INVENTING ANAIS NIN: CELEBRITY AUTHORSHIP AND THE CREATION OF AN ICON

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the process of the construction of Anaïs Nin’s public persona (or rather personae) by herself and by the popular media in the United States from 1966 onwards, with a special focus on socio-cultural processes that contributed to the production and sedimentation of Nin’s public image. This involves, on the one hand, the analysis of Nin’s involvement in the process of self-construction and self-promotion; on the other, the study of how various media contributed to the invention of Anaïs Nin. I also analyse how Nin’s name and persona have been used and what she has come to signify. I investigate what Nin has stood for, what sort of statements she has been brought to support, what products she has advertised, and what debates she has triggered.

In order to accomplish these aims, I rely on the archival research, textual analysis, an examination and application of critical theories to position my study. As far as a critical framework is concerned, I situate my study between autobiography studies and cultural studies. In particular, I combine celebrity culture studies with those that focus on the author’s (self) representation in the literary marketplace, and I foreground gender as a vital factor in constructing a public personality.
DECLARATION

I, Anita Jarczok, declare that the content of this thesis is my own original work except where otherwise indicated with reference to secondary sources. Part of this thesis regarding Philip Kaufman’s film *Henry & June*, which is included in Chapter Four, has been published in a changed form in *A Café in Space: The Anaïs Nin Literary Journal* (2011).
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This study was made possible thanks to the Women’s Studies scholarship that I received during the first year of my research and which was later replaced by funding from the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences. I would like to thank both institutions: the University of Limerick and the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences for financial assistance without which this research would not be possible.

Last but not least, I am immensely grateful to my family and friends who supported me emotionally during my stay in Ireland. My parents in particular were a source of comfort and encouragement and not only during three years of this research but throughout my whole educational journey. Special thanks to Sunshine Kirst for helping me with obtaining the photographs of Anaïs Nin.
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D  The Diary of Anais Nin – the Roman numeral following D indicates the relevant volume number.

H&J  Henry & June – the movie.
A NOTE ON PRIMARY SOURCES

Since archival research constitutes a major part of this project, I spent the month of September 2009 at the Charles E. Young Research Library at the University of California, Los Angeles. Here, I divided my time between the Anaïs Nin Collection and general library holdings in the search for newspaper/magazine articles regarding Nin and reviews of her writings.

The Nin collection at the UCLA consists of 37 boxes most of which hold Nin’s diaries and correspondence; other boxes contain manuscripts of her fiction, taped lectures and speeches, film appearances and memorabilia. At the Anaïs Nin Collection, I surveyed Nin’s diaries from 1931 to 1965, which are held in boxes 16 to 37. What I was looking for in Nin’s private writings were any mentions of the process of diary editing and publishing. I focused in particular on letters she exchanged with her literary agents and publishers. I also paid a close attention to diary entries and letters that would suggest Nin’s self-promotional acumen. The notes taken at the Collection serve primarily for Chapter Two.

The second part of the research involved a newspaper and magazine search in internet databases, paper issues, and microfilms. I was looking for articles regarding Anais Nin and reviews of her works since 1966 (the year when the first volume of her diary was published turning her from a relatively unknown writer into a celebrity) up to 2008. I concentrated on major American press publications, such as influential review magazines and journals of opinion (the New York Times Book Review, the New York Review of Books, the New Republic, the New Yorker, the New Leader, Saturday Review, the Nation); popular magazines (Newsweek); major American dailies (the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, the St. Louis Dispatch, the Christian Science Monitor, the San Francisco Chronicle); some alternative press (the Village Voice, the Los Angeles Free Press); journals for academics (Book Week, Chicago Review, Contemporary Literature, Women’s Studies, Books Abroad/World’s Literature Today, the Kenyon Review) and one of the most influential journal for libraries, the Library Journal. I excluded all foreign press, some minor local American newspapers (such as The Charlotte Observer, or the Chicago Daily News) and some titles which for reasons beyond my control were
unavailable. Altogether, I gathered articles from thirty-three American newspapers, magazines, review periodicals and scholarly journals.

I compiled a complete list of articles on Nin and her writings in two major American newspapers: The New York Times (together with The New York Times Book Review) and the Los Angeles Times (the UCLA has an access to internet databases of these two titles dating back to nineteenth century). Thus, I found around forty articles directly regarding Nin and her books in The New York Times, and around thirty articles in the Los Angeles Times, and many more in which she is mentioned or which she wrote herself. As for other newspapers/magazines, not all of them were available online, and the ones that were, had usually an access to their archives only since some point in the 1980s (depending on the newspaper/magazine). Therefore, for earlier articles, I had to refer to either paper or microfilm issues, relying on the bibliography of articles on Nin from 1966 to 1983 that I prepared before my departure on the basis of Rose Marie Cutting’s Anaïs Nin: A Reference Guide and Richard Centing’s supplements to it that appeared in two magazines: first in Under the Sign of Pisces and then in Seahorse: The Anaïs Nin/Henry Miller Journal. These materials are examined in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.
INTRODUCTION

“Someone asked me to pronounce my first name… three times.” (Laughter and applause.) “I must do that – it’s very important – because five little girls have been named after me. So you have to learn the name: it’s Ahna-ees, Ahna-ees; like Anna with ees added onto it” – says Anaïs Nin to her audience during one of her lectures. The archival footage, showing Nin clad in a long robe, on stage, confidently addressing her listeners, constitutes the opening scene of a documentary Anaïs Observed: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin, made by Robert Snyder in 1973 – at the peak of Nin’s popularity. This first scene, together with the fact that the film devoted to Nin was made in the first place, point to several important issues central to this thesis.

First, the mere existence of the film is good proof of Anaïs Nin’s fame in the 1970’s in the United States. It also suggests Nin’s complicity in her image making, as the film, in the shape it is, could not have been made without her participation, since most scenes involve Nin talking about her life and influences. Second, Nin’s words – “five girls were named after me” – indicate her status as a role model. And finally, the content of the film, announced by a brief synopsis on the cover of the video tape, highlights Nin the writer, thus being consistent with Nin’s preferred self-presentation. The first sentence of this synopsis – “Anaïs Nin is remembered for her surreal novels, her extensive diaries and deep friendships with artists who helped shape modern consciousness” – captures a moment in time when Nin indeed was celebrated as an artist and an artists’ friend and not as a sexual symbol that she became with the publication of her biography The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin (1993) or the release of Philip Kaufman’s film Henry and June (1990), which advertises itself as “A True Adventure More Erotic than Any Fantasy.”

Since Nin came to the limelight in 1966, there have been a variety of discourses on her, frequently contradicting one another. These discourses and the images of Nin they have created will be a major part of this thesis. What interests me in this study is how Nin has been represented in various media, but also what her own impact on creating a public persona was, as Nin’s Diary is a major medium through which her persona has been created. Apart from the Diary, there are also biographies, films, plays, critical studies and memoirs on Nin. None of these sources capture the real Nin, although a few might promise to do so. Every text constructs a different Nin and a
different account of her life, and just as it is impossible to fix the meaning of any text, it is impossible to determine who was the real Anaïs Nin. We can only tell more stories. However, what is important is, what story is told and how it is told. And this thesis examines a number of these stories.

More specifically, the aim of this dissertation is to examine the process of the construction of Anaïs Nin’s public persona (or rather personae) by herself and by the popular media in the United States from 1966 onwards, with a special focus on socio-cultural processes that contributed to the production and sedimentation of Nin’s public image. This involves, on the one hand, the analysis of Nin’s involvement in the process of self-construction and self-promotion; on the other, the study of how various media contributed to the invention of Anaïs Nin. I also analyse how Nin’s name and persona have been used and what she has come to signify. I investigate what Nin has stood for, what sort of statements she has been brought to support, what products she has advertised, and what debates she has triggered.

These are some of the questions that I address while discussing the Anaïs Nin phenomenon: Who contributed to the construction of Nin’s public persona? How has this process evolved? How did Nin herself take part in the process of self-construction and self-promotion? What was the relation between Nin and the culture that contributed to the phenomenon she became? What has been the cultural significance of Anaïs Nin? What was the role of feminism in Nin’s self-creation? And finally – What has commanded public attention: Is it her oeuvre or rather Nin’s public persona and the scandals surrounding her life?

**Rationale for this Project**

Nowadays, Nin is largely absent from academic curricula, scholarly debates and popular culture. But, paradoxically, this very absence of Nin today, which stands in stark contrast to her very prominent presence in the 1960s and 1970s, makes Nin an interesting case study.

First of all, taking into account the expanding literature on celebrity culture and Nin’s popularity in mainstream American culture in the 1960s and 1970s, it is quite astonishing that there has not been a single study devoted entirely to Nin as a celebrity, as a public figure, as a cultural phenomenon. Nin definitely did not shun the limelight. After the publication of the first volume of her diary in 1966, she became a literary
celebrity and was hailed as a representative of women. This status was reinforced after her death in 1977 when her erotic stories, *Delta of Venus*, were published and Nin was proclaimed a writer of female sexuality. Nin’s glory, however, was relatively short lived. From 1980 she began falling into oblivion. A resurgence of interest in Nin took place at the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when her unexpurgated diaries were published; however, much of the attention Nin received at that point was quite negative, especially within feminist circles. Nin was regarded by many as a devious manipulator, a liar and a master of self-promotion. Drawing upon celebrity culture studies to examine the Nin persona allows us to consider her in a new light. None of Nin’s critics have examined Nin as a cultural symbol and/or celebrity; typically it is either Nin’s oeuvre or her life that is under scrutiny.\(^1\) Looking at Nin through the lenses of celebrity culture helps to resolve some controversies around her persona by making the process of its construction transparent.

It is also worthwhile to re-examine the cultural significance of Nin’s *Diaries* and their role in constructing the Nin persona from the joint perspective of autobiography studies and celebrity culture studies. Analysing Nin’s *Diaries* at the intersection of these two disciplines, which have developed greatly in the last two decades, allows us to examine Nin’s own contribution to the process of self-construction and self-promotion without condemning her for being a driving force in the management of her career. Nin was an active agent in creating and distributing her image and thus she can be regarded as a powerful production force in the production/consumption dialectic, which, as many cultural critics indicate (e.g. Richard Dyer, David Marshall), is typical of celebrity formation. In this respect, this thesis is in the tradition of such works as Joe Moran’s *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000) which highlight the importance of fame to the careers of modern writers and emphasise their own contribution to the production of their celebrity.

However, this study is not only interested in Nin for Nin’s sake. Nin’s example can also serve a springboard for other investigations. Viewing Nin as a

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\(^1\) None of Nin’s critics have examined Nin as a cultural symbol and/or celebrity; it was either Nin’s oeuvre or her life that was under scrutiny. Helen Tookey’s monograph, *Anais Nin, Fictionality and Femininity: Playing a Thousand Roles* (2003), deals with various “versionings” of Nin (Tookey uses Brenda Silver’s concept of versioning introduced in *Virginia Woolf Icon* (1999)), but only a part of her last chapter focuses on the reception of Nin in popular culture. Besides, examining a response to Nin in British press and on internet websites, Tookey does not focus on any particular context; whereas I concentrate solely on the making of Anais Nin’s public persona in the United States, as I believe that nowhere else was Nin’s stardom so prominent.
celebrity allows us to learn more not only about Nin herself but also about ourselves and our cultures. Tracing the trajectory of Nin’s celebrity, the reception of her writings, and the changing constructions of her public persona facilitates the examination of the rise and fall of a cultural icon. Whereas in the 1960s and the 1970s Nin was considered an important writer and a voice of the generation, in the 1990s she was reduced to a “major minor writer” (Bair xviii). The changing portraits of Nin enable the analysis of the interplay between Nin and the culture that first brought her to prominence only later to push her off the pedestal. By looking at which version of Nin prevailed, or was privileged, at a given time, we can examine the dominant cultural movements and how they produced the Nin that met their own needs. The backward glance at Nin and her changing relationship with feminism, for instance, reveals that the notion of Nin as the representative of women, so prominent in the 1960s and the 1970s, was unravelled in the 1980s partly as the result of the decisions that the Nin estate made, releasing the unexpurgated diaries and with them the new portrait of the erotic Nin, but also partly because of the changes within feminism itself. The emerging factions of feminism, such as poststructuralist feminisms and feminisms focused on race and class, engendered a critique of essentialism and the concept of the ‘whole woman’ that Nin embodied.

Finally, the specificity of Nin as a case study enables interesting insights into celebrity culture studies and autobiography studies. By bringing these two disciplines together, I demonstrate that they both complement each other and have the potential to enhance our understanding of the complexity of public personalities. The specific trajectory of Nin’s celebrity facilitates the examination of the fallen icon. Nin’s example demonstrates that falling out of grace is closely connected not only with the changes of image but also with cultural shifts. The fact that different portraits of Nin were emphasised/constructed at various times reflects a changing American culture and highlights the importance of market factors to the creation of her persona. Nin’s example also illuminates, and has the potential to advance, some important issues in autobiography criticism. It brings to light the dynamic relationship between the stories we tell about ourselves, our identity and our cultures. The multileveled construction of the Nin persona serves as a good illustration of how the self is fashioned through narratives, and not only through the obvious ones, such as diaries, but virtually through every story that invites us to give an account of ourselves and our lives (e.g. lectures,
interviews). It also points to the malleability of identity which changes with every story told.

While analysing the mechanisms at work during the production and consumption of Nin’s public personality, I approach Nin as a construct or a set of representations, rather than as a historical individual, although I will discuss how Nin the person intervened in her career and in her image production. Although I will not attempt to locate the authentic Nin, at this point I want to introduce briefly Anaïs Nin from a ‘purely’ biographical perspective, focusing in particular on her private life.

**Who is Anaïs Nin? – A Brief Story of her Personal Life Based on Anaïs Nin: A Biography by Deirdre Bair**

Anaïs Nin was born on 21 February 1903 in Neuilly, France to Joaquin Nin y Castellanos and Rosa Culmell y Vaurigaud. She was the first of three children, followed by her two brothers: Thorvald and Joaquin. For the first eleven years of Anaïs’s life, the family moved around Europe – France, Germany, Belgium, Spain – as her father was determined to make a success of his career as a pianist. Joaquin Nin abandoned the family in 1913 and, as a result, a year later, Anaïs’s mother took her three children to the United States. On the ship to New York, Anaïs Nin started her lifetime pursuit – the diary, first with an intention of recording everything for her father. The first volumes of her diary were written in French and she switched to English in 1920.

She dropped out of school early, and started working as an artists’ model at the New York Art Workers’ Club for Women. In 1921 she met Hugh Parker Guiler, a banker of Scottish origin, whom she married on 3 March 1923. The newlyweds moved to Paris in 1924 where they would stay until the outbreak of World War II. In 1931, she met Henry Miller and his wife June – a trio whose adventures (sexual and others) would be depicted not only in Nin’s diaries but also in various plays on Nin and in Kaufman’s film *Henry and June*. In 1932, Nin published her first book, *D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*. That year she also started her first psychoanalytical sessions with Dr René Allendy, changing him a year later for Dr Otto Rank (she maintained sexual relationships with both therapists for a time). At around the same time, she also reunited with her father: a reunion which went beyond a usual father-daughter
relationship as it turned into a sexual affair. In 1934, she underwent her first abortion which she later described in her *Diary* as a stillbirth. Nin engaged in many sexual liaisons during her Parisian year but her last major lover in Paris was Gonzalo Moré, a Communist married to a dancer Helba Huara, who followed Nin to New York.

Nin moved to New York with her husband Hugh Guiler in 1939, and from then on, she returned to France solely for holidays or professional purposes (e.g. interviews). She swapped the bohemian Parisian society of Miller for artistic circles of writers, painters, photographers and filmmakers in New York, such as, to enumerate a few, Dorothy Norman, Robert Duncan, Virginia Admirals, Maya Deren, Kenneth Anger and Gore Vidal. In America, she continued her therapy, first with Martha Jaeger, then with Dr. Clement Staff, and finally with Inge Bogner. She also carried on with numerous love affairs. Bair comments that while “all her lovers in the 1930s represented what she called ‘years of erotic madness’ with adult men . . . the period 1945-1947 represented erotic madness of a different kind, usually with mere boys half her age” (300).

The year of 1947 was significant for Nin as she met two men who played a crucial role in her life: a writer and actor James Leo Herlihy (the author of *Midnight Cowboy*) who became her devoted friend and supporter, and sixteen years younger Rupert Pole who became her life-long partner. From 1947, Anaïs Nin led a bi-coastal life, shared between Los Angeles and New York, and between Rupert Pole and Hugh Guiler respectively. Nin married Pole in 1955 thus committing bigamy since she had never divorced her first husband Hugh Guiler. The marriage to Pole was cancelled in 1966, once Nin became a public figure with her own income. That year, Nin who had so far kept both men in the dark about each other’s existence, revealed to Pole her marriage with Guiler, explaining that their relationship had ceased to be sexual. She also informed Pole that she felt obliged to provide Hugh with both emotional and financial support, since he had maintained her for most of her life (not only did Hugh Guiler support Nin’s daily needs but he also financed the publication of some of her books, gave her money to buy her own press, and helped out – sometimes oblivious of this fact – many of Nin’s friends). Pole did not object and he remained a devoted partner until Nin’s last days. Guiler, with whom Nin met more and more reluctantly excusing herself with her declining health, remained oblivious to Pole’s existence until Nin’s funeral where the two men met. Anaïs Nin died of cancer on 14 January 1977. The obituary in the *New York Times* mentioned Hugh Guiler as Nin’s husband, while the *Los Angeles Times* listed Rupert Pole.
This brief biography focused exclusively on Nin’s private life. The next section concentrates on Nin’s professional existence (or sometimes the lack thereof) in the American literary marketplace. It examines the development of Nin’s literary career in the United States, focusing in particular on the period prior to 1966, and it indicates Nin’s participation in her self-promotion.

**Nin and the American Literary Marketplace**

Despite the fact that Nin’s works were translated into many languages and enjoyed a considerable success in France, Italy, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom, the Nin persona did not leave such a durable imprint anywhere outside America. It was in America that, as Henke describes, “an Anaïs Nin cult took root and flourished in the 1960s” (*Recollections* 119); it was in America of the 1970s that large audiences gathered to listen to Nin, then “an extremely celebrated writer” (*Zinnes, Recollections* 28), giving lectures. It was America that has produced most of the critical and biographical works on Nin. And it was an American director who brought Nin to a global attention by releasing a successful film *Henry and June* in 1990. And although the Nin persona is used by popular culture in other countries as well – for instance in 2005 a song “Anaïs Nin” about Nin’s relationship with Henry Miller was released in France – we need to start the examination of the cultural significance of Anaïs Nin in the country that contributed most to the making of her persona.

Nin’s relationship with the literary marketplace in the American context falls roughly into three stages. The first one begins with her arrival to New York in 1939 and lasts until 1966, when she releases the first volume of her *Diary*. What marks this phase are her struggles to get her works published and the relative obscurity of her writings. Nin manages to print some of her novels and stories and to get the attention of some critics, even eminent Edmund Wilson; she remains, however, unknown to the general public. During the second period, from 1966 to 1977, Nin enjoys considerable popularity: she becomes not only a published author but also a feminist symbol, a role model, a celebrity. Moreover, although Nin participates actively in building up her career for most of her life, she particularly does so in this period. The third stage opens after her death in 1977 and it consists of several turning points that influenced Nin’s public image. Even though Nin’s name, persona, face, and signature were used to market and endorse certain products and events during her lifetime, this process
expands considerably after her death. Nin the author cannot control and contain her image any longer, and because of the growing controversy around her person/-a, she turns into an attractive and attention-attracting commodity. Because the period after 1966 will be scrutinised in this dissertation, at this point, I just provide a brief overview of the first stage: Nin’s professional life prior to 1966.

To a reader unacquainted with Nin, it may seem that she sprang up into fame out of obscurity in 1966, and to an extent she did, since her early publications were of interest to few. Yet, at the same time, she had been working for many years to gain success in the literary market. It was not, therefore, an immaculate conception of an author, a discovery of a literary genius, but rather a long and sometimes painful labour. The story of Nin’s early efforts to get published can reveal something about the American marketplace and the changing culture from the 1940s to the 1960s.

After having spent fifteen years in France, where she managed to publish a critical reading of D. H. Lawrence (1932), the prose poem *House of Incest* (1936), and the collection of short stories *The Winter of Artifice* (1939), Nin moved back to America in December 1939. Leo Braudy, comparing the status of the writers after World War I in America and Europe, says that while in Europe it was enough to write something in order to be considered a writer, in America the writer had to fight for his/her status constantly. “If you did not keep producing,” he says, “your status as an artist could be taken away” (546). Nin, therefore, had to adjust her perception of herself as an artist. It was not enough just to label herself as one: she needed to be recognized as one, too, and that took her more than two decades to accomplish.

What is more, when Nin arrived in the United States, she must have experienced the kind of discrepancy between the publishing markets that Loren Glass describes in his book *Authors Inc.*. Glass explains that, “In the modern United States – with a much-less-established tradition of high culture and a far-more-developed mass cultural public sphere – many authors whose self-understanding was based in European models of restricted production found themselves having to adapt to the marketing strategies and audience sensibilities of large-scale production” (6). Glass works here with Bourdieu’s concepts of the “field of restricted production” and the “field of large-scale production.” The former stands for the market that produces the works for a small, specific audience, characteristic of European markets, while the latter refers to the marketplace that aims at mass production. What was considered publishable in the United States in the 1940s did not correspond with what Nin had on offer at that time. The lack of interest in her
fiction, which deals with the exploration of the subconscious in a very surrealist way, is frequently attributed to the fact that American literature was dominated by realism for the most part of the twentieth century (Franklin and Schneider 3).

Even so, Nin engaged energetically in the enhancement of her literary career from the very beginning of her stay in New York. She established important acquaintances and did her best to see her works, both diary and fiction, to print. In the 1940s, she started to write erotic stories for one dollar a page, which were released after her death in two volumes: Delta of Venus: Erotica (1977) and Little Birds (1979). She also began submitting shorter pieces and articles to alternative magazines such as Twice a Year, The Phoenix, or Furioso (Bair 257). As her biographer Deirdre Bair comments, “Anaïs, realizing that the path to commercial publication was uncertain, intended to build up a solid list of publications in various little magazines as a way to bolster her planned assault on commercial American publishers” (257).

