it will be published. For me it would be enough if only one person read it” (95).

PUBLICATION PROCESS

Even if adult influences are not present within the youth’s original written diary, navigating the realm of publication is usually, if not always, tainted by biased edits and suggestions. As stated by Lejeune, “It is rare to publish a journal in its written form without rewording or cuts. Most journals are so long and repetitive that they are unpublishable” (31). Something has to be removed, reworded, or moved around to make the cut for approval by the publisher; unfortunately, the author tends to have little say in the matter. And while this essay focuses on publishers’ influence on youth authors, it must be recognized that all works go through this process and are mediated in some manner or another – even writings fashioned by

adults. Why, then, are alterations made to youth war diaries significant and worth examining more closely? These changes are critical to this discussion because they produce a narrowed view of childhood under warfare, where only specific information can be shared by hand-picked individuals, information that is deemed “necessary” by the adult population.

When Frank first received the well-known red-and-white checkered journal from her father as a birthday present, she was immediately drawn to the idea of using it as a diary. On June 20, 1942 – one of the very first entries composed within – Frank validates her wish to keep secret writings within when she states, “Yes, there is no doubt that paper is patient and as I don’t intend to show this cardboard-covered notebook, bearing the proud name of ‘diary,’ to anyone, unless I find a real friend, boy or girl, probably nobody cares” (2). From the beginning, she had no intention of sharing her thoughts and emotions with the other members in hiding or anyone, for that matter; writing would be for herself, a way to deal with the sufferings of a life shortly lived.

This all changed on March 29, 1944, when 14-year-old Frank tuned in to a radio announcement that would alter her life and the lives of millions of readers forever: “Bolkestein, an M.P., was speaking on the Dutch News from London, and he said that they ought to make a collection of diaries and letters after the war. Of course, they all made a rush at my diary immediately” (Frank 191). The idea was that future generations would come to know and acknowledge the horrors that citizens – specifically Jews – had endured while living under the Nazi regime. Although Frank never discloses who “they” are, it is at this time that she begins the daunting task of correcting all previous diary entries – perhaps with the intention of one day being published. Therefore, leading up to the family’s arrest, accounts were reworded, shortened and expanded upon, or removed altogether in accordance with personal preference and emotional appeal. Explained by author Francine Prose in her work entitled *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*, “Anne cut, clarified, expanded her original entries, and added new ones which in some cases she predated, sometimes by years. Thus the book is not, strictly speaking, what we think of as a diary – a journal in which events are recorded as they occur, day by day – but rather a memoir in the form of diary entries” (13). Due to these alterations, scholars have often questioned Frank’s writing style because it does not sound like the retellings of a “typical child.” But how do we know what a “child” truly sounds like? For instance, in a traditional English classroom, teachers are likely to experience a diverse group of advanced writers, average students, and adolescents who fail to understand most grammatical rules. Critics may also be overlooking the fact that her entries as a 13-year-old were actually rewritten from a 15-year-old’s perspective.

The final version, or what has traditionally been taught in schools, is a culmination of both the original and revised diaries. Following the war, Otto Frank, the family’s sole survivor, was handed his daughter’s work by Miep Gies who had saved the various notebooks and loose sheets of paper in the hope of Anne’s own return. Because certain pages had been lost in Miep’s attempt at salvaging Frank’s work, Otto “had to edit it, and he made a clear choice: he decided to complete the work that Anne had begun” (Lejeune 245). Rather than settle on one version over

the other, he intertwined both – making sure to include necessary details and eliminate others. Where Frank had decidedly removed her interactions with Peter which had dominated her original version, her father repositioned them among some of her newer reflections because he deemed them crucial to the plot line. Additionally, he cut Frank’s most bitter references to her mother (Edith Frank) and to the arguments carried out between him and his wife. Although he never gave specific reason for doing so, it could be proposed that Otto wanted readers to view Anne and Edith in a positive light.