But when neither she nor her literary agents managed to interest the publishing houses in her work, she bought her own printing press in 1942 and named it Gemor Press after her lover, Gonzalo Moré, with whom she ran it. The first book Nin printed was The Winter of Artifice (1942) and it was distributed through the Gotham Book Mart, a bookstore which itself became soon a cult space in the New York literary landscape. The publication of The Winter of Artifice not only failed to boost her literary career but also brought financial losses. The next publication that came out from Gemor Press in 1944 – a collection of short stories, Under a Glass Bell – sold three hundred copies in the first three weeks and got her a few reviews, one from the prominent critic Edmund Wilson writing for The New Yorker (D IV 7). Her engagement with the press indicates a strong self-promotional zeal and marketing acumen and the following passage can provide us with further insights into how Nin went about her business: “Of 500 Winters [The Winter of Artifice] I gave away 100, sold 250 and 150 are there. Of Under [Under a Glass Bell] I am only printing 300. Most of the subscriptions were obtained by my writing pressing letters, telephoning etc.” (MS Journal 67, n.pag.). However, the continuous lack of success wore her down, and in the same entry, she remarked that, “The support has been infinitely small – not sufficient to sustain me either spiritually or materially. I am going to surrender” (MS Journal 67, n.pag.). After the release of This Hunger in 1945, Nin noted: “I fell into a suicidal depression. Had to face criticism of my book” (D IV 92).
Even when her novels started to be printed by commercial publishers – beginning with E. P. Dutton’s release of *Ladders to Fire* in 1946 – they received mainly unfavourable evaluations and none of them brought Nin the recognition she wanted. For example, before she eventually managed to publish *A Spy in the House of Love* in 1954, she received many letters of rejection, and a year after its release she related in a letter to Felix Pollak that, “Spy only sold 1000 copies and I’m the blackest of all sheep among American publishers!” (Mason 37). The political climate after World War II was not favourable for the type of writing represented by Nin. As Lawrence Schwartz (1990) explains, American art and literature became a part of ideological battle with the Cold War. Her literary output failed to cater for the needs of the American literary market at that time. Nin, however, did not give up. Bair comments that many people who knew her at that time described her as “a steel humming bird . . . determined to be famous” (324). And she adds that, “Her efforts to promote her novels attest to this fact. She wrote to every college and university that had previously hosted her, asking for invitation to speak again, and also to universities where she knew no one, frequently sending her photographs and books” (324). Two crucial factors that influenced Nin’s career are pointed out in the above quote: Nin’s involvement in self-promotion and her awareness of the power of the visual.

In 1958, Nin began to cooperate with an independent publisher Allan Swallow, who kept her novels in print throughout the late 1950s and the early 1960s, yet it was not until the joint release of the first volume of Nin’s *Diary* by Swallow Press and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1966 that she became popular with the general public. The publication of *Diary I* turned her from a coterie into a celebrity writer. Nin’s *Diary* is a crucial vehicle of the Nin persona and for that reason the following section provides general information about Nin’s diary and outlines ways of distinguishing between different versions of it to help the reader to navigate through this thesis.

**Diary vs. Diary**

Anais Nin began her diary at the age of eleven as a response to two traumatic events: her father’s abandonment of the family and the decision to move from Europe to the United States. Her diary, which started as a series of letters to her father in 1914,
continued through her lifetime, albeit in various forms, until her death in 1977.\(^2\) As for the division of the diary, the easiest way to think about Nin’s diary is to differentiate between the published diary and the manuscript, and this is the basic differentiation that I will be making throughout this thesis, referring to the original version simply as ‘the diary’ and to the published version as *Diary*. The easiest way, however, conceals the complexity of the diary. The case of Nin’s diaries is much more difficult than the usual division into the published versus original version, as Nin worked on her diary most of her life.

The original diaries from 1914 up to 1965 were sold in 1976 to the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for $100,000 (Bair 511). The remainder are in the possession of the executor of the Anaїs Nin estate. Going through Nin’s diaries from 1914 to 1965 it is impossible not to notice a change in the diary. Nin kept the diary in book form up to May 1946 and these journals were occasionally interspersed with photographs, paper clippings, and letters. The manuscript journal number 69, covering the period from November 1945 to May 1946, is the last one written in a book. From 1946, the diary was written on loose sheets of paper and the closer one gets to 1965, the less diary one encounters – the diary was almost entirely replaced by Nin’s vast correspondence. So in its later stages, Nin’s diary seems more like a collection of letters from and to Nin, rather than a diary as we tend to think of it – the record of daily entries.

Elizabeth Podnieks remarks that, “There is a gradual shift in the journal as it moved from being a letter to Nin’s father to a letter to the world, from a romantic document to a modernist text, and *from a work that was written in order to be published to a work that was written because it was being published*” ([emphasis added] 284). Podnieks, who had access to the manuscripts of the early diaries, noted that these were published with few alterations (285); therefore, there is no reason to treat them differently from the diaries of any other writer. The rest of the diary is, however, more complicated than the ‘average’ diary, as Nin copied and rewrote the diary at different stages of her life. The Nin archive contains, therefore, not only the manuscripts as we normally think of them – the original version of the published one but also the rewritten versions of the original.

\(^2\) That is the story of inception of the diary given by Anaїs Nin herself. Her brother claims that it was their mother who encouraged Anaїs to begin the journal on the ship in order to keep Anais busy (Nin-Culmell 24).
The published diaries – fifteen volumes in total comprising the period from 1914 to 1974 – subdivide into three series. The first series consists of seven volumes covering Nin’s life from 1931 to 1974, most of which appeared during Nin’s lifetime. These volumes were heavily edited. Nin herself (with the collaboration of her agent Gunther Stuhlmann) managed to edit six out of seven volumes. After her death, Rupert Pole and Gunther Stuhlmann took over the editing of *Diary VII*, which appeared in 1980. Another series, known as *The Early Diary of Anaïs Nin*, started to be published shortly after Nin’s death and it contains four volumes presenting Nin’s early life from 1914 to 1931. The last series, referred to as unexpurgated diaries, also consists of four volumes. It began in 1986 with the book *Henry and June* and finished ten years later with the volume entitled *Nearer the Moon* (1996). It covers the period of 1931 to 1939 and includes the material that was left out from the first two *Diaries* of the first series. Although these four diaries are advertised as unedited, the comparison between them, the first series of the *Diary* and the manuscripts reveal a great extent of editorial manipulation.

Chapter Two of this thesis examines the Nin persona as it was generated and constituted over the decades as she wrote and rewrote, edited and revised the versions of her diary to make them – and herself – marketable. Chapter Four, in turn, demonstrates the change of Nin’s portrait in the ‘unexpurgated’ diaries. Edited after Nin’s death, these ‘uncut’ volumes brought to light, and cashed in on, the erotic aspects of Nin’s life.

**Content of the Chapters**

**Chapter One** – “Literature Review” – provides an overview of academic criticism on Nin and a theoretical framework for my thesis. As far as a critical framework is concerned, two disciplines in particular inform my research project: autobiography studies and cultural studies. Since the chief interest of this study lies in the public persona of Anaïs Nin, I found that celebrity culture studies particularly converge with my own objectives.

**Chapter Two** – “Public Promotion of the Private Self: Anais Nin’s Self-construction in the Diary” – focuses on Nin’s self-promotion and self-construction through and in her diary. The diary served marketing purposes, not only luring the publishers, but also promoting certain images of Nin. I describe the process of editing
the diary and outline attempts to publish it. I also discuss Nin’s techniques to make her diary interesting for her readers. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the culture of the nineteen sixties contributed to its success. Finally, I examine the images of Nin, both written and visual, that were launched in the first six volumes.

Chapter Three – “Public Relations of the Self – Anais Nin, Feminism and Celebrity Authorship” – deals with the most prolific years in Nin's career (1966 – 1977) and exposes the process of Nin's self-construction versus media-invention that made her a celebrity author and a representative figure of popular feminism. On the one hand, I present how Nin participated in spreading out her fame, how she embraced feminist discourse in order to advance her prominence. I focus on analysis of her public appearances such as lectures and interviews. On the other hand, I demonstrate how Nin’s image was articulated in the press throughout the USA during that time, focusing on reviews of her diary and articles on her. What is of special interest is how Nin was positioned in relation to feminism which was, just like Nin, in its prime during that period.

Finally, Chapter Four – “Success, Scandal, Sex and the Search for the ‘Real’ Anaïs Nin” – establishes how Nin’s reputation has been built after her death in 1977 and how her name and persona have been used in popular culture since. Myra Macdonald writes about Princess Diana who “like a multifaceted hologram . . . shifted identity as the light fell on her. Fairy-tale princess, fashion leader, media manipulator, devoted mother, fun-loving girl, jilted lover, compassionate carer, sad bulimic, Princess Diana appeared at times to possess as many personae as designer gowns” (1). We can conceive of Nin in a similar way. Concentrating on the key moments in Nin’s relationship to the marketplace – the release of erotica in 1977; the publication of the four volumes of unexpurgated diaries in the 1980s and 1990s; the launch of the movie Henry and June in 1990; and the publication of two biographies: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin by Noel R. Fitch (1993) and Anaïs Nin: A Biography (1995) by Deirdre Bair – I examine Nin’s posthumous portraits and analyse what cultural phenomena they reflect.
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is twofold: first, to review the most important developments in Nin scholarship and to situate my own study in this tradition; second, to present the theoretical framework that informs this research. In order to analyse the creation of the Nin public persona efficiently, I situate my study between autobiography studies and cultural studies. In particular, I combine celebrity culture studies with those that focus on the author’s (self) representation in the literary marketplace, and I foreground gender as a vital factor in constructing a public personality. This chapter consists of three parts: first, I comment on the reception of Nin’s works in academia; second, I consider autobiography criticism in relation to the diary in general and to Nin’s Diary in particular; third, I discuss celebrity authorship with a special focus on the representation of women artists and writers in the marketplace.

Academia on Nin’s Works

Anaïs Nin’s writings have generated a substantial critical response. Her literary output has been subject to academic and intellectual analyses that have resulted in numerous reviews, a plethora of articles, and several monographs. The scholarship on Nin flourished after the publication of the first volume of her Diary in 1966 and developed mainly in the United States, but Nin has also attracted the attention of critics in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and particularly in Japan. Between 1968 and 1984 six monographs on Nin’s works were published. The first one, entitled simply Anaïs Nin (1968), written by Oliver Evans, was followed by Evelyn J. Hinz’s The Mirror and the Garden: Realism and Reality in the Writings of Anaïs Nin (1971), Sharon Spencer’s Collage of Dreams: The Writings of Anaïs Nin (1977), Bettina Knapp’s Anaïs Nin (1978), Benjamin Franklin V’s and Duane Schneider’s Anaïs Nin: An Introduction (1979) and Nancy Scholar’s Anaïs Nin (1984).

3 The interest in Nin in Japan is so prominent that the edited collection of articles on Nin, Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives (1997), contains a separate section entitled “Japanese Voices on Nin.”
Between 1985 and 1992, no book-length criticism on Nin appeared; however, the critical writings on Nin were sustained (mainly) by Gunther Stuhlmann – Nin’s agent and editor – who began publishing *Anaïs: An International Journal* in 1983, an annual journal which, apart from critical articles, included previously unpublished portions of the diary, Nin’s correspondence, and recollections of Anaïs Nin by her friends. The interest in Nin’s writings was renewed in the 1990s and most definitely was a result of a growing interest in Nin herself after the publication of her unexpurgated diaries and the emergence of an abundance of biographical material.


As for the early criticism on Nin, I outline briefly the main trends up to the early 1990s, using Philip Jason’s *Anaïs Nin and her Critics* (1993). Then, I discuss in more detail the recent works on Nin that were published after 1993 and were not covered in Jason’s study.

**Academic trends in Nin’s criticism up to the early 1990s**

In the useful reference book, *Anaïs Nin and her Critics* (1993), Philip Jason comments on the development of the critical thought on Nin. Not only does he trace and discuss the critical writings on Nin but he also accounts for the assessments critics have made
and relates them to a larger socio-cultural framework. Therefore, in order not to duplicate unnecessarily the work already done by Jason, I rely mainly on his book-length study *Anaïs Nin and her Critics* (1993) and the introduction to the reader he edited, *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin* (1996), in order to present the main tendencies in the Nin literary criticism up to the early 1990s.

First of all, Jason observes that in the early stages of Nin’s reception, critical writings devoted to Nin’s works clustered around several issues such as ‘feminine writing,’ Nin’s relation to Surrealism and Modernism, and her involvement in the women’s movement (Introduction 1-3). Moreover, from the very beginning, Nin’s oeuvre was subject to psychoanalytical interpretations, a trend which has become more visible since the late eighties and which continues to inform recent critical analyses. In the preface to the edited collection, Jason notes that “it would be possible to gather enough material on Nin related to psychoanalytic theory to fill a hefty volume” (Introduction 5).

Secondly, Jason remarks that Nin’s commentators were divided over whether it was her fiction or her diary that constituted her main achievement. He notes interestingly that this was not a question of whether Nin was more skillful as a fiction or non-fiction writer but rather which genre was more valued at a given time. He observes a considerable drop in the critical writings on Nin’s novels in favour of the diary by the 1980s and he attributes this shift of interest to the rising popularity of feminist criticism, to new journalism, and to developments in autobiography studies (*Anaïs Nin* 1). It needs to be remembered that the above phenomena, such as the women’s movement, contributed significantly to the publication of the diary in the first place. As I demonstrate in Chapter Two, Nin tried to sell her diary from the early 1930s, but only with the cultural climate of the 1960s did she succeed in doing so.

Thirdly, Jason points out that frequently it has been Nin herself – as an exemplary figure, a voice of feminine consciousness – rather than her writings that has been of interest to critics (*Anaïs Nin* 2). He states that, “for many who have considered her career, Nin the personage, the personality, is of greater consequence than Nin the artist” (Introduction 3). Julia Casterton similarly notes that, “To write about the ‘work’ of Anaïs Nin would seem perverse. It is surely rather her life that shines out” (224). These observations particularly correspond with this project, since it is the cultural significance of the Anaïs Nin public persona that will be explored.
Finally, Jason comments that, “Writings about Nin make only rare appearances in established journals of literary and cultural criticism. In historical or thematic critical anthropologies and monographs, comment about her work is similarly infrequent” \((Anaïs Nin 11)\); and he emphasises the role of Nin’s academic friends and journals devoted to her in making her reputation. He notes that Nin’s reputation was in the hands of a few critics who were frequently personally acquainted with her \((Anaïs Nin 10)\). Nin indeed collaborated with her critics and tried to influence their analyses. She managed to befriend some of the scholars writing about her works, such as Sharon Spencer, Bettina Knapp, and Evelyn Hinz, and some of their critical studies were published by the same houses that were responsible for the publication of Nin’s books \((Jason, Anaïs Nin 11)\). As a result, Nin had considerable control over the interpretation of her works, and was surrounded by a devoted though narrow circle of critics. The manipulation of the criticism of her writings can be regarded as one aspect of her self-promotion. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Academic trends in Nin’s criticism since the mid 1990s
Interest in Nin’s writings diminished between 1985 and 1992, if we take as a measure a number of book-length studies devoted to a given author. During these years no book-length criticism on Nin was published in the United States. It may seem surprising, especially when we take into account the fact that in the 1980s, as Elaine Showalter observes, “women fully joined the literary juries of the United States, as writers, critics, reviewers, publishers, anthologists, and historians, contributing to the verdicts, and challenging the laws” \((Jury 467)\). Feminist literary theory blossomed in the 1980s and so did women’s studies. So why was Nin pushed to the margins? There is no easy answer and there are a few possible reasons for this critical neglect of Nin. First of all, Nin’s extremely cautious version of feminism did not correspond with needs of any factions of the feminist thought prevailing in the 1980s. For example, it may seem that feminists of radical orientation, such as Mary Daly, the author of \(Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism\) (1978), shared with Nin an enthusiasm for ‘revaluing the Feminine’ \((Beasley 21)\), however, Nin’s claims were not far-reaching enough. Nin certainly stood for the feminine, but rather than being one of Daly’s “wild females,” she would have been classified as Daly’s “painted bird” \((Tong 105)\). “For Daly,” as Tong explains, “painted birds are those women who permit ‘daddy’ to deck them out in splendour, to ‘cosmeticize’ and perfume them, to girdle and corset them” \((105)\). Nin’s
focus on her appearance, the flattering photographic portraits included in her *Diary* and press, the posthumous release of the perfume ‘Anaïs Anaïs’ inspired by her name, and the publication of *Henry and June* which revealed her great dependence on men, made Nin into one of Daly’s “mutant fembirds” (Tong 105).

The decade of the 1980s saw also the expansion of another faction of feminism, referred to by Chris Beasley as REI feminism (where REI stands for race, ethnicity and imperialism) (22). In the 1980s, as Showalter indicates, “the notion of a universal womanhood or sisterhood, unmarked by differences of race, religion, age, region, sexual orientation, and political affiliation, seemed like an outdated utopian fantasy” (*Jury* 493). At a time when women were recognising and confronting their differences, Nin’s self-presentation as a spokesperson for all women lost its currency. It became more evident that Nin spoke from a position of a white, middle-class, and privileged woman and her solutions to social problems were frequently naïve. For instance, shortly after Nin’s death Alice Walker, the author of the acclaimed *The Color Purple* (1983), wrote a very sympathetic obituary in *Ms.*, which, nonetheless pointed out Nin’s limitations. “Anaïs’s apolitical nature,” Walker declared, “was self-indulgent and escapist; her analysis of poverty, struggle, and political realities, mere romantic constructions useful to very few (ghetto children, she is reported to have said, should ‘write’ as she had done, thus escaping their wretched existence)” (46).

Another probable explanation of why critics steered clear of Nin in the second half of the 1980s lies in the publication of her erotica collections, *Delta of Venus* (1977) and *Little Birds* (1979), and the pornography debate which raged for most of the decade. Nin’s erotic stories were considered harmful by one of the leaders of the anti-pornography movement, Andrea Dworkin, as Chapter Four indicates. Moreover, on whichever side of the pornography debate women were, I believe that more and more of them realised that a woman’s perspective on the erotic does not necessarily equate with a feminist one. And finally, the lack of criticism on Nin can be also attributed to the disappointment with Nin after the publication of *Henry and June*, an ‘unexpurgated’ diary that adjusted many of Nin’s self-portraits released in the first seven volumes. This disillusionment with Nin is discussed in the last chapter.

The critical studies on Nin that started to emerge in the mid 1990s were mainly psychologically and/or autobiographically oriented, frequently with a ‘feminist slant.’ The rediscovery of Nin in the mid 1990s is partly attributable to the publication of the unexpurgated diaries and the emergence of biographies of Nin in the late 1980s and the
early 1990s, which brought Nin again to the limelight. The rising prominence of psychoanalytic theories in the United States also contributed to the renewal of interest in Nin, whose works, heavily influenced by psychoanalysis, lend themselves to such interpretations. And new developments in autobiographical theories, mainly driven by feminist critics, played their part in enlarging Nin’s scholarship. First of all, earlier ignored genres, such as diaries, letters and journals, started to garner critical attention in the late eighties. As Smith and Watson explain, although theories of autobiography flourished in the 1970s, critics tended to focus exclusively on autobiography and ignored forms of daily inscriptions (32). Secondly, in the early 1990s theorists of autobiography became interested in memories of sexual abuse and psychic trauma (Smith and Watson 39). Due to emergence of the series of the unexpurgated volumes of Nin’s diary, and especially *Incest*, which was published in 1992 and which dealt with the incestuous relationship with her father, the range of possible debates on Nin expanded.

As for psychoanalytic studies, the most recent work in this tradition is Diane Richard-Allerdyce’s *Anaïs Nin and the Remaking of Self: Gender, Modernism, and Narrative Identity* (1998), which interprets Nin’s works from a Lacanian perspective. Although Richard-Allerdyce gives equal consideration to Nin’s fiction, diaries and her criticism, she strongly believes that “Unlike the prodigious, nearly boundary-less diary from which the *Diary* was drawn, the works Nin published as fiction and criticism provide a formal closure she was not able to achieve elsewhere” (8). Consequently, she demonstrates that for Nin composing fiction “became her stay against confusion” (8).

As for autobiographical approaches, both Suzanne Nalbantian in her book *Aesthetic Autobiography: From Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin* (1994), and Elizabeth Podnieks in hers, *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart and Anaïs Nin* (2001), include a chapter on Nin’s works. While Nalbantian’s study deals mainly with Nin’s fiction, Podnieks’s is entirely devoted to the diary (and therefore it will be discussed in more detail in the next section). Nalbantian creates her own theory of aesthetic autobiography in order to analyse the transformation of lived data into fictionalised discourse and applies it to the reading of four modernist writers: Proust, Joyce, Woolf and Nin. In the chapter entitled “The Mystification of Selfhood in Anaïs Nin,” she demonstrates how Nin’s stories and novels fed off her diary, and referring to Nin’s critical writings, such as *The Novel of the Future*, she also indicates that Nin
herself was preoccupied with conceptualising the process of transmutation of life into fiction. Nalbantian examines the techniques Nin used to translate her life experiences into art, which include “a heightened use of metaphor drawn from concrete images, the proliferation of metaphor into metonymy, the use of analogy, and the variegated symbolisation of obsession” and she concludes that out of four writers considered in her book Nin “was the most aware of the powers of transformative process welding life fact into artefact” (197). Nalbantian’s study is perhaps the most in-depth demonstration of how Nin transformed her life into fictional accounts; however, the argument itself is by no means new, as several critics before her tried to search for parallels between Nin’s diary and fiction, even long before the publication of the unexpurgated diaries which exposed the great extent of similarities.

An interesting study which merges autobiographical and psychoanalytical perspectives is Suzette Henke’s *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life Writing* (2000). Henke posits that autobiographical testimony has a potential to be “a powerful form of scriptotherapy” which allows people to heal from the past traumatic experiences (xv). She concentrates on women authors and expresses a belief that life-writing enables women to reassess their past and to reinvent themselves by temporarily restoring “the fragmented self to an empowered position of psychological agency” (xvi). In the chapter on Nin, Henke concentrates on Nin’s relationship with her father, claiming that his abandonment of the family when she was ten seriously affected Nin’s development. She argues that Nin incorporated the figure of the absent father into the self “as a harsh, implacable parental imago that haunts much of her diary, as well as her autobiographical fiction” (55). Henke’s claim that Nin’s writings helped her to gain control over her life echoes to a degree views expressed by Richard-Allerdycz. They both believe that writing, diary for Henke, fiction for Richard-Allerdycz, saved Nin from a breakdown.

An earlier version of Henke’s chapter on Nin appeared in a collection edited by Suzanne Nalbantian, *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives* (1997), which was compiled after a conference on Anaïs Nin at Long Island University in 1994. Henke’s is one of three articles in a section devoted to psychoanalytic interpretations of Nin’s writing. The other two, by Valerie Harms and Sharon Spencer, examine Nin’s relationship with her two earliest psychoanalysts, René Allendy and Otto Rank. The volume also contains

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4 For example, Bettina Knapp in *Anaïs Nin* (1978), or Nancy Scholar in *Anaïs Nin* (1984).
essays devoted to gender issues. For instance, Philip Jason discusses male characters in *A Spy in the House of Love*, which he finds weak and superficial, while Lajos Elkan does a close reading of the “Birth” story, arguing, in a very essentialist manner, that Nin’s writing is “specifically female” (162). Nalbantian also includes three essays by Japanese critics of Nin. Junko Kimura, for example, outlines the history of translation and reception of Nin’s works in Japan. She demonstrates that in Japan Nin’s fiction has been more successful than her *Diaries*, which she attributes to the fact that Nin’s novels correspond with “the vague and equivocal character of the Japanese language” (213).

Of special significance is Benjamin Franklin V’s essay which examines a history of dust-jackets of *A Spy in the House of Love*. Franklin V argues that the title of the novel repeatedly encouraged publishers to create erotically suggestive covers, thus cashing in on deceiving the public (the novel was largely devoid of sexual content) (“Selling”). His chapter seems to suggest that Nin’s writings were linked to the erotic long before the appearance of her erotica.

Helen Tookey’s *Anais Nin, Fictionality and Femininity: Playing a Thousand Roles* (2003) is the most recent monograph devoted wholly to Nin, and it is worth mentioning that it is a study produced in the United Kingdom, unlike most criticism which has come from the United States. In her complex study, Tookey both examines different versions of Nin – “as a modernist, as a woman writer, as a public (and controversial) figure of the women’s liberation movement, as a set of conflicting and often extreme representations of femininity” (1) – and demonstrates Nin’s own fascination with the multiplicity of a self. It was Tookey’s book that referred me to Brenda Silver’s study of Virginia Woolf as a cultural sign, *Virginia Woolf Icon* (1999), which is of great significance to this research. Tookey’s book, however, differs considerably from Silver’s. Tookey, unlike Silver, grounds her study in the interpretation of Nin’s work, and following Rita Felski’s underscoring the need of placing an analysis of literary texts in the context of their production and reception, she provides a socio-cultural framework for Nin’s writings. Hers is therefore more of a literary study in context, rather than a cultural analysis.

My own study converges with Tookey’s on two counts: a focus on feminism and an examination of different versions of Nin. Although both of our projects show special interest in feminism, we approach it in different ways. While Tookey explores how Nin has been regarded by various feminist critics, which allows her to highlight the differences between various feminisms, I focus mainly on a dual process of
appropriation of feminist discourses by Nin and attribution of these discourses to Nin by feminists who had an interest in reclaiming her for the women’s movement.

As for analysing different versions of Nin, the second part of Tookey’s last chapter mirrors to a certain extent the objectives of my own project. Basically, what Tookey attempts to do in this part is developed in my own project to a full-scale study. Tracing various responses to Nin – feminist ones from the 1970s, the fanzine tributes from websites devoted to Nin, and the reviewers’ evaluation of two biographies from British magazines and newspapers – she demonstrates how Nin has become “a mobilizer of fantasies, a kind of symbolic place-holder” (189). Tookey claims that, “Just as Nin created for herself an identity (or non-identity) in the realm of legend and fantasy, so too . . . many women respond to her in the same register: Nin becomes a mirror reflecting various faces of femininity and feminine sexuality, including ‘liberated’ woman, enigmatic femme fatale, garish old hag, and predatory monster” (189). I follow this strand of her investigation and continue to trace the Nin figure and what it has come to represent. Unlike Tookey, however, who devotes only the fraction of her last chapter to this issue, I explore it in a full-length study which allows me to examine Nin as a cultural phenomenon in a more systematic and comprehensive way. Besides, Tookey concentrates mainly on Nin as a mirror of different faces of femininity, whereas my study explores other aspects of Nin’s public persona.

**Autobiography Criticism and Nin’s Diaries**

It is the Nin persona rather than her writings that will be the subject of this research; however, as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, Nin is inextricably linked with her diary and the self-presentations she projected in it, so the references to her diary are inevitable. For this reason, the following section places the diary as a genre in the history of autobiography criticism before summarising the response of critics to Nin’s diary practice.

Despite the fact that women kept diaries for many centuries – as Margo Culley and Harriet Blodgett makes evident in their studies of, respectively, American and English women[^5] – serious critical interest in their output did not emerge until the 1980s.

In a way, women diarists were doubly excluded – by virtue of their gender and by virtue of the genre they practised. Laura Marcus elaborates: “Not only were women autobiographers self-evidently outside the ‘Great Men’ tradition with which many autobiographical critics operated; generic definitions served to exclude forms of ‘life writing’ such as diaries, letters and journals, often adopted by women and those outside mainstream literary culture” (1).

The omission of women and forms of daily inscription was arguably due to historical developments in autobiography criticism. As Sidonie Smith illustrates, critics of autobiography were influenced for most of the twentieth century by Georg Misch’s multivolume *History of Autobiography*. Misch regarded important public personae – reputed leaders and famous personages – as “the ‘representative’ and appropriate subjects of what he designates as autobiography” (Smith, *Reading Autobiography* 114). And although Misch helped to establish autobiography as a valid subject of study, his aid in shaping the canon of great autobiographical works came at a price. His focus on the representative value of autobiography and on prominent individuals meant leaving out other forms of life narratives (diaries, journals, letters) and people who did not achieve the status of an eminent person (women, slaves, or the colonized) (Smith, *Reading Autobiography* 114-5).

And while early feminist critics of literary autobiography concentrated on the absence of women writers from the canon, by focusing on autobiographies of distinguished women, they frequently ignored other forms of life narratives. Only critics of, what Smith terms as, the third wave of autobiography criticism, informed by postmodern and postcolonial theories, challenged Misch’s identification of autobiography with greatness and individuality, and broadened the range of autobiographical texts by including forms of writing which had been considered trivial and marginal and by focusing on stories of ‘common’ people (Reading Autobiography 137). Thus, for instance, Hoffman and Culley incorporated in their collection, Women’s *Personal Narratives* (1985), women’s letters, diaries, journals and oral stories; whereas Brodzki and Schenck expanded the canon of women’s self-writing even further by including in their *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women’s Autobiography* (1988) such autobiographical forms as film, poetry and painted self-portraits (Smith and Watson 11-

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6 Sidonie Smith’s *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography* (1987) is one example of autobiography criticism which demonstrated that autobiography studies from the very infancy privileged works by written by men. However, her focus on autobiographies of famous women failed to cater for a variety of autobiographical voices.
In the 1980s studies devoted solely to diaries also started to emerge. Margo Culley’s *A Day at a Time: Diary Literature of American Women, from 1764 to the Present* was published in 1985, and it was followed three years later by Harriet Blodgett’s *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen’s Private Diaries* (1988).

Nin’s *Diary* has received a fair amount of attention in terms of autobiography criticism. Even the first studies on Nin’s works, published in the 1970s and the early 1980s, included comments on her *Diary*. This somewhat premature consideration of this largely ignored genre was arguably due to the fact that Nin’s *Diary* was very popular and also because, despite its label, it did not conform in many respects to its generic standards (just to give one example, the entries were very elaborate and only roughly dated). This led many of Nin’s critics to wonder how best to characterise Nin’s endeavour. Most frequently Nin’s *Diary* has been classified as a hybrid form somewhere between autobiography and fiction. For example, in her study of Nin’s oeuvre, *Collage of Dreams: The Writings of Anaïs Nin* (1977), Sharon Spencer acknowledges that parts of Nin’s *Diary* were rewritten and edited and maintains that the *Diary* “is neither a diary in the usual sense – a candid, uncensored record of the events of a life – nor is it a work of fiction like the frankly autobiographical ‘novels’ of writers like Leiris, Celine or Henry Miller” (121). From Spencer’s account emerges a common vision of a diary as truthful and unedited record, challenged later by many diary critics. A few contributors to the volume *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays On Women’s Diaries* (1996) argue that diaries are less private that we would like to think. For instance, Lynn Z. Bloom, in her article “‘I Write for Myself and Strangers’: Private Diaries as Public Documents,” proposes to distinguish between diaries of writers and private diaries of nonprofessional people. She argues that “for a professional writer there are no private writings” and she lists Nin as one of these writers (Bloom 24). She demonstrates that writers shape even their most intimate writings, such as diaries, with an audience in mind, thus creating public documents. This observation particularly resonates with Nin’s diary practice: As I show in Chapter Two, Nin consciously worked on her diary, long before it was published.

Franklin and Schneider in their *Anaïs Nin: An Introduction* (1979), propose to distinguish between the original diary and the published version and they encourage readers to bear in mind three points when reading the *Diary*, which are: “(1) editorial responsibilities in creating the *Diary*, and the implications of these responsibilities; (2) the question of genre, that is, to what extent is the *Diary* ‘pure notebook or journal’ and
to what extent has it been consciously structured, rearranged; and (3) the function of
time, consumption, and organization upon the finished product” (169). Consequently,
they point to the contributions of Gunther Stuhlmann in editing; they ponder how the
thirty-year gap between actual writing the diary and its editing might have influenced its
form and content; and they propose to regard Nin’s *Diary* as “a new and created work
of art”, “a piece of literature” (172).

For another Nin critic, Nancy Scholar, Nin’s work is “part autobiography, part
journal” (24) – a view that echoes Lynn Bloom’s and Orlee Holder’s claim that Nin’s
*Diary* is “a hybrid form, alternatively functioning as diary, writer’s notebook, and
autobiography” (qtd. in Bobbitt 191). This tendency to regard Nin’s *Diary* as a form of
autobiography or a work of art, also apparent in some reviews of the *Diary*, might be an
attempt not only to best describe Nin’s work and its internal attributes but also to put
value on Nin’s writings at a time when the diary form was still highly undervalued.
Laura Marcus, for instance, thus explains the frequent comparison of autobiographies to
novels: “by establishing a rapprochement between autobiography . . . and the putatively
more secure category of the novel, critics felt able to remove the troubling ambiguity of
the aesthetic status of autobiography” (234).

Nin’s *Diary* has triggered several debates, two of which are particularly
important for this study, namely what is the role of Nin’s diary and how does Nin
construct herself in its pages. Sharon Spencer is one of the first critics to summarise
aptly the various roles Nin’s diary held for her throughout her lifetime:

> Nin has used her Diary as a place to express her fantasies, her ambitions, her terrors and
> joys. . . . It offers room for as many styles of writing as exist, as many types of entries
> the diarist wishes to include. It is an ideal writer’s notebook, a treasure of characters,
> incidents, and themes. Besides helping Anaïs Nin perfect her style, her diary has been
> friend and companion of her desperate confidences. . . . As the years passed and Nin
> developed as a writer, she began to make her Diary a work of art. . . . Nin has used her
diary to fill out her life; it is a complement; it is the expression of the dimensions of her
self that her life has not always had room for. (*Collage* 118-9)

Here a few functions of the diary emerge: the diary served as a record, as a companion,
as a writer’s notebook, as a fount of ideas, as a springboard for fiction writing, as a
space where the writer can practise her craft, and where she can express herself freely.
Despite these multiple purposes that Spencer attributes to the diary, she construes the diary as something external to Nin.

While for Spencer the diary remains external to Nin, Tookey conceives of the Nin-diary relationship as much closer. Her main argument is that "for Nin the diary is not simply a ‘record’ of lived experience; rather, the ‘life’ and the writing impact on each other in a process of mutual feedback, creating life lived, as Nin puts it, ‘within stories’" (15). A similar treatment of the diary, not as external to Nin, but as a process that helps to build up Nin’s identity is offered by Podnieks, who offers the best examination of Nin’s diaries so far in the light of recent autobiography theories. Podnieks too considers the diary as the space where the construction of the self takes place (284). Throughout her study, she discusses various roles of the diary, starting with Nin’s childhood when Nin used it “to create, by means of imagination, a world of her own” (284). She also claims that the diary was a substitute for Nin’s father, explaining that, “Not only was the diary for her father, but often it became her father. She spoke to it and feared it just as she would her father” (293). Furthermore, Podnieks conceives the diary as “a kind of stage upon which women may practice various roles” (301). Nin’s diary is therefore regarded as a site of struggle where she was able to negotiate the existing scripts of femininity. And finally, Podnieks, like Diane Richard-Allerdyce and Suzette Henke before her, considers the diary as a space that helped Nin to deal with traumatic experiences in the form of an alleged abuse by her father. According to Podnieks, the opportunity to deal with this experience on the pages of the diary helped Nin to “emerge from being a victim in childhood to become a survivor in adulthood, one who controlled how the incest was (re-)experienced and narrated” (328).

I want to contribute to this discussion of the various roles of the diary by suggesting that Nin’s diary was also a powerful marketing tool, an idea that I elaborate in Chapter Two. I believe that the diary, which at some point grew to a legendary status in literary circles, became Nin’s bargaining card. However, it is not my aim to reduce it solely to this function. I conceive the diary as a very complex phenomenon, and casting it to this single role would unfairly diminish the multiple roles which it played throughout Nin’s lifetime. I therefore believe that these various functions, noted by Nin herself and by her critics, are not mutually exclusive. I do question, however, some of the roles that critics ascribe to Nin’s diary. In Chapter Four, for instance, I investigate
Nin as a trauma survivor and her diary as a space that helped her to deal with alleged sexual abuse.

Another debate regarding Nin’s *Diary* that I hope to revive is the construction of her self. The claim that Nin created a character in her *Diary* is not a new one and several of Nin’s critics have pointed to this fact. Nin’s *Diary*, therefore, has been frequently regarded to represent Nin not as she is, but the Nin persona. In fact, this claim gained even more ground as theories of autobiography advanced and the creation of the persona started to be perceived as an inherent characteristic of any autobiographical writing. Thus, critics begun to comment not only on Nin’s persona in the *Diary* (the published version), but also in her original diary.

Focusing mainly on the published *Diary*, Franklin and Schneider regard each volume as a journal-novel, and Nin as the main character surrounded by other minor characters (176). They wonder whether the success of the first diary influenced the editing of subsequent volumes. They ask, for example, “Did Nin consciously or unconsciously characterize herself in a certain way in the first volume, and then change the portrayal in later volumes?” (175). Nancy Scholar also points to Nin’s conscious intentions to present herself for the public in a specific manner. She remarks that, “the reader must consider the legend Nin wished to create in these pages of a courageous, independent woman struggling to forge her own identity and art” (21).

However, Scholar is also one of the first Nin critics, if not the first one, to point out that by creating her diary, Nin created herself. She writes that Nin “came to know herself as she composed her own image, and that image altered the person she was or would have been” (15). So while the early critics, such as Franklin V and Schneider, emphasised Nin’s self-presentation in the published *Diary*, later critics, such as Scholar, Podnieks and Tookey, influenced by the expanding autobiography criticism, began to stress the creation of the self in general, which is inevitable in any self-writing process.

“Narrative,” as Paul John Eakin argues, “plays a central, structuring role in the formation and maintenance of our sense of identity” (123). He also notes that in forming our sense of self we rely on models of identity which are supplied by the culture we live in (Eakin 46). Influenced by the latest theories of autobiography, Podnieks analyses Nin’s diaries from the interdependent perspective “which would admit that the self is always in part invented by and perpetuated through its linguistic and textual configurations but also by its social, cultural and historical contexts” (42). Tookey echoes this view and argues that Nin “creates narratives and self-
representations which are neither entirely fictional nor entirely historical” (15). So, Nin’s self-constructions are partly invented and partly influenced by the society, culture and times she lived in. In my analysis of Nin’s public persona, I am not interested in what social repertoires Nin draws on or challenges; rather I focus on the finished product of her self-presentation and how she chooses to present herself to her audience.

While most critics of Nin attempt to conceptualise constructions of her self comprised in her diaries, Elyse Lamm Pineau, in a very interesting essay, “A Mirror of Her Own: Anaïs Nin’s Autobiographical Performances,” examines Nin’s stage self-presentation created through her public performances. Analysing unpublished audiotapes of Nin’s lectures, interviews and discussions, Pineau identifies “continuity between her autobiographical and performance personae” (234) and regards Nin as the embodiment of her *Diary*. This is yet another, and very significant, level of the construction of the Nin public persona, and one that goes beyond the boundaries of autobiography theory.

In Chapter Two, I draw on autobiography theory and the works of Nin’s critics in order to chart different levels of construction of the Nin public persona. I argue that this construction is multileveled and complex with Nin’s diary (both original and published) at the heart of it. By mapping out the various planes of Nin’s self-creation, I also hope to make this process more transparent for Nin’s future readers and critics.

**Celebrity Authorship**

The generation of the 1960s . . . virtually succumbed to a love affair with Anaïs Nin. An Anaïs Nin cult took root and flourished in the 1960s Californian milieu, with a literary guru that appealed not only to the burgeoning flower children of the era but to women everywhere searching for revised subject-positions in the modern world. For many of us, Nin emerged as symbol of women’s nascent liberation in love and life – a female hero charting new creative and emotional territories for the second half of the twentieth century. (Henke, *Recollections* 119)

This is how Suzette Henke, one of Nin’s scholars, recalls Anaïs Nin’s presence in the 1960s, simultaneously pointing to a cult of personality that accompanied her persona. Nin became a cultural symbol, a role model, a celebrity revered by many of her contemporaries. Her persona became of equal, if not of greater, importance to her writings. And, as Loren Glass reveals in *Authors Inc.*, marketable ‘personalities’ of
writers have been for a long time considered as significant as the quality of their literary production (2).

In *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000), Joe Moran argues that celebrity authors are the ones who “are reviewed and discussed in the media at length, who win literary prizes, whose books are studied in universities and who are employed on talk shows” (6). He gives an example of writers such as John Grisham or Danielle Steel who despite being popular authors, are “more read than read about” (6). Taking into consideration the fact that Nin was described as “one of the most frequently interviewed of twentieth-century authors” (Cutting xix), that in 1976 the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed her “Woman of the Year,” and that in 2010 *Esquire* placed her among “The 75 Greatest Women of All Time,” along with Sappho, Joan of Arc, Queen Elizabeth, Marie Curie, Marilyn Monroe, Gloria Steinem, Aretha Franklin, Janis Joplin, and Meryl Streep, Nin definitely qualifies as a celebrity author, especially if we situate her in the American culture of the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Although Nin may not be readily recognisable nowadays the way Meryl Streep is (especially on this side of the Atlantic), the worldwide recognition, as Jeffrey J. Williams points out in his essay “Academostars: Name Recognition” (in which he examines the academic fame), is part and parcel of the Hollywood model of stardom which cannot always be brought to other star systems, because it fails to consider their distinctiveness (373). Williams notes that, “The celebrity draws his or her power not from culture at large but from his or her particular audience” (376). Therefore, casting Nin as a celebrity author, I take into consideration both the specificity of literary celebrity and a particular cultural and historical context that contributed to the elevation of Nin to the status of a star.

According to Moran, literary celebrity differs significantly from other forms of celebrity mainly due to its precarious position between literature, still frequently associated with ‘high’ culture, and the marketplace, which has been frequently blamed for bringing this ‘high’ culture down (4). He argues, however, that the phenomenon of the literary star “tends to be mediated in such a way that that the author represents both cultural capital and marketable commodity” (6). He also states that a celebrity author is one who is commercial successful, yet at the same time is capable of remaining a

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7 Nin was described as “Babysitter to big boys of American literature. Her diaries outshine, and out-scandalize, them all” (“Greatest Women”).
cultural authority; in other words, is able to maintain a balance between being an artist and a star (6). Throughout this thesis, I indicate how Nin maintains an equilibrium between being an artist and a star. I argue that her self-presentation as an extraordinary artist released in her *Diary* is later softened by Nin herself in interviews and lectures where she claims to be “one of us,” – a ploy frequently used by stars to suggest proximity with their audiences. Nin’s presentation of herself as an Everywoman was essential to her public persona at a time when women were searching for role models.

Regarded from this perspective, Nin’s self-presentations in the *Diary* (and beyond it) become a significant component of her celebrity. Moran highlights the complicity of authors in constructing their own image, arguing that literary celebrities are partly produced through their own writings and their self-marketing strategies (22). A central argument of his study “is that authors actively negotiate their own celebrity rather than having it simply imposed on them” (10).\(^8\) Nin’s self-constructions on the pages of her *Diary* are, however, just one aspect of the making of her public persona. A “star’s image,” as Richard Dyer notes, “is also what people say or write about him or her, the way the image is used in other contexts such as advertisements, novels, pop songs, and finally the way the star can become part of the coinage of everyday life” (*Heavenly Bodies* 2-3). So, the co-producing role of readers/viewers in making the celebrity image is paramount. As P. David Marshall explains, “To make sense of celebrity culture inevitably leads us to a study of how an extended industry helps to construct the celebrity as text – what we could call the cultural economy of celebrity production – as well as how audiences transform, reform, and remake these texts and meaning” (Introduction 9). Or, in the words of Brenda Silver, “The meaning of the star image . . . is never divorced from a production/consumption dialectic in which consumers are potentially as significant as producers” (17).

In his seminal study, *Stars* (1979), Dyer puts texts that constitute a star image into four categories: promotion, publicity, films, and criticism and commentaries. These categories can easily be adapted to discuss Nin’s celebrity. Films that feature a given star correspond in a way to Nin’s *Diary*, since, as I have already indicated, it contains a carefully constructed character. “Promotion”, Dyer remarks, “is probably the most straightforward of all the texts which construct a star image, in that it is the most

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\(^8\) The ability to co-produce fame and star image is not limited to literary celebrities, however. For instance, several essays in *Madonna Connection* (1993) indicate that Madonna’s success stems from her ability to manipulate her image and her own involvement in the publicity process.
deliberate, direct, intentioned, and self-conscious” (60). In the case of film stars, promotion involves studio announcements, fashion pictures, ads, public appearances. In the case of Nin, it entails blurbs, advertisements of books in the press, and book signing tours. Publicity, as Dyer observes, is not, or at least does not appear to be, a deliberate image making and it includes interviews, gossip columns, articles, in brief – “what the press finds out” (61). Focusing on literary celebrity, Moran uncovers, however, that nowadays many of the marketing strategies that fall under the category of publicity (reviews, cover stories, interviews) are in fact carefully managed by the publishing houses which can go as far as securing a book review or prearranging the interviews with the author (41). While Moran includes reviews in the publicity category, according to Dyer’s classification, they would rather fall into ‘commentary and criticism.’ The fact remains, however, that reviews are important because first, they constitute a part of celebrity making, and second, they are good indicators of cultural changes. Reviews, as Charlotte Templin writes, are “sites of conflict over values and beliefs” (30). They are a battleground where contemporary cultural ideas are explored and debated. Dyer’s ‘commentary and criticism’ can be taken to correspond to evaluations of Nin’s works by scholars.

Dyer therefore highlights the importance of various media texts in constituting a star’s image and in this thesis I consider a variety of texts that contributed to the creation of the Nin persona. In order to capture the complexity of a star’s image, Dyer employs the concept of “a structured polysemy.” “Polysemy,” as Dyer explains is “the multiple but finite meanings and effects that a star image signifies” (63). The fact that polysemy is structured means for him that sometimes certain images of the star reinforce one another, while sometimes the emerging images have the potential to contradict one another (63-4). Images of stars also develop and change over time, and, most importantly, they reflect the dominant constructions of gender, class and ethnicity.