A more recent example of editing for publication purposes lies in the retellings of Hadiya, the name fabricated by blogger “IraqiGirl,” whose online journal became a printed diary in 2009. Focusing on her experiences as a school girl in the midst of war, Hadiya began blogging in July, 2004 – one and a half years into the U.S. occupation of Iraq – as a method of expressing her thoughts and opinions of the surrounding conflict. She was, perhaps, influenced to do so by her grandfather, a scientist and professor of engineering who authored a total of six books in his professional career. At one point she mentions that she “still dream[s] of opening a big library in Mosul” to become “someone that [her] grandfather would be proud of” (Hadiya *IraqiGirl* 122-123). Many of Hadiya’s family members also kept blogs, including both her father and sister; therefore, the idea of jotting down thoughts via the internet was not an unheard of method. In 2006, a proposal to turn the online entries into a more “readable” fashion began to unfold with the assistance of developer John Ross, who was in charge of collaborating with the young girl from his place of residence in Mexico City (Ross 9). This project weaved four years of blogging into narrative, in addition to adding readership commentary and conversations Hadiya had with Sasha Crow who worked with refugees both inside and outside of Iraq.

Upon first read, Hadiya’s online blog can be extremely difficult to understand; it is evident that many rounds of edits had to take place before the posts were compiled to form the published autobiographical text. Also apparent is the addition of political and religious information, the removal of Hadiya’s jokes and numerous family photographs, and the combination of two or more entries into one. Whereas the blog allows the reader to know Hadiya on a personal level – including her likes (music, computer games, learning English) and dislikes (studying for tests) – the book gives only a mere sense of who she is as a young girl living in Iraqi. It is almost as if the publisher wanted to eliminate all humor and entertainment in order to force the audience into believing that Hadiya’s childhood was completely removed as a result of war. Below is a sample entry, both the original and printed versions, that draws attention to the spelling and grammar corrections, sentence restructuring, and deletions that resulted as part of the process.

Original: Saturday, November 06, 2004 [day of my life]

Here I am, write to you again, in spite of the bad situation around me...yesterday when I heard that boush won and the American soldiers will began to attack al_faluja, I began to cry and I couldn’t stop, and my head ache me, So I went to bed without finishing my homework as should I do,in the morning when we went to school there was check point, That give me a little moment to look to

the book and check my information, When we were in the road to school, One of the girls who is with us in this taxi shout” oooh look at our school, it is not there” We look to her and wonder” what she is talking about?” that is not our school, That is one of many building that Americans destroyed it in the war.some times you feel that you are not in the same area that you lived all yor life.

Today we went to the shop to found clothes for me while Najma and my father went to the dentist ,anyway that was after the school so, I was so tired and my leg ache me now, there is saying that when your legs ache you that mean you will being tall :) thats good

yesterday one of our teacher gave her son to the lesson, and that was terrible, He took all the pens and pencil from the girls and He don’t stop from jumping and running about the class,our teacher shout to him but he didn’t stop, the teacher try to continue the course but the girl’s eyes looking at the boy all the time. (Hadiya “Day of My Life”)

Published Work: Saturday, November 6, 2004 [Day of my life]

Here I am writing to you again in spite of the bad situation around me. On Tuesday when I heard that Bush won and the American soldiers will begin to attack Fallujah, I began to cry and couldn’t stop. My head was aching so I went to bed without finishing my homework. But in the morning when we went to school, there was a checkpoint. That gave me a little moment to look in my books and study the information there.

When we were on the road to the school one of the girls who was in the taxi with us shouted, “Ohhhh, look at our school! It’s not there!” We looked at her and wondered what she was talking about. It was not our school that was bombed, just one of the many buildings that the Americans have destroyed in this war. Sometimes, you feel that you are not in the same area where you lived all your life.

After school, we went to the shop to find clothes for me while Najma and my father went to the dentist. I was so tired and now my leg aches. There is a saying that if your leg aches, you will be tall. That’s good. (Hadiya *IraqiGirl* 27)

One will notice that most of the alterations made were beneficial for those who typically read, write, and speak the English language. Not only are the sentences now grammatically correct, but they also flow in a manner that is socially acceptable to the reading community. However, it is also evident that Hadiya’s short story regarding her teacher’s son was eliminated from the final version. Was this because the piece of information was unnecessary in carrying out the day’s message? Or rather, were the editors concerned by the flirtations and/or simple disruptions that were occurring between the young boy and classroom girls – children who should be more concerned with their studies?