Dyer’s concept of a “structured polysemy” is central to Brenda Silver’s study *Virginia Woolf Icon* (1999). Silver, who explores how Virginia Woolf has been constructed as cultural icon, employs “structured polysemy” because, as she explains, it effectively “captures both the multiple, contradictory representations of Virginia Woolf and their necessary limitations: limitations of available texts and ideological/institutional constructs at any particular moment” (17).

Tracing multifaceted images of Woolf in popular culture, Silver is preoccupied with two research threads simultaneously. “One narrative tracks the versioning of
Virginia Woolf: the proliferation of texts and responses that produce an increasingly multifaceted, postmodern Virginia Woolf who changes with the text, the medium, the discourse, the historical/cultural moment. A second narrative tracks the repetitions, the reiterations, enacted in and through Virginia Woolf’s star appearances, highlighting those that have so powerfully tied her image and its meaning to fear” (81). So, on the one hand, Silver demonstrates the abundance of various images of Woolf; and, on the other, she establishes a pattern common to all these appearances, namely the frequent association of Woolf with fear. Silver focuses on repetitions of Woolf’s images in order to show their performative role in regulating our perception of gender, sexuality and cultural class (81-82). She notes that, “Both her appearances and their reception in the more popular media soon reveal the same fractures and anxieties found in the realms of high culture: anxieties about gender and sexuality, anxieties about social class and cultural class” (4).

Silver is also interested in how the figure of the author is appropriated and used to endorse certain claims, events, and products; or, in her own words, “what cultural, social, and political ends are articulated and served by the disparate uses of … [writer’s] name and face” (84). Consequently, considering this aspect of a celebrity – as cultural phenomenon – I examine not only how Nin has been represented but also what social anxieties about sexuality, femininity, and authenticity are expressed through these representations. Just like Silver, who using Schickel’s formulation of the star’s emblematic nature (e.g. Einstein being a symbol of intellectuality, Gertrude Stein of incomprehensibility), asks “What is Virginia Woolf emblematic of?” (90), I, too, pose similar questions: What does Nin stand for?; What sorts of claim does she come to support?

Another premise central to Silver’s study and reflected in this thesis is the importance of the visual in the construction of the star image. Silver argues that “the visual aspects of Virginia Woolf icon are crucial to her visibility and her resonance” (18). As a result, Silver analyses photographs, caricatures, posters and other visual representations of Woolf. I follow Silver in this assumption and devote part of my analysis to discuss Nin’s photographs. Unlike Silver, however, I also focus on Nin’s own participation in distribution of her photographic portraits, as during her lifetime she was greatly involved in what images of her were to circulate.

In her discussion of Woolf’s iconicity, Silver makes gender one of the focal points of her analysis and she emphasises the role of the women’s movement in the
canonization of Woolf. Such focus is also discernible in the following publications: Charlotte Templin’s *Feminism and the Politics of Literary Reputation: The Example of Erica Jong* (1992), Toril Moi’s *Simone de Beauvoir: the Making of an Intellectual Woman* (1994), and Andrea Noble’s *Tina Modotti: Image, Texture, Photography* (2000). All of these critics foreground gender as an essential factor that decides how an artist is represented in the marketplace, and most of them (except for Moi) highlight the importance of the feminist movement of the 1960s and the 1970s to rising these artists to prominence.

Templin’s study of Erica Jong is wholly devoted to the reception of a woman artist (a writer in this case) and therefore her argument that gender determines how a woman’s creations (novels in this case) are evaluated is most clearly defined. Templin provides a historical overview of the response to works by women writers and she demonstrates that the assessment of women’s writings in terms of their lives has not been exclusive to Jong but has been typical of women writers in general. The best known historical example here is probably the reception of *Jane Eyre*, which, as Showalter points out, was regarded as “a masterpiece if written by a man, shocking or disgusting if written by a woman” (qtd. in Russ 27). Consequently, Templin strongly affirms that being a woman writer influences the way her works are assessed and the way she is portrayed in the media.

Following Joanna Russ’s (27) argument that women writers, especially in the nineteenth century, were judged on the basis of what is appropriate of a woman, Templin sets out her argument: “As my discussion of Jong’s reviews will demonstrate, Jong’s sin is not being a proper woman. The one period in which criticism of her softened was when she became a mother, which happened during the writing of her novel, *Fanny*. Not only was *Fanny* well-received, but journalistic articles about her at this time portrayed a new Jong: the happy mother and suburban matron” (4).

Motherhood is an especially crucial element in portraying and judging women writers, and Nin, as I indicate in this thesis, is no exception. The harsh criticism of her abortion, discussed in Chapter Four, proves the case. Templin also follows Russ in her

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9 According to Silver, however, in the case of Woolf gender constantly intersects with cultural class. She also states that the extent to which Woolf’s representations come to normalize our understanding of gender or class depends on a particular context (Silver 82).

10 Tracing responses to Beauvoir’s works, Moi concludes that “Much to my chagrin I soon discovered that, on the whole, the very same sexist clichés surface unchanged from the 1950s to the 1990s: feminism has clearly not made that much of a difference, at least not in the French cultural climate” (75).

11 Moi and Noble offer also readings of Beauvoir’s writings and Modotti’s photographs respectively.
assumption that in the twentieth century literature written by women has not necessarily
been assessed in terms of what is appropriate of a woman, but rather in terms of
confessional writing. Confessional writing, Russ says, cannot aspire to be treated as art
since it is too personal (29). This debate over the value of confessional writing will be
evident during discussion of reviews of Nin’s *Diaries*.

Templin also considers the role of media in transmitting feminist messages
indicating that the media often caricature feminist ideas (73). Her claim that “Jong’s
novels are utilized so frequently to explore readers’ feelings about feminism . . . [that] one must conclude that the response to her novels is inseparable from the social
reception and construction of feminism” (11) strongly resounds with Silver’s
assumptions that Virginia Woolf’s appearances often become a pretext to articulate
“fear of feminization” or “fear of feminism” (11). The response to Nin and her *Diaries*
also serves as a site of cultural debates about femininity, and to a lesser extent, about
feminism.

Toril Moi is another critic who considers gender as a significant variable that
determines the response to a writer’s works. In the part of her study devoted to the
analysis of Simone de Beauvoir’s reception, Moi shows that Beauvoir’s status as an
intellectual involved in politics, combined with the fact that she is a woman, provokes
much hostility from the reviewers (73-4). She claims that what a woman writer thinks,
says or writes becomes of a secondary importance and she is frequently reduced to a
personality, to who she is (78). A similar phenomenon is apparent in the case of Anaïs
Nin. And although Nin and Beauvoir stand for extremely different types of femininity:
while Beauvoir is frequently accused of being “unfeminine,” Nin is often regarded as
the essence of femininity, they are both regularly discussed in terms of their looks,
characters and lives. Moi also points to another interesting fact, namely that Beauvoir’s
multi-volume autobiography has been frequently regarded as an evidence of relentless
narcissism, which, she argues, is not the case in reviews of male autobiographies – a
point that echoes Templin’s discussion of confessional literature (80). Accusations of
self-absorption have also been made against Nin and her *Diaries*.

In her study of the photographer Tina Modotti, Andrea Noble is not interested so
much in a response to Modotti’s works as in the mechanisms that had been at work
since the 1970s and which made the signature ‘Modotti’ an attractive product on the
market in the 1990s. Noble observes that the rediscovery of Modotti by feminists in the
1970s and a codification of her body as Mexican (= exotic) and Communist (= radical)
were two factors that contributed to her popularity. She describes the sale of Modotti’s photograph *Roses* which brought a record-breaking sum at auction in 1991 and explains why the photograph was appealing to its then-to-be-owner Susie Tomkins\(^{12}\) – the co-owner of Esprit. According to Noble, the signature ‘Modotti’ was attractive to Tomkins [sic] because it was the signature of a *radical woman* photographer which allowed Tomkins to “complement her own status as a woman entrepreneur” (33). Noble concludes that in the 1990s gender “was a category that sold images” (34). Recounting how the picture was later used on the tags of Esprit clothes, Noble explains that, “By investing in Modotti’s signature, Tomkins [sic] was investing in an iconic body to promote herself and thereby to enhance the salability of her products. These products, we should not forget, clothe the female body” (42). This leads Noble to reach the following conclusion about the place of feminism in the marketplace: “The whole process of the salability of the signature/body ‘Modotti’”, Noble writes, “illustrates how feminism, despite its ongoing critique of commodification of the female body, is itself subject to market forces” (29). In Chapter Three I demonstrate how the women’s movement used Nin to promote their own ideas and how Nin used the movement to sell her books.

The above studies reveal that an artist’s gender determines how she is received and written about. They show that the formation of Woolf’s, Jong’s, Modotti’s and Beauvoir’s public image was strongly linked with the fact that they were *women*. Although academia for some time now has attempted to conceptualise gender not in terms of two opposite binaries but rather in terms of fluid and unstable identities, looking at Nin as a woman writer is justified because it seems that in the popular consciousness the binary woman/man is still very ingrained, and if less nowadays, it definitely was back in the 1960s. This study will therefore contribute to the body of literature on how women artists, and women writers in particular, have been evaluated.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study is to examine the process of the construction of Anaïs Nin’s public persona by herself and by popular media and to investigate the socio-cultural processes that contributed to the formation and fossilisation of Nin’s public images. I

\(^{12}\) I believe Noble means Susie Tompkins rather than Tomkins.
also analyse the cultural significance and commercial potential of the Nin persona. I am aware that this thesis is a reflection of the growing celebrity culture and studies which accompany this phenomenon. My study is therefore rooted, as all studies are, in the culture and historical time it stemmed from. This research was possible because the celebrity culture studies moved on from studying almost solely film stars to applying this theoretical framework to various types of fame.
CHAPTER TWO: PUBLIC PROMOTION OF THE PRIVATE SELF: ANAÏS NIN’S SELF-CONSTRUCTION IN THE DIARY

I was thinking of Fame, of that mysterious and sublime power that raises one man above his fellow creatures and stamps him as an individual, a personality and an extraordinary being. (Anaïs Nin)

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the ways in which Nin took an active part in both the construction of her public image and the management of her career. In the Diary she developed a set of self-presentations which she continued to deploy, once she began to interact with her audience after the publication of the first volume of the Diary in 1966. Nin was a very conscious self-marketer and her efforts to get published, which can be traced to the very early stages of her career, certify that. She became an insider in the publishing industry and knew the value of a good advertisement. That is why she frequently sent her books to reviewers, wrote to colleges and universities asking for an opportunity to lecture, and befriended many of her critics. The following excerpt from Nin’s letter to her accountant serves as a good example of her marketing awareness: “Harcourt Brace is so stingy with its review and publicity copies . . . I have had to spend almost all my royalties giving copies to excellent reviewers. . . . Every lecture, every foreign contract, every translation, entails gifts, review copies etc.” (qtd. in Bair 490). Similarly, in a letter to Jean Fanchette, she provides publicity advice: “Each time I publish a book . . . I send an announcement to 1000 names and addresses, and friendly books shops, make announcements to all the Universities.” Nin therefore actively engaged in the process of self-promotion.

This chapter concentrates exclusively on Nin’s self-marketing in and through the diary. There are two significant reasons for starting with the diary. First, it is virtually impossible to separate Nin the public person from Nin the Diary persona. Nin became the director and star of the Diary. In a sense, she became her Diary. Second, the published version of the diary was the first medium that launched certain representations of Nin that would later be either reinforced or contested as Nin’s visibility in the public increased. Nin unarguably contributed significantly to the
creation of her own legend. Hence this chapter begins by considering the marketing potential of the diary. I show Nin’s artistic attitude towards her diary writing and I outline her attempts to publish it. In the next section, I demonstrate how Nin and her diary are intertwined. I discuss the relationship between Nin the person, Nin the diary persona, Nin the Diary (published version) persona, and Nin the public persona. I then examine what sort of images Nin generated in her Diary. With the publication of each volume, Nin released certain self-presentations of herself that she had to maintain once she appeared in front of her fans. The forms of self-representation available to women at a given historical time do not interest me as much as the finished product of Nin’s self-presentation – the portraits she made available for her audience in the published version of the Diary. This chapter relies chiefly on textual analysis of Nin’s Diary. However, endorsing the statement that “Modern celebrity is unthinkable without the presence of the camera” (Stimpson xii), I also consider visual representations of Nin, and more specifically, the photographs included in the Diary, and their role in the construction of the Nin phenomenon. This allows me to examine the interrelations between the word-portraits and the visual ones.

Preparing the Diary for Publication and Attempts to Have it Published

Theories of autobiography have changed our perception of life writing, in the sense that any genre falling into this category (e.g. diary, autobiography, memoir, journal) is no longer regarded as an uncomplicated record of reality, but rather as a construction of it. Still, diaries are commonly seen as the most private and honest of autobiographical writings, written for personal purposes rather than publication. That is why, while reading a diary, we have an impression of discovering the truth about its author. We want to believe that a diary helps us to get to the essence of its creator and understand him or her better. And that is why both Sidonie Smith in *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (1987) and Elaine Showalter in her newly published literary history of American women writers *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx* (2009) decide to leave out diaries, together with letters, journals, recipes and wills from their discussions. Their objective is to focus on women who wrote for publication. They, therefore, assume, as probably most people do, that diaries are personal writings and are not intended for literary marketplace (Smith 19; Showalter xv). And commonly
enough, if diaries are published it is usually without, or sometimes against, their writers’ consent and most often after his or her death. Moreover, diaries that are released are usually by people who managed to achieve some degree of recognition during their lifetime.\(^{13}\) We are interested in them because we have managed to develop some kind of (imaginary) relationship with their author and we are curious about his or her life, motives, and inspirations.

If we imagine the diary as a candid and private record written by someone who by the time of its publication is well-known and usually dead, Nin’s *Diary* does not conform. When her diary was published in 1966, it was neither private, nor, as it turned out after the release of the unexpurgated series, truthful. It was not published because the person who wrote it was extremely famous, and she was not dead either. As far as Nin’s status in the literary marketplace in the 1960s is concerned, she was heard of in artistic circles but scarcely known to the general public. Therefore, her diary was not that of a famous person. Nin’s diary also violated the ‘rule’ of privacy, since for a long time before its release Nin shared it with numerous agents and potential publishers, as well with her friends (Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, Robert Duncan, Maxwell Geismar, Lila Rosenblum, James Leo Herlihy, Daisy Aldan), her family members (her cousin Eduardo, her husband, her brother Joaquin), and her analysts (Dr Otto Rank and Dr René Allendy).

Although Nin was by no means a popular writer before 1966, her diary acquired a legendary status in literary circles long before it was published, as Edmund Wilson’s and Karl Shapiro’s reviews attest. The opening sentence in Wilson’s 1944 *New Yorker* review of *Under a Glass Bell* – twenty-two years before the first *Diary* appeared in print – announces: “The unpublished diary of Anaïs Nin has long been a legend of the literary world, but a project to have it published by subscription seems never to have come to anything” (75). Shapiro’s review of the first volume of the *Diary* in *Book Week* begins in a strikingly similar way: “For a generation the literary world on both side of the Atlantic has lived with the rumour of an extraordinary diary” (154). The diary that developed into a legend (or was constructed as one) among literati became Nin’s bargaining card. The marketing function of the diary emerges most clearly when we trace the history of the attempts to rewrite it and to have it published. To present

\(^{13}\) This is not always the case and Anne Frank’s diary serves here as a counterexample.
this history, I draw on both the manuscript and the published version of the diary, as well as on Bair’s biography of Nin.

The idea to publish the diary came up for the first time at the beginning of the 1930s in France. On October 1931, Nin wrote: “I have begun to copy Journal from the very beginning that is, from eleven years old on” (MS Journal 32: 18). Two days later she observed: “A strange life I’m leading, because copying out the first part of my Journal I seem to be spinning the whole web out from the beginning while at the same time working on the end” (MS Journal 32: 19). A similar observation appears in a letter to Maxwell Geismar twenty-four years later, in 1955: “While typing out vol. 60, I write about what developed and concluded and catalyzed twenty years later. It all falls into place.” So, in the 1930s Nin started a process that would continue for most of her life: making transcripts and rewriting the existing volumes, while at the same time producing the new ones.

Nin was determined to make her journal public. As early as 1933 she showed her diary to William Aspenwall Bradley, a literary agent, who, as Bair observes, “with his Russian wife, Jenny, formed the most famous international literary agency for half a century” (184). Though he expressed considerable enthusiasm for the diary, in the end he pronounced it, as Bair reports, “unpublishable” (184). Nevertheless, the acquaintance with Bradley must have been very informative for Nin and his comments definitely influenced her future rewritings of the diary. Nin quoted their conversations regarding her journal extensively and scrupulously noted down Bradley’s observations. During one such discussion, Bradley read from her journal, pointing out the passages he considered effective and identifying those he considered too dramatic or too extreme. Nin noted down, for example, his remark on volume 32: “Henry, he says, doesn’t come off as a character – it’s overdrawn, overwritten, overintense [sic], exaggerated, inhuman” (MS Journal 44: 30). Although in the beginning she resented his comments, she later realised that “Bradley’s virulence has had the effect of accentuating my awareness of the note quality of the journal. It is mostly notes which my enemies may say I present as literature. My life has been one long note taking – sum total: little writing. I owe him this realization” (MS Journal 44: 71; Incest 265). As a consequence, at the beginning of the 1930s Nin began to acquire a new awareness about the literary potential of the diary and began to regard it not only as her private companion but also as a creative endeavour, one that she needed to work on.
When Nin began to perceive her diary as art, her writing became more conscious and deliberate. On the first page of Journal 54, which is in a big A4 format, unlike the previous journals which are in A5 format or smaller, Nin noted: “Not the small notebook I could hide. A larger, honest, expansive book given to me by Henry, on which I spread out beyond the diary. . . . It lies on my desk like a real manuscript. It is a larger canvas. No marginal writing done delicately, unobtrusively, but work, assertion” (MS Journal 54: 1; DII 218). She therefore began to regard her diary writing as a piece of work, a creation. She was an artist ready to fill in her blank canvas.

The process of revising the diary went on for most of the 1930s but intensified particularly in 1936 and 1937. Journals covering these years are full of entries referring to her work on the diary. In a letter to her cousin Eduardo Sanchez, Nin explained her occupation in the following way:

I took volume 45 of the first trip to New York and I made it bloom like a hot house camellia, I Proustanize, only dynamically. For example, [take the] page [where I describe when] Miriam came to be analyzed. She is my favourite patient. Her confession touched me. “What confession?” Suddenly I sat down and I wrote the whole confession, naturally and diary-like, but full and complete, like a geyser. Inserted it. By the time I was through there were no more “notes,” but a full smooth book, a book, not a notebook. I wrote up Rank that way, filled out, enriched. (MS Journal 55: 125)

Nin expanded stories, remade portraits, and filled her rewritten copies with details she did not record before. Her diary ceased to be a notebook and started to be shaped into a book. She worked on it as if it were a novel, yet, at the same time, she tried to preserve its journal-like, spontaneous quality. She compared herself to Proust, whom she greatly admired, and aimed at turning her life story into a work equivalent to his *Remembrance of Things Past*.

Nin also began to present her diary as an artistic undertaking to others. For example, in a 1937 letter to Jean Paulhan, a French writer, critic and publisher who expressed an interest in the diary, Nin highlighted in particular the novel-like quality of her journal, explaining that “Each volume contains, in a sense, a novel, an incident, a drama” (MS Journal 55: 151). Thus, she presented the diary not as a random collection of private notes, but as intentional and coherent writing. In the same letter she also attached a list of themes contained in the diary that reads as follows:
Separation from father and trip to New York; A year as a painter’s model to support mother and brothers; A year as mannequin; Trip to Havana with wealthy aunt and presentation to society. Society life, luxury; Marriage in Havana and first novel on artists and models; Trip to Paris; Spanish dancing studied. Appearance on stage; Book on D. H. Lawrence and new worlds entered through it; Seeing father again, reconciliation; Love affairs – about fifteen of them; Two psychoanalysis fully described, in which I seduce my analysts; Birth and death of a child; Playing at being analyst myself in New York, with hundreds of confessions, and incidents, a bursting of full life; Book of House of Incest. (MS Journal 55: 151)

Obviously, at that particular time, Nin was quite open about her life and was ready to share her most intimate experiences (note, however, the absence of a love affair with her father). A glimpse at the above list offers a good indication of which events she regarded as marketable and interesting for her future audience. First, Nin presents herself as an independent woman, trying by various, usually artistic means, to earn her living: as a model for painters, as a writer, as a dancer, as an analyst. Second, she portrays herself as a worldly figure who travels extensively and moves between various societies – a model for painters, but also, a participant in high, luxurious circles of her family. Finally, being a good advertiser, she also paints an atmosphere of scandal and mystery, saying that her diary contains fifteen love affairs, her seduction of her own psychoanalysts, and personal revelations about her patients.

Jean Paulhan was one of a few people in the mid 1930s interested in the possibility of making the diary public. Another was Denise Clairouin, who wanted “all the diaries to be published” (D II 115). Shortly after expressing her enthusiasm, Clairouin started to doubt the possibility of the diaries appearing in print: “People can’t bear such nakedness. . . . The childbirth story will immediately be censored” (D II 175-6). Nevertheless, Clairouin sent them to the British publisher Faber and Faber. Despite being very much impressed with the diary, Faber and Faber rejected it “with a great deal of reluctance” (D II 215). Maxwell Perkins of Scribner was another person to whom Clairouin showed the diary. At his request Nin prepared an abridged copy of six hundred pages, and although, as Nin noted in the diary, he was initially “thunderstruck” by it, in the end, he did not decide to publish it (D II 278).

In 1937 another attempt and, needless to say, another failure to publish the diary took place. This time Henry Miller got involved and set out to publish Nin’s childhood
diary. In November 1937, Nin and Miller sent out the circular saying that Henry Miller was going to publish Anais Nin’s diary *Mon Journal* in the original French in a limited production of 250 copies. The book was supposed to be printed by the Imprimerie Ste-Catherine in Bruges, Belgium. The front endpaper of Nin’s fifty-fifth Journal, covering the period from September to November 1937, contains a list of the subscribers to this publication. Because so few people were interested, the project failed. That was possibly the last attempt to publish the diary in Europe. At that point, Nin moved back to the United States in 1939, as the World War II broke out.