Although Hadiya continued writing after *IraqiGirl: Diary of a Teenage Girl in Iraq* was published, the number of entries produced for her online blog decreased dramatically each consecutive year. In 2004 alone she compiled 87 accounts; shockingly, by 2014 that number had lowered to only three, with 2015 producing none. This raises the question of whether or not adult supervision silenced her rather than encouraged her writing. Nodelman, an internationally-known author of children's literature, would certainly agree with the latter. He points out that "in the act of speaking for the other, providing it with a voice, we silence it. As long as we keep on speaking for it, we won't get to hear what it has to say for itself – and indeed, that may be exactly why we are speaking in the first place" (30). Of course, one who reads these final entries could argue that adult supervision was of no influence in her decision to stop writing, as indicative of her August 9, 2014, submission:

I lost the words to write about my story, to write about the lily of my desert, to write about the beauty of my parents' eyes and the warmth that their sounds give to my heart. I lost the words to write about the pain of my country. And how scared I was within it and how lost I am without. I really can't express my feeling now but something inside me died with days and as I guess nothing could ever give me more hurt and pain than I already have.

In a matter of days, I turned from an Iraqi pharmacist from [a] high social class in Mosul to a refugee pregnant woman with no job, no home address and only \$2,000. A person who [is] counting the days to have a call from the IOM to get an appointment for interview which simply may take a year or so till the IOM will decide whether I deserve to have a station in UN to start my life over again or not. That's including to study and certify my pharmacy degree over again! I am obviously having a chronic depression episode and have no close person to talk to since all persons I know are already living their own tragedy. (Hadiya "A Cry")

At this point, the city of Mosul, located in northern Iraq, has fallen into the hands of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (abbreviated ISIL or ISIS), making it nearly impossible for anyone to safely speak up about the situation at hand. Hadiya's life, according to her last three blog entries, has been altered dramatically; not only have she and her husband been forced into an unwanted move, but she is also suffering from the loss of employment, depression, and the effects of pregnancy. In her eyes, there is no point in continuing to write about life, for the life she once lived has been discontinued. She is no longer a "child" of the war but an "adult" who must face the consequences herself, an adult who will soon bring a child of her own into the war-torn country she cared for and admired growing up. So, just as other recognized children diarists suffer from adult mediation, she *was* influenced by an adult to withdraw from writing; she *had become* that adult.

CONCLUSION

Since the publication of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* in the late 1940s, the genre of "Children War Diaries" has erupted into a marketable business for journalists, editors, and publishing companies around the world. As a reading community, we tend to believe that

autobiographical representation, such as the personal diary or online blog, “assumes that human actions and thoughts are actually being represented rather than created or simulated” (Kitzmann 60). Despite these assumptions, diary writing – especially within the realm of publication – tends to undergo both self-imposed and editorial alterations. The diarist, trying to conjure memories from the previous day, may overlook a situation and tell details that are not necessarily accurate. The editor, trying to reduce the number of pages in the final version, may eliminate entries that do not appear “important” in understanding the diarist’s life. This leads to the following question: is it even possible to offer a fully “truthful” or “accurate” account when writing? Mary Masrieh Hazboun, featured in *Stolen Voices*, wrote: “I can’t really write everything because I can’t translate my feelings into normal words. In this world, the truth is buried. When you say a word of truth, you are smashed and killed under their tanks” (248). At the age of 17, Hazboun already understood that speaking the truth is not only an internal struggle of converting emotion into words but an external conflict that may lead to one’s demise if discovered.

Alterations made to youth war diaries, in particular, are significant and worth examining more closely because adult mediation comes to play a huge role in both the initiation and publication of these texts. I sought to uncover these adult influences by analyzing a number of famous war diaries that have been released to the public in the last few decades, beginning with the Second World War. It was discovered through this analysis that family situation, educational background, exposure to media/propaganda, and journalist intervention all have an effect on those who are selected for publication. These factors reveal that as much as we try to be transparent about the effects of war on children, we fail – in every sense of the word. Rather than allow these diarists to tell their stories, we shape the narratives to our likes and dislikes, in part because we cannot handle the truth. We cannot handle the thought of childhood “innocence” being lost in the terrors of war. Because of this, we show a glimpse of the hurt and heartbreak, but only from the perspective of those who suffer the least – middle-class, well-educated youth who, in the midst of war, possess adequate supplies for survival and remain close to their families despite outside conditions. As a result, society fails to receive a clear picture of the war at hand or the consequences of that war. Only one side of the story is told – the side that encompasses experiences and opinions which the adult population has influenced and deemed acceptable for public attention.

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