In 1940-41, Nin was represented by John Slocum, Henry Miller’s agent who, as Bair reports, showed the diary to every publishing company in New York (264). At around the same time, Nin also sent the diaries to the Boston publisher, Houghton Mifflin. She must have sent the diaries including her sexual adventures, for the commentator who evaluated the diary noted: “When the author does prepare it for publication, my advice would be cut out the redundancy rather than sex.” And then he or she adds: “In fact, I’d trim lightly there, and with an ear merely on the law. The erotic element is part of its uniqueness” (MS Journal 65: 238). Sex and scandal were, therefore, considered marketable. However, at the same time, the publisher did not like the self-reflexive nature of Nin’s journal and remarked that “such morbid preoccupation with one’s inner life will seem trivial. My guess is that it is a book to see light about five to ten years after the war is over” (MS Journal 65: 238). The cultural climate of the early 1940s was apparently unfavourable for such intimate revelations. Nin’s explorations of personal life seemed petty in the light of World War II.

Nin, however, continued to work on the diary even more intensely in the 1940s, revising and copying her earlier written volumes. Some of Nin’s journals are indexed, and, the index of the diary from December 1940 to July 1941 is full of entries that mention her work on the diaries or her copying of pages. Bair describes the process of rewriting in the early 1940s in the following way:

First, with the original diaries beside her, Anaïs rewrote by hand all those parts that she thought were publishable. This included almost everything but the incest with her father and most of the entries about her brother Thorvald. Then she gave the rewritten volumes to Virginia Admiral, who typed them onto “easily transportable” rice paper. Each separate diary volume was then inserted into its own cardboard folder, secured by brass tacks. The diaries she rewrote by hand were locked away with the originals, and the typed copies were made available to selected readers. And so, when Anaïs offered
to let someone read the “original” diaries, she was really showing those she had handcopied from the true originals. Mostly, however, she showed the typed copies, all the while insisting each was transcribed word for word from the originals. (279-280)

What is more, in the early 1940s, Nin devoted a lot of time to reading her diaries and pondering on their nature, trying to find a suitable technique for recomposing them. She began to record her observations on the rewriting process that would make her revisions more effective in the future. As a consequence, the manuscripts are full of reflections on the process of diary editing. In February 1940, for example, she attempted to regroup her diaries, and to analyse their content. She tried to see them as a coherent opus. She thus commented on her own journals:

Journals 32-33-34 – They recreate a state like opium smoking where one little incident, one caress, one scene produced enormous diffusions – The writing is all about feelings produced, enormous expansion in sensation, removed from reality. . . . 35 to 45 – later diaries are focused on human drama – movement – the writing is lighter. 45 -50 – The focusing gains in intensity. In the last 50 to 60 there is fulfilled climax and fusion of the dream, the mirage and human life. They flow together. (MS Journal 63: 127)

Or, to give another example, the MS Journal 65 (November 1941–October 1942) contains Nin’s suggestions for drawing coherent portraits of people mentioned in the diary. It is a seven-page entry in which Nin cites examples from her previous diaries and writes about the need to discover and capture each person’s “hidden demon” (64), gestures (69), and aura (70). The work on the diary becomes, therefore, more and more self-conscious, and her reflections definitely facilitated her final construction of her self-portraits, as well as the portraits of others, in the published version of the diary.

In the 1940s, Nin also started to produce an expurgated version of her journal by deliberately excising the scandalous material. In October 1940, she records that “Henry is reading the ‘abridged’ diary from which all the love affairs are extracted – nothing left but the outer relationships with Allendy, Rank, Artaud etc.” (MS Journal 63: 352). So, the journal that the public saw in 1966 started to take shape in the early 1940s.

In 1942, Nin was more engaged in printing her fiction on her own press than in revising the diary. She also suffered from depression at this time, possibly fed by her lack of success. Journal 66, covering the year from October 1942 to October 1943, contains an index with as many entries about working on the press as ones saying “early
to bed,” “terrible depression,” or simply “depression.” She came back to the diary this time to find the solace in it: “Diary is obviously the diary of neurosis – the labyrinth – I am in it again – drawn inward” (MS Journal 67: n.pag.).

The idea of publishing the diary re-emerged again in the 1950s. Nin’s novels sold poorly and received mostly unfavourable reviews. As a result, she once again turned her attention to the diary and reconsidered its publication. From 1953, she also became determined to sell manuscripts of the diary. As Bair recounts, “She vowed to pursue the ‘fantasy’ of selling the diaries until it became a ‘concrete fact.’ Each time she wrote to a college or university to request a lecture engagement, she also sent a list of the diary’s contents and the names of some of the persons who figured in it, hoping to entice a library to buy it” (379). In 1955 she decided to “devote the rest of [her] time to preparing diaries for publications” (D V 237).

In the mid 1950s, Nin also met Gunther Stuhlmann, who would become her lifelong agent, editor, and friend. When her initial collaboration with Stuhlmann did not result in any immediate ventures, she wrote in 1961 to Allan Swallow, the owner of a small, independent press, explaining her situation and asking him whether there was a possibility of the cooperation between them. She suggested a few undertakings that might be beneficial for both of them: either to reprint *The Winter of Artifice* “which has been out of print for a long time and which I get orders for”; or to print an unpublished manuscript – *Seduction of Minotaur* (she herself guaranteed to sell one thousand copies); or to do a collection of her novels *Cities of Interior* (D VI 253). The diary served again as the bargaining card, for she wrote, “There is one added factor, that I have always said whatever publisher puts out my novels I will give an option on the diaries (for the future)” (D VI 253-4).

Allan Swallow reprinted most of her fiction in the 1960s, none of which had any significant success. Both he and Gunther Stuhlmann kept looking for a publisher for the diary. As Bair notes, “James Silberman, of Random House was the most interested among the many to whom Gunther offered the diaries” (474). However, Silberman wanted to condense the material so that the first volume covered much larger span of time that Nin planned: “The very least that should be encompassed in a single volume is the entire thirties” (AN quotes Silberman’s letter in her letter to Hugh Guiler, 1964). We know that the thirties were eventually covered in two published volumes, not one, as Silberman wanted. As Stuhlmann related in a letter to Anais Nin, Silberman thought it was necessary to produce a book that would strongly affect the audience,
would live up to the expectations that had been built around the diary for so long, and
would be of a comparable calibre to Simone de Beauvoir’s memoir. And in order to
accomplish these aims, Silberman considered it was essential to cut down some
personal and reflexive material and to have more sketches of people instead. “In other
words,” as Stuhlmann communicated, “he is looking perhaps for more ‘portraits’, more
‘action’ and he seems to feel that ‘condensation’ will ‘speed up’, make the book more
‘solid’” (letter to AN 6 Nov. 1964). Nin reacted quite strongly to Silberman’s
suggestions and in a reply to Stuhlmann she wrote indignantly: “A diary is not an action
film. . . . What greed, too, and entre nous, there is more in my diary than in the diary of
Simone de Beauvoir. . . . [Hers] is deadly dull” (letter to Stuhlmann 9 Nov. 1964). She
also added that she wanted to preserve the integrity of her diary and did not agree to
condensation of the material. Eventually, the project was dropped.

Peter Israel of Putnam was another editor who saw the manuscript of the diary.
Putnam had earlier published Miller’s letters, which were edited by Nin and to which
she held copyright, but in the end, Putnam too declined the diary. In a letter to Nin,
which she quoted in her letter to her husband Hugh Guiler, Israel lavished a lot of praise
on her writing, admiring her self-krevelation and the skilfully drawn portraits in her
diary. However, at the same time, he expressed some doubt as to “whether these pages
are commercial or not” (Anaïs Nin to Hugh Guiler, circa Jan. 1965). His main concern
was the fact that Nin was unknown in the literary marketplace, despite some printed
novels, and he worried whether the confessions of an obscure individual could interest
people. He mentioned that he decided to show the diaries to his wife to get another
opinion. In a letter to Hugh, after quoting Israel’s letter, Nin expressed her indignation:

As you can see, with the prise [sic – praise] there is still the commercial reservation.
He will now try it on his wife, on the salesman, on the doorman, the elevator man, the
night watchman, the cleaning woman, the delivery boys, the telephone girl, and then he
will ask me to make it sound like candy, and like Simone de Beauvoir, and like Mary
Mac Carthy [sic – McCarthy] and yet keep it clean for the Ladies Home Journal, and
perhaps rewrite it in the third person, make Allendy a negro physician, my father a taxi
driver, for human interest, and instead of a dead child, write about nine children . . .
and throw in a few more famous names, but be sure and do not do name dropping as
Charlie Chaplin did. (circa Jan. 1965)
Taking into consideration that at that point Nin had been trying to publish the diary for more than thirty years, her irritation at Israel’s comments seems justified. Nin was perfectly aware that the publishers wanted a bestseller. They tried their best to forecast what the public might like and they made writers adjust their material accordingly so that it reached the largest number of people. By then, Nin also knew that the power of her diary was not in her self-revelations but in the characters who were portrayed in it, since both Silberman and Israel emphasised the importance of the famous people she mentioned. That is why the manuscript of the journal sent to publishers was frequently accompanied with a register of the famous people described in the diary.

Allan Swallow, who tried to find a co-publisher for the diary, showed it, among others, to William Morrow. When Nin was rejected by Morrow, she wrote in a letter to Swallow that she wished he himself was rich enough to print her diary on his own, adding immediately that “But you know, it is not the money, as I will get money from every country in Europe, it is the fact that we will get no reviews, as with the other books.” If we read this remark, together with Nona Balakian’s – the New York Times critic – observation on the situation in American publishing she shared with Nin a year earlier, we get a clearer picture of the publishing industry: “there is a terrible snobbism in this country about publishing with the ‘right’ publisher. What I mean is, unless a writer is published by the leading publishing houses (Knopf, Random, Harpers, Harcourt etc.), he [sic] is either completely neglected or treated in a light way – unless of course he has something sensational or fashionable to say” (letter to AN). Nin was therefore perfectly conscious that unless her diary was published by one of the leading publishers, it would be most probably doomed to obscurity. She knew that being published with the prestigious company would guarantee, if not success, then at least reviews and publicity.

In the meantime, Nin kept editing the manuscript, working closely with her brother Joaquin, who contributed greatly to the accuracy of their family story, and with Henry Miller, who offered advice, corrected some details, and demanded a few changes. She finalised the editing of the diary on 18 May 1965: “The diary is now completely edited, retyped, ready to go. It has been accepted everywhere by [sic – but] the USA” (letter to Lynne). Finally, in 1965, Hiram Haydn of Harcourt Brace offered her a contract for the Diary (letter from Gunther Stuhlmann to AN, 1 July 1965). Thus the first volume of the long-marketed Diary was published in 1966.
To sum up, from the 1930s onwards Nin was preoccupied with turning the diary into a coherent and publishable work. She also engaged actively in promoting it and aimed at seeing it in print. The story of Nin’s publishing effort is interesting in several respects. First of all, it becomes apparent that up to the 1960s there was no room in the American literary market for the type of writing represented by Nin’s diary. Nin’s revelations were considered too intimate and self-absorbed. Even at the beginning of the 1960s the publishers considered not Nin’s inward journey but the portrayal of famous people as the main asset of the diary. Secondly, the history of Nin’s publishing attempts goes against the common assumption that diaries are written for private purposes. Nin’s diary was deliberately and consciously created, and shaped by the comments of many people, such as Henry Miller, William Bradley, or the editors of big publishing houses. Nin frequently revised it, treating it as art and trying to find the best methods to shape it. This concurs with Lynn Z. Bloom’s conclusion that diaries of professional writers are public documents.

The contentious issue here, however, is the label under which Nin’s work was published. In fact, Nin might have fared better in a long run, avoiding the outrage and disillusionment of her audience after the publication of her unedited diaries, if she did not label her work as ‘diary.’

Nancy Scholar points this out, stating that, “In the case of Nin’s Diary, the problem is magnified by the label “Diary” which immediately conjures up the image of an honest, daily record, which this Diary is not” (27). And she continues on the importance on label: “we do not respond to works labelled “autobiography” or “diary” the same as we do to those labelled “fiction”, even knowing that their authenticity is illusory. This is part of the meaning of autobiography – this expectation of truthfulness, intimacy, and self-revelation – which leads to an intensification of emotional response on the part of the reader” (27).

This expectation of truthfulness described by Scholar is what attracts the audience to autobiographical writings and should Nin’s Diary appear under a different label, it might not have been successful, or it might not have been published in the first place. Such was the case of James Frey’s highly controversial A Million Little Pieces (2003) which Frey apparently did try to sell as fiction, as Joe Hogan of the New York Observer reports, only his publisher, Nan A. Talese, “declined to publish it as such” (n.pag.). As a result, the book was published and advertised as a memoir, and after

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14 Nin’s Diary was released as The Journals of Anaïs Nin in the UK.
being endorsed by Oprah’s Book Club, it became a big success. In 2006, however, a scandal erupted after it turned out that this alleged memoir contained many facts fabricated by the author. So perhaps the real problem here is our need for clear labels and the fact that the publishing industry takes advantage of that. Or, is it an inadequate classification system where works such as Nin’s and Frey’s are fitted into categories they do not really belong to but which sell?

**Various Levels of the Construction of the Nin Persona**

Anaïs Nin and her diary are so closely intertwined that speaking about her and her public persona (which will be the subject of the next chapter) is not possible without speaking about her immense original diary and the published *Diaries*. It was the *Diary* that introduced Nin to a larger audience, brought her recognition, and launched a set of certain images of her. Before I move on to discuss Nin’s self-portraits included in six volumes of the *Diary*, I establish and examine the relationship between Nin the person, Nin the diary (=manuscript version) persona, Nin the *Diary* (=published version) persona and Nin the public persona. In order to understand the relationship between these various levels of construction of the Nin persona I employ a range of useful theories and concepts. First, conceptualising the relationship between Nin the person and Nin the diary persona, I turn my attention to theories of autobiography. Second, in an attempt to comprehend the link between the original and published diary, I make use of Peter Hamilton’s concept of a double construction which he employs in relation to documentary photography. Finally, I bring in P. David Marshall’s notion of textual and extra-textual dimension of celebrity performance in order to consider the connection between Nin the *Diary* persona and Nin the public persona. Ultimately, the aim of this section is to facilitate understanding of the construction of the Nin persona which is multilayered and complex and also to point out the crucial role of the *Diary* in this process.

**Nin the person vs. Nin the diary persona**

What I consider in this section is the relationship between Nin the person and Nin the persona that appears in the original diary. First, I argue that, although Anaïs Nin left us with 35,000 pages of manuscripts of the diary and fifteen published volumes easily
available to anyone, getting to know the ‘real’ Anaïs Nin is impossible. Then I indicate how keeping the diary might have impacted on Nin’s life.

There are two reasons to advocate the idea that discovering the ‘real’ Anaïs Nin is not possible. First of all, there was no ‘real’ Anaïs Nin. Taking the postmodern view of identity as fluid, unstable, and impossible to fix, I assume that no one has an essence, a true and coherent core that is there to be discovered. People and their identities are multifaceted and changeable, so for this reason, impossible to pin down. The second reason is related to the nature of language and the writing process. Language was the medium in which Nin chose to capture and convey her-selves. And, as she observed in the following passage, she became aware that it was impossible to express her-selves effectively and completely in writing:

It seems to me now that when I write I only write consciously or at least I follow the most accessible thread. Three or four threads may be agitated like telegraph wires at the same instant, and I disregard them. If I were to capture them all I would be really . . . revealing innocence and duplicity, generosity and calculations, fear and courage. The whole truth. I cannot tell the whole truth simply because I would have to write four pages to the present one. I would have to write always backwards, retrace my steps constantly to catch the echoes and the overtones because of the vice of embellishment, the alchemy of idealism which distorts the truth every moment. (MS Journal 54: 90)

In this fragment Nin demonstrates her awareness of both the complexity of human experience and the impossibility of capturing it in words. She knows that writing embellishes and distorts the reality and that an attempt to communicate the ‘truth’ is doomed to fail, since the ‘truth’ is complicated and multidimensional. She grapples therefore in a way with the question tackled by the theorists of autobiography, namely what is the relation between the reality and the record of it, between a real-life person and a text persona.

In her study of American women’s diaries, Margo Culley urges us to remember that “diaries and journals are texts, that is verbal constructs” (217) and that “all diarists are involved in a process, even if largely unconscious of selecting details to create a persona” (218-9). In a similar vein, Felicity A. Nussbaum notes that “The diarist pretends simply to transcribe the details of experience, but clearly some events are more

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15 This fragment in a slightly changed form can be read in Diary II: 233.
important to the narrative ‘I’ than others” (165). Nin’s diary therefore contains not the ‘real’ Anaïs Nin but the Nin persona.

There is also another interesting dimension of the relationship between the real person and the diary persona. Writing about American women diarists, Culley observes: “Some evidence exists that the persona in the pages of the diary shapes the life lived as well as the reverse” (219). Similar observations emerge from discussions of Nin’s diary by both Podnieks and Tookey. They claim that not only does Nin construct the text and textual persona(e), but also Nin’s own identity as a person is affected in the process of self-writing. Podnieks, for instance, observes that “The writer of any life text necessarily creates herself in the process of self-documentation”, and she considers the diary as the space that facilitates the construction of the self (284-5).

While we do not have a chance to measure effectively how Nin’s identity was influenced by her self-presentations in the diary, there is some textual evidence that Nin regarded herself in certain circumstances as a character in the novel. She writes, for instance, “Literature is an exaggeration, a dramatization, and those who are nourished on it (as I was) are in great danger of trying to approximate an impossible rhythm. Trying to live up to Dostoevskian scenes every day. And between writers there is a straining after extravagance. We incite each other to jazz-up our rhythm” (D I 117).

Nin frequently expresses her longing for intensity of experience. This provokes a fascinating question, namely how much the need to experience is triggered by the need to have something interesting to describe. Nin observes: “I really believe that if I were not a writer, not a creator, not an experimenter, I might have been a very faithful wife. . . . But my temperament belongs to the writer, not to the woman” (Henry and June 12). When one wants to write (and especially a story of one’s life, as Nin did), one wants to have something interesting to write about, and a housewife’s existence usually does not provide extremely captivating stories. Therefore the possibility exists that writing incited Nin to experiment with her life.

What is more, bearing in mind the fact that Nin shared her diary and tried to publish it from the 1930s, we can speculate about how diary writing was guided by the awareness of the audience and the need to present her- selves in a particular way. Margo Culley emphasises the importance of an audience, whether real or imagined, conscious or unconscious. She writes: “The presence of a sense of audience . . . has a crucial importance over what is said and how it is said” (218). And she adds that many diarists suppose some kind of audience, even if it is the diary itself, addressed in many
diaries as “Dear Diary” (Culley 217). Nin’s audience from the 1930s was real rather than imagined, and we need to bear this in mind while reading Nin’s self-presentations. In this regard Nin’s diary differs from the diaries of people who never engaged in bringing their daily inscription to public light and whose diaries were published posthumously.

To sum up, it would be neither possible nor advantageous to determine to what extent Nin the diary persona reflects Nin the real person, if for the simple fact, that Nin the ‘real’ person is impossible to capture. As a result, the original diary, rather than reproducing Nin the person, contains her self-made portraits, which also reflect social and cultural repertoires at a given historical moment. I will not be particularly interested in this level of self-construction, as it has already been studied by such critics as Podnieks and Tookey. Rather than investigating the forms of self-presentation available to Nin and discourses that might have shaped them, I am interested in the next level of self-construction and the finished product of it: the published Diary.

16 Elizabeth Podnieks’s study Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart and Anaïs Nin (2001) gives a detailed analysis of Nin’s diaries in the light of recent theory of autobiography. Podnieks places Nin in a line of other diarists, naming both those who influenced Nin and those who were inspired by her diary. She points to similarities and differences between Nin’s diary practice and the practices of other diarists, such as, for example, the habit of sharing the diary with others, which was common among many female journal-keepers, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and which also characterised Nin’s work. Podnieks treats the diary as a female space where women, traditionally confined to the private sphere, were able to express themselves freely. She is particularly interested in how gender codes determined the construction of identity and self-presentation in the diary. She regards the diary as a “textual battlefield” where struggles with the self are played out and registered and where traditional roles assigned to women are either accepted or subverted (63). She demonstrates how Nin created her textual self by both appropriating and rejecting social scripts of an appropriate behaviour and expression for a woman. Podnieks also shows how certain cultural developments influenced diary habits of the four women writers she studies. She illustrates, for instance, the great impact of psychoanalysis on Nin’s diary writing, arguing that “her sense of self is an embodiment of his [Freud’s] theories of a neurotic, fragmented psyche, which informed so much of modernism” (311-12). And finally, she discusses the influence of other writers on Nin. She claims, for example, that both D. H Lawrence and Henry Miller had a great impact on Nin’s ability to write openly about her sexuality – a subject that had been taboo for many women. (For example, in Professions for Women Virginia Woolf states that although she managed to kill the angel in the house, she is still unable to write about her experiences as a body.) Helen Tookey devotes part of her monograph, Anaïs Nin, Fictionality and Femininity: Playing a Thousand Roles (2003), to Nin’s diary, demonstrating how Nin narrativizes her self and her life. According to Tookey, Nin’s diary writing exemplifies two paradigms within feminist autobiographical theory. On the one hand, there is a recognition of the multiplicity and fictionality of the self (which is the focus of poststructuralist and deconstructionist theories); on the other hand, there is a pull towards the unity of identity and an emphasis on female experience (in the mode of such feminist critics as Estelle Jelinek who point to the specificity of women’s self-writing). Tookey, like Podnieks, highlights the importance of psychoanalysis to Nin’s self-narratives and to the creation of her identity. She concentrates in particular on the ways in which Otto Rank’s ideas influenced Nin’s life and writing.
Nin the diary persona vs. Nin the Diary persona
The previous section considered how Nin the person and Nin the diary persona are interrelated. This section examines the relationship between Nin the diary persona and Nin the Diary persona, so, in other words, the connection between the original diary and the published one. Exploring the connection between Nin the diary persona and Nin the Diary persona, I employ Peter Hamilton’s concept of a double construction of documentary photography.17

Hamilton describes the construction process that takes place before pictures reach the viewer. It is a double process consisting of two phases. We may say that the portraits Nin presented in the published Diary to her readers were also doubly constructed. Hamilton explains: “First, the photographer is involved in a process of construction in choosing and framing his or her images as ‘to make known, to confirm, to give testimony to others’” (86). In an analogous way, Nin created herself on the pages of her (original) diary. Like a photographer, she first had to choose what to put in the diary. And she admitted that it is impossible to give a full view of life and herself: “I sometimes doubt that this can be considered a complete record of a life” – Nin writes about her journal and she further explains: “Not because I have not written every day, but because I have not written all day, every hour, every moment. . . . The moment I catch and fix, when I can spare a few minutes and sit down to write, is only one of thousands which go into the making of a day” (Journal of a Wife 26). Once she selected what to write down in the diary, Nin needed to decide how to ‘frame’ it. And, as I demonstrated in the previous section, Nin devoted a lot of time and energy to inventing the best technique for the diary. Consequently, in the original diary she framed herself in a sequence of shots.

Then, a second process of construction takes place. In the case of documentary photographs it is a process of selection “out of their original ordering and narrative context to be placed alongside textual information and reports in a publication” (Hamilton 86). In the case of Nin’s diary, it is a process of preparing the diary for publication – selecting parts of materials, rewriting them, elaborating them or avoiding

17 Introducing documentary photography at this point may seem striking at first, but is not so when we consider that the common preconceptions about authenticity and realness of diaries can be put side by side the expectations we held towards photographs. As Timothy Dow Adams explains in his study Light Writing and Life Writing: Photography in Autobiography (2000), both photography and autobiography have frequently been regarded as truthful representations of the reality, and, as a result, they have not been considered as art for a long time.
repetitions, adorning them with the photographs, thus making them more readable and attractive for the reader. Therefore, following this photographic comparison, we may say that in the Diary Nin gave us an album of photographs that she decided to develop out of many other images she took with her digital camera. What is more, the pictures available to us are greatly retouched, and some of her portraits are blurred and unclear.

There is also a question of an audience which must have played a crucial part in determining the material selected for publication. Margo Culley stresses the importance of an audience to the diary writing. By my arrangement of levels of self-construction, she refers to the first level: writing in the original diary. In the second level of self-construction, which is the process of editing, an audience comes to the forefront. Since readers’ reactions (in the form of letters and reviews) to the consecutively published Diaries were available to Nin, she must have taken them into consideration while arranging the material, elaborating or consolidating it, making it coherent, readable and contemporary.

How this process of the double construction occurred can be clearly seen in Nin’s account of her friendship with Henry Miller. In the first seven volumes of the Diary, Nin presents their relationship as friendship and literary collaboration only, while the unexpurgated volume Henry and June and Nin’s biographies revealed that they were also engaged in a very passionate sexual affair. Moreover, Nin manipulated not only the content of the Diaries but also their form. Take, for example, Nin’s entry on first meeting Henry Miller from the original diary and the one she developed Diary I. Here is the passage from original diary:

I’m singing, singing, and not secretly but aloud. I’ve met Henry Miller. When I first saw him stepping out of the car and walking towards the door where I stood I went blind, in my usual way. Blindly, I looked at him with a second vision. I saw a man I liked. I saw a mouth which was at once intelligent, animal, and soft, strange mixture. Then my eyes opened and I saw a man who was likeable, not overbearing, but strong, a human man, who was [intelligible word] aware of everything (In his writing he was flamboyant, virile, animal, magnificent). “He is a man whom life makes drunk” I say that inwardly “He is like me.” (MS Journal 32: 77)

And here is the ‘same’ entry from Diary I:
When I saw Henry Miller walking towards the door where I stood waiting, I closed my eyes for an instant to see him by some other inner eye. He was warm, joyous, relaxed, natural.

He would have passed anonymously through a crowd. He was slender, lean, not tall. He looked like a Buddhist monk, a rosy-skinned monk, with his partly bald head aureoled by lively silver hair, his full sensuous mouth. His blue eyes are cool and observant, but his mouth is emotional and vulnerable. His laughter is contagious and his voice caressing and warm like a Negro voice.

He was so different from his brutal, violent, vital writing, his caricatures, his Rabelaisian farces, his exaggerations. The smile at the corner of his eyes is almost clownish; the mellow tones of his voice are almost like a purring content. He is a man whom life intoxicates, who has no need of wine, who is floating in a self-created euphoria. (D I 14-5)

In this case, Nin elaborates, rather than condenses, the notes taken after the actual meeting with Henry Miller on 3 December 1931. The original entry serves as a rough draft that Nin expands and embellishes. To every original sentence, Nin writes two or three. In this way she makes her text clearer and more interesting for her audience. For instance, the fragment from the original entry, when Nin says that she went blind, is slightly confusing, while in the published version it makes perfect sense: she explains that she tried to grasp Henry intuitively, with her “inner eye.” Her rewritings also make the text more attractive: she uses similes (comparing Miller to a Buddhist monk and his voice to a warm Negro voice), literary epithets (Rabelaisian farce), and many adjectives in her description.

To sum up, before the Diary reached its readers, it went through a process of a double construction. First, in the original journals Nin represented her experiences, emotions, and reflections as she lived through them, making necessary choices as to what to and how to record. Then, preparing the diary for publication she selected which of the whole spectrum of her-selves she is willing to present to the public. Once both the early and unexpurgated diaries were released, they challenged her carefully self-coined images. The Diary is, therefore, multi-layered, consisting of Nin’s version of her-selves which she recorded as she lived them, rewritten at various stages and finally ‘cropped’ to suit the audience and legal requirements.
Nin the *Diary* persona vs. Nin the public persona

In this section I explore the connection between Nin the *Diary* persona and Nin the public persona. I start with P. David Marshall’s division of star performance into two dimensions: the textual and the extra-textual. His categorisation will help us to think through the process of creating the public personality, and also to understand the connection between Nin’s *Diary* and Nin the public persona.

For Marshall, the “textual” refers to the star’s performance in the domain s/he represents. So, for an actor it would be acting in a film, for a sportsperson it would be playing sport, for a musician it would be singing at a concert, and in the case of Nin, the “textual” would be writing. Then, there is the “extra-textual” which for Marshall stands for the performance of everyday life of public personality (Introduction 6). According to him these two layers produce public personality, or celebrity. Consequently, he posits that to make sense of the star involves not only the analysis of the primary text (e.g. film performance, or, in the case of Nin, her *Diary*), but, first and foremost, the study of magazine profiles, television interviews, and the fans’ involvement in celebrity reception (and simultaneous co-construction) (Introduction 10). These two dimensions – the textual and the extra-textual – produce an interesting intersection, namely, as in the case where an actor or an actress becomes identified with his or her character or role, so Nin’s *Diary* and her public persona are closely intertwined. That is why, this chapter deals with Nin’s self-presentation in the *Diary*, whereas the next one examines Nin’s participation in public life and her reception by various media.

Consequently, Nin in a sense becomes the living embodiment of the persona that she created in the *Diary*. This fusion will be especially visible when we scrutinise her engagement with the public after the publication of the first *Diary* in 1966. It is a two-way process. On the one hand, Nin created herself in the *Diary* and also thanks to its success she managed to promote herself through it. On the other hand, by publishing the heavily edited *Diary* and launching certain images of herself for the public, Nin was somehow forced to live up to the expectations of the audience, thus building her public persona on her *Diary* character, and also on the public reception of this character. By publishing the *Diary* and insisting it contains a genuine Nin and her real life story, Nin had to enact the persona she created in the *Diary*. Thus Nin the public persona became an example of Donna Haraway’s cyborg, “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (191). This phenomenon has been already noticed by Elyse Pineau in her analysis of Nin’s public performances. She notes that “Performance marked the
culmination of Nin’s autobiographical project, for it provided an ongoing, public, and collective enactment of her *Diary* persona on college campuses nationwide” (233). Following Pineau, the next chapter argues that Nin’s ability to recreate the *Diary* identity contributed significantly to her popular success after 1966.

To sum up, the relationship between Nin the person, Nin the diary persona, Nin the *Diary* persona and Nin the public persona is far from being straightforward. On the contrary, it is full of complex interrelations which together contribute to the creation of the Anaïs Nin celebrity.

**Nin’s Self-presentations in the *Diary***

In this part I identify and examine Nin’s self-presentations launched in the first six volumes of the *Diary*. I propose to approach Nin as a personality fashioned through the text in which she recounts her experiences. I focus on the predominant and most defined images of Nin. Furthermore, I discuss how her self-portraits interrelate with the ideas dominant in the ‘sixties.’

The release of her *Diaries* and Nin’s public visibility coincided with the rise of the women’s movement. The women’s movement of the 1960s and the 1970s is usually referred to as feminism of the ‘second wave’ as opposed to the ‘first wave’ which usually denotes women’s liberation activities between the eighteenth century and mid-twentieth century and the main aim of which was to provide women with equal legal rights. Like the ‘first wave,’ the ‘second wave’ also had an emancipatory orientation, but unlike the ‘first wave,’ it was to an extent directed against men, who were seen as possessing power and controlling women (Beasley 19), and patriarchy was a key word used in many feminist debates of the time (Beasley 19; Hollows 5). Another feature of ‘second wave’ feminism, pointed out by Hollows, was a hostile attitude towards femininity. Hollows argues that “the identity ‘feminist’ was predicated on a rejection of femininity” (2), which explains why Nin, considered by many as the embodiment of femininity, was criticised by some feminists.

By no means, however, was the ‘second wave’ a homogenous group and it developed into various strands, such as Liberal feminism, Marxist/Socialist feminism or

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Radical feminism (Beasley 31-2). Davis suggests distinguishing between liberal feminism and the women’s liberation movement (70). Liberal feminism was represented by organisations such as NOW (National Organization for Women) which main focus was employment (Davis 59). They recognised that although women have been granted equal rights, their public position remained in many respects inferior to that of men. Consequently, their chief objective was to make the public sphere more accessible to women. So issues such as free childcare, equal salaries, flexible working hours, equal job opportunities and access to education, together with free contraception constituted their agenda (Hollows 3).

In turn, the women liberation movement, which had its beginnings in 1967, its peak in the early 1970s and its decline after 1975, had a much more radical agenda (Davis 69). It was represented, for instance, by the New York Radical Women (NYRW). Radical feminists, as Tong explains, were usually concerned, more than their liberal colleagues, with the issues of men’s control over women’s bodies and sexuality (72). They focused on “men” rather than on “society” as the source of women’s oppression, and they suggested ways of escaping the domination of men, such as the suggestion that women should remain single or become lesbians (Tong 95). The New York Radical Women was responsible for establishing consciousness raising (C-R) groups (Davis 87). In the late 1960s and 1970s thousands of such groups were formed in the U.S. and their main objective was to change women’s beliefs about themselves, their relations to men and their position in society (Davis 87-88). In this respect, Nin’s position in feminism is more complex. On the one hand, many of her lectures were turned into intimate conversations, which could be argued to be a form of consciousness raising. Yet, on the other hand, Nin’s insistence on individual action was totally at odds with the ‘second wave’ collective approach.

Some of Nin’s critics (e.g. Jason, Tookey) have already pointed out to the importance of feminism to the success of her Diary, but they have failed to make connections between her Diary and the youth subculture (with its extreme representation in the form of the hippie subculture), which I believe was equally responsible for its success. My argument is that while Nin’s ideas about femininity frequently were at odds with the position taken by feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, her portrayal of herself as a supporter of the young and a participant of Bohemia must have appealed to the young generation and the hippies, who, as Elizabeth Wilson points out, were the new bohemians (Bohemians 115). I believe that Nin’s Diaries struck a chord
not only with the women’s movement, but also with other elements characteristic of the era identified by Arthur Marwick in his 1998 study, such as the importance of the young; the emergence of the ‘underground’ and the ‘counterculture’; idealism; and the frankness in books and behaviour (3). Nin’s text, although originally written a few decades earlier, reflected many concerns and fascinations of the 1960s generation.

In the following section, I also analyse photographs included in the *Diary*. The hardback edition of the *Diary* contained photographs of Nin, her friends, and places characteristic for a given volume, and Nin bemoaned the lack of photographs in the paperbacks. Very possibly as a result of her discontent, *A Photographic Supplement to the Diary of Anaïs Nin* was published in 1974 to accompany the paperback volumes. The supplement, apart from reproducing many photographs previously included in the hardback version of the *Diary*, also contained some previously unpublished pictures.

Nin was very much aware of the power of the visual and photographs were another means of constructing her public persona. She was very involved in the process of selecting the photographs and thus shaping her image. Bair recounts how Nin dealt with her dissatisfaction with the photograph chosen by her first editor, Hiram Haydn, for a paperback diary cover. Bair writes, “When neither Haydn nor publicist Hilda Lindley listened to her complaints about the cover photo they wanted to use, she went directly to John Ferrone, then chief editor of the paperback division. She marched in bearing the objectionable photo and Ferrone became her friend forever when he looked at it, then at her, and said ‘but of course it’s all wrong. We must have another’” (492). Throughout this chapter, I demonstrate that the included photographs serve to reconfirm and reinforce many of Nin’s word-portraits and to enhance the illusion of authenticity of the *Diaries*.

**Diary I 1931-1934**

Although Nin started the diary as an eleven-year-old in 1914 and although she attempted to publish her childhood journal in the 1930s, the first volume that eventually was released in 1966 covered the period from 1931 to 1934, so the years she spent in Paris. It is doubtful whether she would have achieved the same recognition had she released her childhood diary first. Despite its unarguable merit, the story of her teenage years probably would not have had the hold over her audience that the Paris years had. After all, at the time of the publication of the first *Diary* Nin was not yet an established
figure at the literary marketplace and reading about the adolescence of a little known personality, who, unlike, for instance, Anne Frank, did not have a tragic aura about her, would not have been as interesting as reading about her acquaintance with Henry Miller, which constitutes a great part of the volume one.

The first volume of Nin’s *Diary* gives an intimate picture of a bohemian coterie in France, features Henry Miller together with his eccentric wife June, and also describes Nin’s commencing adventure with psychoanalysis. The presence of Miller – not only a well-established but also a highly controversial literary figure on the 1960s literary marketplace – certainly spiced up the story, contributed to its popularity, and increased its sales. Nin was aware of the allure of Henry Miller. That is why she decided to publish his letters to her a year before the publication of the first *Diary*. And she was not the only one who tried to trade on Miller’s name. In 1962, Alfred Perlès, Miller’s and Nin’s common acquaintance, published his memoir of Henry Miller entitled *My Friend Henry Miller*.

Because of the simple fact of being the first in the series, and therefore, probably the most frequently read one, this volume was (and still is) incredibly influential in shaping Nin’s further career. First of all, because it sold, it made the publication of further volumes possible. Secondly, it launched the first set of representations of Nin. The stories of Nin’s life in Paris between 1931 and 1934 included in the first *Diary*, and later expanded by two unexpurgated volumes *Henry and June* and *Incest*, were the most exploited in popular culture afterwards. The Miller-Nin-June trio captured the imaginations of the readers especially powerfully, and as a consequence, her relationship with Henry Miller became one of the most recognisable ‘characteristics’ of Nin.

The first volume of the *Diary* can be divided into four parts according to the person who prevails in it at a given moment. Thus, the first part features Henry Miller and his wife June, the second part introduces the psychoanalyst Richard Allendy, the third one describes Nin’s acquaintance with French poet and actor Antonin Artaud and it also recounts Nin’s reunion with her father, and the fourth part presents another analyst Otto Rank. There are, therefore, two leading themes of the *Diary I*, writing and psychoanalysis, and they frame Nin’s self-presentations.
Nin the writer

Diary I opens with a description of the French village, Louveciennes, where Nin lives, and Nin’s house. Like a novelist, Nin sets the scene for the events that will take place. The first few pages are abundant in literary allusions and comparisons. For example, Nin compares Louveciennes to the village where Madame Bovary died, describes a village character as “one of Balzac’s misers,” mentions Maupassant’s fondness for Louveciennes, and likens people commuting to Paris on old-fashioned trains to Proustian personages. The literary ambience is therefore introduced from the very beginning.

As far as Nin herself is concerned, she introduces herself as an aspiring writer. One of the first things she relates is that she has finished her book D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study and that she is not interested in an ordinary life of mending socks, canning fruit, and polishing furniture. She seeks moments of exaltation and they occur while she is writing (11). Moreover, anyone familiar with the plot of Madame Bovary knows that the heroine of this novel is unhappy within the confinement of her marriage. Nin, therefore, implicitly hints at her domestic imprisonment – implicitly, because, apart from the preface, her husband does not appear in the Diary I (he does appear in later volumes but always under pseudonym – Ian Hugo – and never as Nin’s husband). However, she also states that unlike Madame Bovary she is not going to commit suicide. Writing prevents her from this tragic step. She presents her writing as the only means to escape “a beautiful prison” of her existence, to bring a state of hibernation to an end, and to start to live more fully (14).

Therefore, the first Nin we encounter is Nin the writer. This portrait will be strongly developed in the first as well as in the following five volumes of the expurgated series. Throughout Diary I she recounts and comments on her experience of writing her journal, House of Incest, The Winter of Artifice, and the preface to Miller’s Tropic of Cancer. She also formulates a very romantic notion of an artist and a writer as a creative genius superior to other people. Nin endows writers and artists with superpowers and describes them as special, chosen and unique. She states that whenever she writes she is in “a state of grace,” and she experiences “illuminations and fevers” (11). Her creative sensibility brings on “states of ecstasy” that others can only achieve through drugs (43). And she maintains that writers live two lives, since in writing they re-experience and taste everything one more time (80). She is also glad to
be a writer because this enables her to create her own portrait (147). So writing can be a very gratifying experience, but it can also become a curse. At one stage, Nin compares writing to pains of childbearing: “No joy. Just pain, sweat, exhaustion” (325), and she yearns to be delivered of her book (326). In whatever terms she describes it, writing generates extreme emotions.

What is more, her writing seems to exist outside the marketplace. Nin’s idea of authorship at this stage is disconnected from fame. Although she narrates attempts to publish her diary and fiction, she does not elaborate on the need of becoming famous. Her writing is almost “art for art’s sake.” Nin’s idea of an author is grounded in the romantic (and in effect modernist\(^\text{19}\)) notion of a writer as a lonely, insightful, misunderstood and frequently underrated genius, who sets himself/herself (although, when Nin talks about the artist in general she always uses male pronouns) against society. And she will promote this notion throughout the whole series of the seven Diaries.

In the first volume Nin also tries to establish the origins of herself as a writer as if to authenticate her occupation. She traces her interest in writing back to her teenage years. She quotes an entry from her early journal written at the age of thirteen which reads as follows: “I must rewrite my arrival in New York,” and then she comments, “Even then, I had literary preoccupation” (254). Similarly, when she recalls her arrival to America, she says that, as their luggage was being unloaded, she held on obstinately to her brother’s violin case since she “wanted people to know I was an artist” ([original italics] 227). She also mentions the fact that from the very early age she invented stories to amuse her brothers and that she wrote for a school magazine (228-9). Such self-presentation creates an illusion that Nin’s writing was not career but a vocation. Again, it gives her an air of a chosen one, of someone special.

This self-portrait of Nin as a natural talent is reinforced by two photographs included in the first volume. The earliest photograph incorporated in Diary I dates back to the time when she was eleven year old (Fig. 2.1). It is a portrait of Nin’s profile. She is captured in the process of writing. She sits at the desk or at the table holding a pen, and looks at the piece of paper on which she writes (or pretends to be writing). We

\(^{19}\) “The romantics,” as Lewis states in The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism (2007), “prefigured many aspects of modernism: the emphasis on the lone genius who follows his (or occasionally her) own inspiration and disregards the tenets and rules of art; a faith in the spiritual qualities of art understood as independent of organized religion; the basic hostility of the artist to society and convention; and the efforts to create an art that speaks the language of the common people” (7).
cannot really discern from the photograph what she is writing but the caption, which reads “At the age of eleven, the author began her diary as an account for her father,” suggests that Nin is writing in her diary. A caption, as Barthes explains, “fixes” the meaning of the image – it provides the image with a preferred interpretation. The meaning of the photograph therefore depends on both image and text (“Rhetoric” 39). Although earlier photographs of Nin exist (some of them are included in biographies), the earliest photograph Nin decided to incorporate in her first published diary dates back to the time when she began the diary. For the audience Nin is therefore born with the inception of the diary. This reinforces the link between Nin and her diary, gives the air of authenticity to her journal, and establishes her as a writer.

Another early photograph of Nin incorporated in this volume portrays her with her family (Fig. 2.2). If not for the caption, this would be an ordinary family photograph. The caption, however, which reads: “A family outing at Coney Island, soon after arrival from Spain. Standing, second from left, is A.N.’s other; left front, brother Joaquin Nin. At this time, the author carried her diary wherever she went in the little straw basket,” foregrounds the meaning of the photograph. It draws the reader’s attention to Nin’s diary, this time hidden in a basket, and emphasises Nin’s early commitment to her work. The fact that Nin “carried her diary whenever she went”
reinforces again her image as a writer. Nin portrays herself as a committed young writer who never parted with her diary and whose writing started early in her life.

Fig. 2.2 “At this time, the author carried her diary wherever she went in the little straw basket”

In volume one, there is another photograph that contributes to the image of Nin as a writer. It depicts Nin at around the time of the publication of *Diary I* (Fig. 2.3). She sits among the piled folders and notebooks, which, as the caption informs us, are manuscripts of her diary kept in a Brooklyn bank vault. Nin holds one of her journals on her lap and she looks at it as if she was reading from it. The large number of scattered journals is arguably supposed to show Nin’s readers the legendary diary in order to reassure them of its existence and authenticity.
Nin the artists’ friend

Even when Nin does not write directly about herself, her portraits and descriptions of others often refer us back to the artistic and literary sphere, since many of her friendships are with people connected with the bohemian world of Paris. Her status of a writer, of an artist is therefore further authenticated by the relationships she forms. The first major portrait in the Diary I is that of Henry Miller. Before Nin gets to know Miller the person, she reads a sample of his writing, a short article on Buñuel’s film, so Miller is first introduced through his writing. Throughout Diary I Nin comments frequently on the nature of his writing, which she finds “flamboyant, torrential, chaotic, treacherous, and dangerous” (17). She also positions herself in opposition to Miller’s
mode of expression: he is a realist, she is a poet (62). His language of realism, of flesh, of nature, of the streets contrasts with her elusive, imaginative, intuitive, poetic writing (62, 65). Miller, therefore, apart from being a good advertisement for the Diary, serves also as a point of reference for Nin’s writing style. By comparing her writing to his, Nin can sharpen her portrait of herself as a writer: she can be more specific about what she stands for.

Nin’s relationship with Miller in this Diary – as opposed to the volume Henry and June published twenty years later – is presented as a literary friendship only. There is no mention of their love affair, no description of sexual encounters, and no passion, apart from the literary one. They discuss literature together, mark passages in books for each other, comment on their literary techniques, and revise each other’s writing (65, 67). They collaborate and impact each other: “We have much influence over each other’s works, I on the artistry and insight, on the going beyond realism, he on the matter, substance, and vitality of mine” (175). What is more, Nin portrays herself as a writer admired by Miller. She writes, for instance, “He still remembers passages in my novel, wants to have the manuscript, to be able to read it over. Says it is the most beautiful writing he has read lately” (63).

June, Miller’s wife, is the only theme to which they devote more attention in their conversations than to writing. However, even June is connected with writing, as she is Miller’s muse and inspiration. Nin remarks: “He has already written about her in a way which I would find intolerable. . . . Poor June is not like me, able to make her own portrait” (22). According to Nin, Miller is unable to grasp June’s essence because his approach is too factual. She writes, “Each time Henry describes June in his language, he fails to make her portrait. . . . Sometimes while reading his manuscript, I feel there is too much naturalism. It obscures moods, feelings, psychic states” (62). Therefore, the abundant descriptions of June, apart from acquainting us with her and her story, can be regarded as Nin’s attempt, as a writer, to create a more accurate and skilful portrait of June. So, when Nin finally gives Miller to read the fragments of the diary in which she describes June, he is moved and taken aback and he admits that his portrait of June in comparison to that of Nin’s is “incomplete and superficial” (69). “You have got her,” he remarks, as if giving her the prize for a better literary portrait (69).

Another writer with whom Nin becomes friends and one of the major portraits in the Diary I, although Henry Miller’s one is definitely predominant, is Antonin Artaud, introduced in the third part. Nin portrays Artaud as a tortured, reclusive artist on the
verge of madness. Life and writing have become painful for him. His portrait, therefore, perpetuates the vision of an artist as someone extraordinary, or in this case, even bizarre – the social outcast. His insanity and extraordinariness are even contained in Nin’s description of his looks: “A gaunt face, with visionary eyes”; “a ghostly figure who haunts cafés” with “eyes blue with languor, black with pain”(195). Moreover, the fact that Nin manages to get through to him and to win his friendship sheds light on her as someone exceptional and sympathetic towards artists and their angst, and thus attuned to the artistic world.

Apart from Artaud, the Diary I contains a whole gallery of mini-portraits of both established and wannabe artists such as, for example, Nin’s father – a renowned pianist and composer, the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the Russian-born sculptor Ossip Zadkine, the Polish composer Ignacy Paderewski, another sculptor Chana Orloff, the painter Marcel Duchamp, and two struggling writers, Richard Osborne and Alfred Perlès. Nin, therefore, not only is an artist herself, but she is a friend of artists.

Nin’s image as artists’ friend and collaborator is also authenticated by the incorporated photographs. People who feature strongly in a given volume, like Miller, Artaud, Rank or Allendy in Diary I, are usually portrayed in the enclosed photographs. In volume one, photographs of Miller dominate. The volume contains three of his portraits: his side profile, picture of him in a Parisian café (as the caption informs us), and the picture taken by Brassai – one of the most frequently reproduced pictures of Miller. It is a half-body portrait of him wearing a jacket, tie, hat and glasses, leaning against either door or window frame and holding cigarette in his hand. There is an inscription on the photograph, which as the caption explains, reads “Compliments of gangster-author, Henry V. Miller.” Reproducing this photo with the personal inscription verifies Nin’s status as Miller’s close friend. In an age of reproduction, anybody can have the same photograph of Miller, so what makes Nin’s photo unique is this personal inscription which confirms their close relationship.

The bourgeois versus the bohemian Nin
At the beginning of the Diary I Nin leads a rather conventional, bourgeois lifestyle with which she is not particularly satisfied. As the text progresses, Nin becomes more and more drawn into the kind of life represented by Henry Miller – the bohemian life of the artist. Consequently, at the end of the journal, Nin states that she is divided into three selves. First, there is the domestic, bourgeois Anaïs, who lives in Louveciennes and
leads a luxurious life with pheasants being served for dinner by servants. She spends her free time writing, translating her early diaries, going to concerts, meeting distinguished people, undertaking psychoanalysis, and dreaming of a fuller existence.

Second, there is the bohemian Anaïs, who leads an artist’s lifestyle, is a friend of Henry Miller and Fred Perlès, and, devoid of her Louveciennes servants, she peels potatoes and grinds coffee, but also discusses art and literature in smoky cafés. Third, there is the Anaïs who is about to try an independent existence by becoming a psychoanalyst in America (361). Having such diverse lifestyles and friends allows her insights into various spheres of society. On the one hand, Nin hangs around cafés, and Miller’s apartment in Clichy; on the other hand, she frequents psychoanalysts’ offices, concert halls, and theatres.

Although Nin is in-between, neither totally bourgeois nor wholly bohemian, she gradually becomes more attracted to the bohemian lifestyle. The bohemian Nin is another crucial aspect of Nin the writer since her idea of an artist corresponds with what Elizabeth Wilson calls, “the bohemian myth.” Wilson explains the myth in the following way:

The bohemian myth – the idea of the artist as a different sort of person from his fellow human beings – is founded on the idea of the Artist as Genius developed by the Romantic movement in the wake of the industrial and French revolutions. The romantic genius is the artist against society. He or she embodies dissidence, opposition, criticism of the status quo; these may be expressed politically, aesthetically or in artist’s behaviour and lifestyle. (3)

Similarly, Nin pictures herself as a rebel. Conversing with the Countess Lucie, who wishes for Nin’s sureness and calm, Nin portrays herself as an independent woman who has resisted social roles: “I have rejected all conventions, the opinion of the world, all its laws” (194). Her main rebellion is against Catholicism, which she repudiated at the age of sixteen when her prayers for the return of her father were not answered. She also rebels against the bourgeois life of her father and what it represents, which is the pursuit of money, the importance of good manners and grooming, so the values that Nin considers superficial. And although her rebellion is not complete, since she does not reject her conventional lifestyle, she objects to her father’s attempted control over her life. She also opposes Dr Allendy’s vision of her as an ordinary being. And finally, she
associates with rebels: with Henry Miller, who rejects traditional lifestyle, with Artaud, who rebels against classical theatre, Rank, who opposes the ideas of his teacher, Freud.

While many elements characteristic of the bohemian living, such as sexual transgression, extravagant behaviour, poverty, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, do not form part of Nin’s self-portrait, these aspects do characterise Nin’s associates. For instance, Henry Miller, her best friend and literary collaborator, is a classic representative of Bohemia. Miller’s bohemianism expresses itself not only in his writings but also in his way of life. Wilson explains that, “The bohemians brought into play all those aspects of daily life that were not central to the production of art. . . . [such as] dress, surroundings and relationships. By doing so they challenged the bourgeois insistence that art was a realm apart” (24). Miller is devoid of any possession, undisturbed by poverty and shabbiness, happy as long his stomach is full and his thirst quenched. He wears shabby and frequently borrowed clothes. He is a vagabond and a pimp. He embraces all experience, and is interested in the ugly and the sick. But he is also an ultimate writer: “He is the man who dodged jobs, responsibilities, ties. He freed himself of all tasks but one: to write” (267).

Descriptions of him and his house trigger nostalgia for a free existence. They bring on certain charm, simplicity and homeliness. Nin notes, for instance, “What would my father say of the odds and ends of cups with unmatched saucers, cigarettes on the edge of the tables, linoleum tablecloths, the homeliness of the furniture, also odds and ends, the ugly couch covers, the rug, the glasses from Woolworth?” (109). Miller’s life is presented as familiar and authentic.

What is more, Nin expresses her own extraordinary status through her surroundings and clothing. Elizabeth Wilson claims that many bohemian women devoted themselves to arranging beautiful interiors and were preoccupied with making original clothes (102). She writes that “For maximum effect upon their urban stage the bohemians needed a mise en scène, theatrical sets and costumes for the performance of revolt and identity” (159). Wilson claims that both interiors and dress were loaded with meaning, expressing both personality and taste (161). And there was not any single costume code: some bohemians dressed in black, others wore colourful attire (164). Nin similarly pays a lot of attention to both the décor of her house and her clothes. She insists that the latter must resemble and represent her: she perceives them as an outer layer of a person (119). She wears unusual clothes and often invents her own: making dresses out of Spanish shawls, adding fur to winter shoes (119). Her dress constitutes
an essential element of her original identity, and it has a symbolic meaning for her, as she herself admits: “It [dress] had, first of all, poetic significance: colors for certain occasions, evocations of other styles, countries. . . . It was a sign of individuality. . . . I wanted striking clothes which distinguished me from other women” (119). Some of her unusual clothes can be seen on the photographs. For instance, in one picture Nin poses in her garden in Louveciennes wearing a very distinctive attire: a long, patterned dress and an unusually cut, long cape.

Nin also develops a very vivid and alluring picture of the Parisian café life. As Elizabeth Wilson explains, “The first and single most important bohemian meeting place . . . was the café” (34). Café life, she continues, provided a venue for many activities, such as studies of individual work, conversations, artists’ meetings; and the indispensable element of it was smoking (35-37). All these elements of café life are detailed in Nin’s diary. She describes various cafés, such as the low-ceilinged and dimly lit Café Viking (22). Nin also relates conversations that took place there, sometimes until dawn, usually sprinkled with wine and cured with cigarette smoke. Moreover, Miller introduces Nin to many seedy places of Paris and makes her a more conscious observer of the street life (85).

Nin is, therefore, an insider of the bohemian milieu, but at the same time, she gives an impression that she keeps her distance. On the one hand, she craves freedom and she associates it with the bohemian life, and Miller’s world seems to her more sincere than her father’s; on the other hand, she does not want to have a shabby life (106; 297). And although she notes, “I have holes in my shoes. I do not pay my bills” (206), she seems to be more an observer of Bohemia rather than a fully-fledged participant. Her bohemianism is therefore very cautious, very studied and deliberate. She mothers the artists, provides the place for their meetings, she participates in their literary conversations, she tries to transgress the boundaries in writing, she dresses unusually; yet all her actions included in the Diary are ‘within the norm.’ There is nothing shocking or extravagant about them. They are socially acceptable since they are not outrageous or offensive. And in the following volumes of the diaries whatever transgressions Nin will be narrating, whether her adventure with LSD or mad costume parties, they will be always moderate, always within the social norm.
**Nin the woman**

While in the first part of *Diary I* Nin establishes herself as a writer, in the second one, devoted to the psychoanalytical sessions with Dr René Allendy, she begins to develop a self-portrait of the woman in a search for herself. Her descriptions of psychoanalysis, first with Dr Allendy and then with Dr Otto Rank, which she extensively quotes in the *Diary*, give readers an impression of discovering the ‘real’ Anaïs Nin. Not only does she reconstruct the detailed conversations with her psychoanalysts, but she also practises her own, inner psychoanalysis. Her diary becomes a space of self-reflection where she starts to expose what seems to be her most private self. She talks about her fears and anxieties and creates a portrait of a neurotic, sensitive woman who is troubled by her artistic sensibility. She is hypersensitive and in need of love, admiration and understanding (84).

Nin presents her status of a writer as being complicated by her femininity. She writes, for example, that her being a writer is a consequence of her lack of confidence: “I decided to be an artist, a writer, to be interesting, charming, accomplished” (89). And although Nin’s *Diary* contains many contradictory statements, and although she lays an enormous emphasis on her role as a writer, the following passage in which she presents herself as a woman first and then an artist is quite significant: “And if I am not a great artist, I don’t care. I will have been good to the artist, the mother and muse and servant and inspiration. It’s right for a woman to be, above all, human. I am a woman first of all” (233). She therefore portrays herself in a passive role typically assigned to women, that of a muse, an inspiration. Being a writer and a woman are presented as incompatible: Nin the artist is hampered by Nin the woman. What is more, Nin helps Miller a lot, to the point where she gives him her typing machine, a very symbolic action suggesting that Nin considers her writing of lesser importance than that of Miller.

The conflict between the writer and the woman deepens in the fourth part of the *Diary I*, devoted to psychoanalysis with Dr Otto Rank. Nin, who was previously analysed by Dr Allendy, objected to his ready-made formulas and categorisations (282). She says that he tried to fit her into mould, and that his statements were too rigid, too limited: “With Allendy, I was an ordinary woman, a full human being, simple and naïve one; and he would exorcise my disquietudes, vague aspirations, my creations which sent me out into dangerous realms” (291). Allendy wanted Nin to become less tragic and more easygoing, to treat things more lightly (291). Psychoanalysis served, therefore, as
a normalizing discourse. The discourse, however, which Nin resented and wanted to escape. She does not want to be regarded as a simple, ordinary woman and that is why she ended psychoanalysis with Allendy and started one with Rank who instead of trying to adapt her to ordinary life, wanted to reconcile her to her individual and creative world (293).

Dr Otto Rank, a rebellious disciple of Freud, because of his great interest in the artist, turns out to be a more suitable analyst for Nin’s needs. He emphasises that “the flow of life and the flow of writing must be simultaneous so that they may nourish each other” (293). What is more, he recognises and authenticates Nin’s self-portrait as someone special and creative. He calls her a “myth-maker” and explains her entries from childhood journals starting with “I am an orphan” – which she was not – as her need to create herself, her need not to be born of human parents (281). Nin writes that, unlike Allendy, Rank “had not thrown me back upon a vague ocean of generalities, a cell among a million cells” (282), another example of her portrayal as a unique individual.

But, however good his intentions, Rank is full of stereotypical notions about women and his ideas must have influenced Nin’s. On the one hand, he puts women’s way of thinking and perceiving, which he considers intuitive and personal, on a pedestal. He states that thanks to psychology it was discovered that women “remained in touch with that mysterious region we are now opening up” (286). He compares women’s perception to that of the child, the artist, the primitive (286). On the other hand, he has very pronounced views about the inferior position of women in the history. According to him, women never invented anything, they never were great artists (301). And the notable women who did exist thought and wrote like men (285). Alas, such ideas about femininity were common to turn of the century sexology.

Moreover, at the heart of Rank’s argument lies a conviction that “When the neurotic woman gets cured, she becomes a woman. When the neurotic man gets cured, he becomes an artist” (301). And although, as Nin states, “He does not separate me from my work. He seizes me through my work” (296), he wants her to become a woman first: “Let us see whether the woman or the artist will win out. For the moment, you need to become a woman” (301). Thus, the conflict between the woman and the writer continues until the end of Diary I which concludes with Nin about to set off to New York to become a psychoanalyst in order to gain financial independence. Here Nin states ambiguously that the psychoanalysis resulted in the birth of her real self. She
writes, “Psychoanalysis did save me because it allowed the birth of the real me, a most
dangerous and painful one for a woman, filled with dangers; for no one has ever loved
adventurous woman as they have loved adventurous men” (369). But whether it is the
birth of the woman or the artist, or both, remains unclear.

As far as Nin’s concept of femininity is concerned, she frequently juxtaposes
masculinity and femininity and she gives value to what she considers as feminine
characteristics. She writes, for example, “The territory of woman is that which lies
untouched by the direct desire of man. Man attacks the vital centre. Woman fills out
the circumference” (193). She sees women as closer to life, maternal, giving, and
protective. She compares writing to childbearing and she presents her writing as an
expression of her feminine sensibility (325-6). For instance, she quotes Miller’s
comments on her novel *The Winter of Artifice*: “it revealed woman, a feminine attitude,
more than any book he had ever read” (325). However, at the same time, she is aware
that women are brought up to be selfless and helpful (173).

Nin represents herself as possessing a lot of features traditionally associated with
women. She paints herself as gentle, sensitive, compassionate, and understanding. She
cannot hate, caricature or mock. She is not interested in politics (18). She creates a
world of her own, a world that is not affected by the ugliness of the external reality. For
example, when she decides to quit the psychoanalytical school, which she took up for a
short period of time, she recounts: “I experienced my first knowledge of the monstrous
reality outside . . . . Doom! Historical and political. . . . And then, with greater, more
furious, more desperate stubbornness I continued to build my individual life, as if it
were a Noah’s Ark for the drowning” (342). She also pictures herself as self-
sacrificing, putting others’ needs above hers. For instance, when Allendy asks her
during one of their sessions, “Have you ever wished to surpass men in their own work,
to have more success?,” she replies that she did not, and she recounts how she made her
brother’s pianist career possible and how she is now helping Miller by giving him her
own typewriter (90). And she adds, “I wanted to be married to an artist rather than to be
one, collaborate with him” (90). What is more, her diary is the search for the father and
the guide. For instance, after having finished her psychoanalysis with Allendy, she
writes: “I have no guide. . . . It saddens me to have become again an independent
woman. It was a deep joy to depend on Allendy’s insights, his guidance” (202).

At the same time, Nin does not want to be dominated by men, and she gives her
mother as an example of a woman dominated by a man, someone who gave up her
music career for the expense of her husband’s (118). In another passage, she recounts an evening of hysteria, a rebellion “against my life, against domination of man, my desire for a free artist life, my fear of not being enough for it” (319). However, these outbursts of anger are rare, and in general, Nin’s concept of femininity does not challenge conventional gender roles. Although she observes occasionally the domination of men and yearns for independence, she does not propose any revolutionary solutions. She does not cast away the stereotypical roles that men assigned to women. In the successive volumes of the *Diary* she will cultivate ‘feminine’ qualities, both in her life – by helping others, and in writing – by attempting to find the feminine mode of expression. Although Nin has frequently been regarded as a feminist icon, her ‘feminism’ was in many respects in opposition to the mainstream feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, which rejected femininity. As Joanne Hollows explains, “the identity ‘feminist’, was predicated on a rejection of femininity” (2).

Nin was frequently at odds with feminist ideas not only in what she wrote but also in how she presented herself in photographs. Some pictures included in *Diary I* (and the following volumes) portray Nin as an embodiment of femininity (understood in a traditional way), and make her into an attractive object of the male gaze. Arguably, because of her career as a model for artist, Nin was very conscious of her body image, and as a result, all the photographs in the volume are highly stylised and posed. Many of them are taken by professional, and some even by famous, photographers – there is one picture by Carl Van Vechten, one by Marlis Schwieger and one by Christian Du Bois Larson, who was responsible for Nin’s publicity pictures. There is not one picture in which Nin would be captured off guard, or even a picture that would give an impression that Nin was captured unaware. Although all of the photographs are black and white, Nin’s make-up is visible – thin, pencilled eyebrows, thick eyelashes to which mascara was applied and coloured lips. In the majority of these pictures Nin looks away from the camera. Myra Macdonald thus explains the averted gaze: “By averting her gaze from the spectator, the woman in the still image invites speculation and possessiveness. We (and more particularly, men) can stare unchallenged” (106). In *Diary I*, there is just one picture in which Nin looks directly at the camera (Fig. 2.4). However, rather than challenging the gaze, Nin invites it even more. Her pose is meticulously fashioned: one arm is bent behind her head and another one is on her stomach. The hand that rests on her belly with long, varnished fingernails is carefully arranged. No detail in this photograph is random. Nin wears a (most probably black)
lace blouse which invites a speculation as to whether she wears something beneath it or whether she is naked. So, although Nin does look straight into the camera, her pose, her clothes and overall look is inviting rather than challenging.

Fig. 2.4 “A. N., photographed by Carl van Vechten in New York, in 1934”

*Nin the daughter in search of the father*

In the opening pages of the *Diary I*, when she introduces the reader to Louveciennes and her household, apart from establishing herself as a writer, Nin mentions people with whom she shares her home and these are her mother, her brother Joaquin and the Spanish maid Emilia. Nin pictures herself as a devoted daughter. She writes that she gave herself to her mother and loved her “uncritically, piously, obediently” and only at
the age of sixteen began to assert herself (76). She is also a loving sister, helping his brother’s career, attending his concerts, and waiting in the hospital while he is undergoing surgery. In subsequent volumes of the Diary Nin will extend her care to her friends and will establish herself as a giving and sympathetic person.

There is no mention of Nin’s husband throughout the whole Diary I. However, as the comparison of the Diary I to the unexpurgated and manuscript versions reveals, in the Diary I Nin frequently replaces her husband with brother Joaquin. She endows her brothers with words that were originally spoken by her husband, as in the fragment “Joaquin questions my giving to Henry” (68).

Nin’s father exists ‘remotely’ for the most part of the Diary I. He makes his appearance in the third part, yet he seems to be an important part of her life. For example, at the very first psychoanalytical session with Allendy, when he points to her lack of confidence, she starts weeping and automatically associates it with her father, saying “My father did not want a girl. My father was over-critical, never pleased” (83). And she asks “Can a child’s confidence, once shaken and destroyed, have such repercussions on a whole life?” (83). Nin’s fathers constantly reappears in her conversations with her analysts as she goes back to her childhood experiences.

The sexually ambiguous Nin

The first part of the Diary I depicts a very passionate and sensual relationship between Anaïs and June Miller that ends with physical contact in the form of a long kiss. Their ‘affair’ goes through the stages typical of falling in love with someone. First, when Nin meets June, she is thunderstruck. She describes June’s astounding beauty and states that she would do anything for her (26). Then, just like lovers do, Nin begins to discover and to ponder on similarities and differences between herself and June. With each meeting, their relationship becomes more and more fervent and Nin’s feelings intensify. The descriptions of bodily contact and physical attraction start to appear, as, for instance, in the following fragment: “Coming out of the theatre I take her arm. Then she slips her hand over mine, and we lock hands. . . . I was infinitely moved by the touch of her hand” (31). Or, the passage in which Nin describes June trying on Nin’s clothes: “I saw the beauty of her body I had not dared to look at, I saw its fullness, its heaviness; and the richness of it overwhelmed me” (37). Finally, during one of their meetings they confess love for each other. Nin writes, “When I realized what she was revealing to me, I was overjoyed. I overwhelm her? She loved me then? June! . . .
Let’s be overwhelmed, it is so lovely. I love you, June” (38). After the meeting, as they walk streets together, “bodies close together, arm in arm, hands locked”, Nin admits to being in a state of such an ecstasy that she was not able to talk (39). And when June finally departs to New York, they kiss, a kiss that is more than a usual goodbye kiss between friends: “And she offered her mouth which I kissed for a long time” (47).

Nin provides a number of descriptions of this relationship which clearly indicate infatuation: “I want to be immersed with her” (31); “I am fascinated by her eyes, her mouth” (31); I held her warm hand. . . . I could not eat before her” (33). Why did Nin decide to narrate a very intimate relationship with a woman while she decided to cut out all other (heterosexual) affairs? Perhaps because the subsequent passages quickly dismiss any homosexual bond. Nin quickly begins to interpret her love for June not as a passionate affair, but a “form of alliance” between women (47). Her relationship with June becomes totally exonerated when Rank confirms that it was not of a homosexual nature (297). Anything that goes beyond the norm is very quickly restored to ‘normality’ so that it can reflect the required social order. Her adventure with June becomes one of the ‘controlled transgressions’ which will be present in other volumes, too.

Diary II 1934-1939
The second instalment of Nin’ Diary, published a year after the first one, in 1967, continues the main portraits began in the previous volume. In this volume two portraits, namely Nin the writer and Nin the woman, become fused. The volume still features Henry Miller. Nin and Miller continue their literary collaboration, but Nin introduces other major characters, both well-known ones, such as Lawrence Durrell – the American writer, and unknown ones, such as a couple Gonzalo and Helba whom Nin is helping out. Gonzalo is a keen Marxist revolutionary; Helba is a sickly ex-dancer. Nin also includes a number of mini-portraits of the famous. In this volume she introduces Theodore Dreiser, the Wagners, Waldo Frank, Eugene Jolas, and the painter Hans Reichel.
*Nin the woman writer*

*Diary II* opens with Nin’s arrival in New York and with a new portrait: Nin the psychoanalyst. First she works as an assistant for Dr Otto Rank, and then she begins to psychoanalyse people herself. However, she quickly tires of listening to others’ grievances. She claims she cannot remain indifferent to people’s anguish because she becomes too involved in their problems and she feels that it deprives her of her own life (40). Drained and tired, she decides to go back to Paris, and most importantly, to devote herself to being a writer only. Her short adventure with psychoanalysis convinces her of her inadequacy for this profession, and Nin concludes: “I realized once more that I was a writer, and only a writer, a writer and not a psychoanalyst” (46). This small portrait of Nin as a psychoanalyst rather than being a portrait in its own right serves to intensify the portrait of Nin the writer and her natural predisposition for writing.

Just as she did in volume one, in this one she highlights the importance and a unique status of the artist in society. The division of the world between the artist and others continues: “I cling to the world made by the artists because the other is full of horror, and I can see no remedy for it” (89). Writing still remains a special activity, distinct from other activities, the one that “comes on unexpectedly, like a fever, and goes away like a fever” (253), and an artist is still someone special. She writes at the outbreak of World War II: “I was never one with the world, yet I was to be destroyed with it . . . . I had, as an artist, another rhythm, another death, another renewal. . . . But the artist is not there to be at one with the world, he is there to transform it” (363-4). And although in volume two Nin shows an increasing interest in publishing her works, and although at some point she and her friends bring up the idea of the printing press, Nin still romanticises the image of the writer. Even setting up her own press is in a way a rebellion against the marketplace, against the commercial. A writer who tries to publish herself brings to mind an underground writer, ignored and obscure, but determined to promote uncompromised art, not tainted by commercial concerns.

In the second *Diary*, Nin seems to resolve the conflict between the woman and the artist. She manages to reconcile her womanhood with her creation. She discovers her own voice, a voice of the woman, and she gradually moves towards feminine writing. She wants to speak on behalf of women, to write from their point of view. She has a sense of importance – she is a woman who tries to capture and express feminine emotions. There is a strong sense of innovation, of a discovery of previously
unexplored areas. For instance, Lawrence Durrell in one of his letters to Nin, which she quotes, claims that she is creating “a new Art”, the art of women’s expression, one that will not be judged by male standards because it will be so different from it (191). And after having quoted the letter, Nin admits that she is becoming aware that feminine sensibility is manifested in her writing (192).

Or, to give another example, during one of the discussions with Miller and Durrell both men attack her personal attitude towards ideas and writing. She defends herself by explaining that she has to follow the woman’s way (242). And she records, “At the end of the conversation they both said: ‘We have a real woman artist before us, the first one, and we ought not to put her down’” (242). That is followed by a two-page entry in which Nin contemplates the difference between man’s creation which she considers abstract, solitary, detached, and objective, and woman’s art which, in order to be successful, must be human, immediate, spontaneous, natural (242-4). Woman’s creation “must come out of her own blood, englobed by her womb, nourished with her own milk”, she writes (242). Nin, therefore, no longer pictures herself as a writer. Now she is the writer with a very specific purpose, that of expressing feminine awareness, and she pictures herself as a pioneer in this territory. As Sharon Spencer rightly observes Nin’s idea of feminine writing corresponds with the theories of French feminists, such as Hélène Cixous, the proponent of écriteur feminine (“Music of the Womb” 64).

As for Nin’s ideas about femininity, they do not change much from the ones she described in the first volume. Nin’s world remains sharply divided into men and women. She generalises a lot, as for example, when she says that, “Woman is more alone than man. She cannot find the ‘eternal moments’ in art as man does, as Proust did, even if she is an artist” (221). She admits that she is living in a world dominated by men in which she is “what man wants” but she does little to challenge it (51). Rank, with whom she still associates at the beginning of volume two, continues to express stereotypical views about women, and although Nin tries to confront his ideas, she does so not by challenging gender division, but rather by revaluing the feminine. For example, to Rank’s claim that women are not inventive and are unable to grasp abstract ideas, Nin replies that perhaps women do have trouble comprehending abstractions: “But once they were embodied, concretized in a person, then she grasped them perhaps more profoundly, because she grasped them and experienced them emotionally, and they could affect and transform her”, she writes (23). Nin also remains strongly
influenced by men. She compares the influence of Gonzalo and Henry on her: “Henry enlarged my world, made me write, made my life rich and also inhuman. Gonzalo brings me turmoil, danger, blood and death, war and destruction” (277).

The bohemian Nin

Since the relationships Nin forms cast a light on her, her friendship with the revolutionary Gonzalo and his partner Helba enhances Nin’s portrait of herself as a bohemian. Gonzalo and Helba are impoverished and Nin is helping them out. Helba is unable to continue her dancing career because of her illness. Gonzalo, like Miller in the *Diary I*, represents a carefree way of life. He spends his days drinking in cafés, he sleeps on the benches, wears shabby clothes, and possesses a few belongings. Nin constantly describes herself as supporting Henry Miller and paying Gonzalo’s and Helba’s expenses. There are a lot of entries like this one: “It is the fourth of the month and my allowance is all gone. Rent, food, doctors, clothes, dentists for my orphans. . . . I own two pairs of stockings, mended, two pairs of worn-out shoes. I owe money to everyone. My jewels are at the pawn shop” (186-7).

In this volume, however, Nin makes a more significant move into becoming truly bohemian than in just befriending artists and rebels. She rents a houseboat at the quay of the Seine, where she is surrounded by social outcasts: rag pickers, hobos, prostitutes. By decorating the houseboat she creates an ambience of a very cosy place where, as Nin maintains, everyone wishes to stay. It is unusual, artistic, colourful, so people who come to visit her are enchanted with it. For example, Conrad Morricand – a poet-astrologer who reads horoscopes for her and her friends – is amazed by the houseboat and thinks of it as “an opium den” (133). This unusual abode stands for freedom and an alternative way of living. The houseboat, La Belle Aurore, features also on a photograph included in *Diary II*, along with a drawing of it made by Gonzalo, next to the picture of the author himself, asleep with an empty bottle (of most certainly an alcoholic beverage) lying next to him. These three pictures also contribute to Nin’s portrait as a bohemian artist.

Very likely this alternative Anaïs struck a chord with the generation of the 1960s. Nin’s lack of interest in political movements also corresponded with the young Americans who condemned the Vietnam War. Throughout volume two Nin states several times that she is apolitical. She does not have faith in political action and she prefers to remain personal (152). She claims that she builds “an individually perfect
world” and she feels helpless when it comes to repairing the world outside. What she believes in is psychological change. No revolution but an internal one, she says, can change the nature of man (163).

Diary III 1939-1944 to Diary VI 1955-1966

The first two volumes of the Diary recount Nin’s life in France and Nin’s portraits included in them are similar to a large extent. Volumes III through VI tell the story of Nin in the United States. In this section, I analyse the volumes III to VI together as many of the portraits sketched in the first two volumes simply continue there, although they frequently acquire new dimensions.

_**Diary III**_ begins in 1939, after the outbreak of World War II, with Nin’s departure from France and her arrival in the United States. _Diary VI_ ends with Nin’s announcement of the publication of the first volume. Volumes III to VI are far less coherent than the previous two. Nin inserts various articles and reviews, written by her and by others. She also frequently cites sent and received letters. In _Diary III_ and _IV_ Henry Miller’s letters prevail. Apart from reports on his journey across the States, his letters are usually full of praise towards Nin the person and Nin the writer. Miller often mentions how much Nin’s help means to him, lists other admirers of Nin’s writings, and encourages her not to give up writing. In _Diary V_ this role of Nin’s admirer and supporter is taken over by James Herlihy.

_Nin the woman writer_

In the volumes in question, Nin continues to deploy her self-portraits of the woman writer, the bohemian and artists’ friend. Writing is an indispensable part of her life. She stresses the importance of it in the following fragment:

> Every book I have ever written has brought me new friends, new realms of experience, new worlds. . . . That is my essential reason for writing, not for fame, not to be celebrated after death, but to heighten and create life all around me. I cannot go into life without my books. They are my passports, my rudder, my map, my ticket. I also write because when I am writing I reach the high moment of fusion sought by the mystics, the poets, the lovers, a sense of communion with the universe. . . . When I write the book I use the book like dynamite, to blast myself out of isolation. (D III 173)
Nin, therefore, insists that she does not write for recognition. She writes in order to create her own world and communicate it to others. She has a very personal attitude towards her works. She does not treat them as products to be published and sold, but endows them with almost divine qualities: they facilitate the creation of her life and enable contact with other human beings. A similar observation about the role of writing in her life appears also in *Diary V*. In a response to a question – “Why does one write?” – posed by an unnamed writer, Nin replies:

*I believe one writes because one has to create a world in which one can live. . . . I had to create a world of my own, like a climate, a country, an atmosphere in which I could breathe, reign, and re-create myself when destroyed by living. . . . The artist is the only one who knows that the world is a subjective creation. . . . Then he hopes to attract others into it.* (D V 149)

So, again she persists in her belief that writing is a unique activity and presents herself as an authentic writer, one who writes not for fame but to communicate herself to others.

She also keeps on insisting on the special status of the artist in the society. In *Diary III*, she writes about the role of the artist in relation to Communism. She states that the Communists destroy the artist by forcing him [sic] to take on the usual social responsibilities of the citizen. She claims that the artist serves society, but does it in his own way. According to Nin, the artist should not be required to fulfil only political purposes because the world will “die of spiritual malnutrition” (D III 56). In *Diary IV*, she compares the artist’s world to that of a child. She says that both live in the self-created world of fantasies which clashes with the outside reality. She strongly believes in the pure intentions of the artist, who, like a child, is uncorrupted by money (D IV 112). In *Diary V*, she inserts notes for lectures on the role of the artist. According to her, the artist reveals the unfamiliar, the unknown, and he should be allowed the freedom to experiment with the form and content in order to discover “new colors, new words, new territories of experience” (D V 56). She claims that as in science we respect the researchers, we should treat the artist in a similar way, as an innovator (D VI 56).

As I mentioned before, Nin founded her idea of an author on the romantic notion of the artist as someone special. Elizabeth Wilson, explaining the romantic idea of the artist, writes: “the Romantics elevated the artistic genius to the status of godlike hero. Art now expressed the originality of the unique creative individual, and the artist’s duty
was to realize himself and his unique vision rather than to create works that expressed the dominant beliefs in society” (17). Therefore, Nin’s rejection of any political or social movements, be it Marxism, or, later, feminism, expresses this ideal. Her belief in the personal is not so much egocentric as it is inscribed in the notion of the artist she believes in.

Nin’s world is also sharply split into artists and non-artists. At one point in *Diary IV* she writes, “I have divided the world into two hostile camps” (D IV 104). And she makes a table with two columns: “*World of the Artist*” which stands for joy, creation, freedom, altruism, contrasted with “*World of Reality*” which is characterised by greed, power, war, self-interest, corruption, dullness, hypocrisy (D IV 104). The artist is therefore depicted as a pure, innocent, free, caring person who has to face the cruel world of greed and corruption. Also, in the notes on writing included in *Diary V*, she juxtaposes the artist with the common man. Common men, Nin states, with their “ignorant vocabulary” should not be imitated in literature (D V 190). Instead, writing should help to express the emotions, feelings more subtle than common men’s words. Thus, she objects to realism typical of American novels at that time. She maintains that the writer has a special role: he should try to express the unspeakable, to expand the senses and enlarge the vision (D V 190-2). Nin also believes that the common people “who are so proud of giving birth and raising three children are giving less to the world than Beethoven, or Paul Klee, or Proust . . . . I would have felt prouder if I had written a quartet to delight many generations” (D VI 49). The artist is therefore beyond the simple, human, family existence, and, as a consequence, Nin’s idea of the artist and writing is very elitist. The artist is endowed with special social responsibility, not towards his/her immediate progeny, but towards future generations.

Nin also remains the writer of women’s perception. She states, “I represent, for other women too, the one who wanted to create with, by, and through her femininity. I am a good subject because I have lived out everything, and because contrary to most creative women of our time I have not imitated man, or become a man” (D III 259). Nin here portrays herself a spokeswoman for women. This portrait develops gradually with each volume until it bursts into full bloom in volume seven (analysed in the last chapter). She still emphasises femininity as the source of her creativity. And she is interested in the theme of the development of women. She wants to describe women’s lives, trace their backgrounds and see what they managed, or did not manage, to achieve. She also notes that women and their artistic endeavours are rarely supported
by their husbands. She thinks that “There is a fear that the development of woman will make her less of a wife, a mate” (D III 211). Her objective is to focus on the conflicts of woman in the present-day society. She wants to describe “Woman finding her own language, and articulating her own feelings, discovering her own perceptions” (D IV 32).

However, at the same time, Nin’s creation is disturbed by her femininity. She maintains that the guilt to create is strong in a woman, and “In a woman who loves man as much as I do, it becomes paralyzing” (D III 252). She fears creation and revelation because they endanger intimate relationships. At the end of Diary VI, Nin narrates her efforts to prepare both Miller’s letters and her diary for publication. She confesses her fear of publishing the diary, of exposing her life and the lives of others. She characterises this dilemma as the dilemma between woman and creator: “The woman, protective, secretive, placing the need of others before her own . . . and the creator, no longer able to contain her discoveries, her knowledge, her experiences, her lucidities, her compiling of the hidden aspects of people so ardently pursued” (D VI 381).

Diary IV contains a photograph which can be regarded as symptomatic of Nin’s anxiety that it is difficult to reconcile being a woman with being an artist. It is a collage of four photographs of Nin made in 1945 by a photographer of Town and Country magazine (Fig. 2.5). The collage, as Nin explains in Diary IV, was intended as a photographic experiment in which she posed as both the author of her book and its female characters. Nin chose costumes which she thought best reflected each individual. She describes how she carried it out: “For Lillian I chose the evening suit altered to fit me . . . with a more sever shirtwaist. I dressed my hair severely. . . . Then I dressed as Hejda, oriental, with a veil across the face. Stella, of course, was soft and feminine, pliant; and the novelist in the centre was dressed simply, and looked up naturally between her ‘characters’” (D IV 47). As a result, these three characters stand for a different type of femininity: Lillian represents an independent woman, Hejda an exotic and mysterious one, and Stella a sensual one. In these pictures Nin emphasises some ‘female attributes’ – Lillian’s small waist, Hejda’s enchanting eyes, and Stella’s cleavage. In the photo in which Nin poses as herself, a novelist, she is dressed in a formal suit. Her costume is elegant but simple, almost self-effacing. Posing as a writer, who is commonly associated with intellect, Nin chooses not to attract attention to her body. This collage is a good indication of how Nin envisions and separates femininity and creativity.
Some new dimensions of Nin the writer emerge in volumes III to VI, such as the portrait of the struggling yet determined and uncorrupted writer. In the third volume Nin admits to encountering difficulties in writing and she starts expressing her dissatisfaction with the lack of publishing opportunities. She writes, “In being deprived of publication I am deprived of existence, forced back into solitude, disconnected from life. Being published would have been a bridge between myself and American life” (D III 117). Despite being discouraged by the lack of interest in her works, she decides to act. She buys her own press and prints her own books, starting with The Winter of Artifice and followed by Under a Glass Bell. Her preoccupation with the press gives rise to a portrait of the self-sufficient, hard-working, and independent woman writer who takes her fate into her own hands. It corresponds well with the discourse of American Dream and the belief that hard work will always be gratified with success.

Nonetheless, up to 1966, the very end of the Diary VI, Nin details her experience of facing the hostile world of publishers and critics. She is discouraged by her lack of success, by the struggles to get her works published and by having to face the unfavourable reviews. She elaborates on being rejected by America as a writer. She ponders what makes her writing so difficult to understand and appreciate. She feels like a failure because she is completely neglected, by publishers, critics and bookshops (D V 106). Yet, despite her doubts and the lack of recognition, she manages to survive as an author. Nin writes: “America tried to kill me as a writer, with indifference, with insults.
But they cannot kill the life and the beauty of my writing, of my life, they can only strangle the books” (D V 157). Hence she adds a heroic dimension to her self-portrait as the writer.

Nin also portrays herself as the writer resisting the corrupt world of publishing by remaining faithful to her ideals, which corresponds with her vision of the artist as pure, authentic and unique. She narrates, for example, her meetings with the publishers: “I am supposed to see Random House, Harper’s, and Pascal Covici, of Viking. I am both happy and sad. I do not like their world, their values. I want to keep my sincerity. I have to keep my world intact” (D IV 117). Getting involved with the publishers means for Nin a loss of innocence. She, the pure artist, refuses the contaminated world of publishing. And then, after one of such meetings, with Harper’s, she records: “the most difficult part of my life is starting now. The struggle with money and the press is nothing compared to the more subtle struggle against accepting money for compromising” (D IV 117). Harper’s people advise her to write a more tradition novel, yet she refuses (D IV 119). She declines their proposition, acting according to what she believes in. And what Nin believes in is that there are two ways “to murder a writer.” One is to force him to write to order, another is to shower him with money which makes him “dry up emotionally” (D III 175).

Another new dimension of Nin the writer is Nin the public writer. Although Nin was not widely recognised until 1966, in volumes three to six, she describes occasionally her first experiences of being a public author. She recounts her lectures and readings and shares her fears of addressing large number of people. She notes, “I have a fear of public recognition. Those who live for the world, as Henry does, always lose their personal, intimate life” (D III 254). During one of the lectures in Sweden, she also experiences the first glimpses of fame: “I was flooded with journalists, cameras, interviews. It was my first taste of celebrity” (D VI 226).

The bourgeois versus the bohemian Nin

As in Paris, where she attended fashionable bohemian places such as Montparnasse (with its cult café Dôme), in New York Nin becomes part of American artistic society. Some of her friends are well-known figures, such as Edmund Wilson, others are underground artists, such as Maya Daren. So, again, Nin has an access to various spheres of society.
On the one hand, she has access to aristocratic societies. For instance, in *Diary VI*, she describes her journey to Brussels Fair and her stay at Baroness Lambert’s luxurious residence where she is served breakfast in bed. During that week in Belgium she meets “all the talent, beauty and wit of Europe” (153). On the other hand, Nin is surrounded by young, unknown, yet inventive people. She also mentions how at ease she feels among the bohemian crowds (D VI 59). After her arrival in the States, she rents an apartment near Greenwich Village (D III 41), which functions as an American equivalent of Parisian Montparnasse. She describes her love for the Village with its Italian shops and jazz clubs (D III 51). She still has a flair for unusual clothes and well-decorated apartments. She likes the unconventional, and is not intimidated to wear in her hair red flowers (D III 29) or paper Japanese parasols designed for drinks (D III 280). She is also willing to let her young,arty friends take crayons and paint various patterns on her wooden furniture and paint the windows of her studio, so, in an effect, it looks like “a pagan cathedral” (D III 113).

Nin’s bohemianism remains, however, very cautious. Her adventures with drugs take a form of ‘controlled transgressions.’ Nin mentions drugs a few times throughout the *Diaries*. It is obvious that she associated with people who (ab)used them (for example, Artaud in *Diary I*). She, however, admits to trying them only in *Diary V*. For example, she recounts having dream about growing marihuana and being arrested for it, and she comments that the dream is awkward taking into consideration that she only tried marihuana twice in real life and she remained unaffected (D V 34). At the end of *Diary V*, Nin recounts her adventure with LSD which took place in a doctor’s room under the supervision of a psychiatrist, and which was part of a medical experiment (D V 255). She describes in a great detail what she experienced. After the experiment, she comments that in her writing she explored similar states of mind, and she concludes that one does not need chemical alternation to reach the subconscious (D V 260). If one is an artist, of course. She writes: “I reached a fascinating revelation that this world opened by LSD was accessible to the artist by way of art” (D V 260). In volume six Nin considers the pros and cons of LSD. As for advantages, she enumerates LSD’s potential to liberate thinking and to allow contact with the inner self. She claims, for instance, that some people could understand her writing better under the influence of LSD. She is, however, against its indiscriminate use (D VI 339-341).

These little moments of transgression, such as drug use, are always reported by Nin as having no effect on her, and in tone of preaching. She seems to be announcing,
“Yes, I have tried the drugs, but I do not think they are necessary to put you in touch with the unconscious.” She always insists that artists and mystics can access these states of minds without any artificial alterations, and ordinary people should be either taught how to do that or the artist should translate such experiences into his art.

*Nin the observer/ the commentator/ the artists’ friend*

While in the first two volumes Nin concentrated a lot on herself and her inner life, with each following volume her self-analysis decreases. Instead, Nin includes more descriptions of people, places and events. She describes richly the towns, cafés, and her friends’ houses she visits. She writes about American lifestyle, literature, architecture and compares it to that of Europe. She gives a full account of parties, dinners, concerts, and exhibitions she attends. And she comments on films and plays she has seen. In a word, Nin becomes an observer, a commentator. And this is very powerful position which gives her control over how events are narrated and remembered.

For a start, Nin travels a lot and provides detailed accounts of her journeys together with some photographs. In *Diary IV*, for example, she describes her trip to western America and includes two pictures taken during this holiday. Her travels continue into the *Diary V* which begins with a description of Mexico, where she eventually purchases a house. She narrates whom she met, describes places she visited, mentions food she ate, and explains local customs. This gives her an opportunity to compare Mexican way of living to that of the Americans, and to criticise the American lifestyle. Mexicans are depicted as being “full of burning life” (D V 4). Although there is a lot of poverty, people seem to be happier, better, more natural, warm, humane, and emotional, in comparison to the Americans, who are described as angry, sulky, and mechanical (D V 21). Despite her approval of Mexican life, her descriptions of it show signs of a colonial mentality. Nin romanticises local people, ultimately placing them in a position of the exotic other.

With each volume of the *Diary* Nin’s attention shifts from her self-portrait to the portraits of others. And a very significant declaration appears in *Diary VI*. Nin decides “to retire as the major character of the diary” and she names her journal as “*Journals des Autres* (Diary of Others)” (D VI 319). She makes more elaborate portraits of her friends and acquaintances, sometimes providing quite thorough stories of their lives, as in the case of Frances Brown. Yet, Nin’s portraits of others work to define her as well. For instance, in the third and fourth volumes she recounts her acquaintance with young
artists, and she stresses her attachment, understanding and appreciation of the young. She writes, for instance, “I like the adolescent world, yes, because they are still vulnerable and open. They are a relief from tight, closed, hard, harsh worlds” (D IV 99). She compares their spontaneity and flexibility to the maturity and rigidity of people of an established public position, such as the literary critic Edmund Wilson. She finds the world of the latter “oppressive, definitive, solidified” as opposed to the “fluid, potentially marvellous, malleable, variable, as-yet-to-be-created” world of the young (D IV 108). She thinks that the younger generation understands her better, that they appreciate her writings, and that they prevent her from getting corrupted by the reality (D IV 111). Describing her young friends as innocent and fluid, and emphasising her connection with them, Nin reinforces her self-portrait as the pure and unsoiled artist. Interestingly, her approval of the youth must have affected positively her audience, which consisted, as Stuhlmann notes in the preface to the Diary IV mostly of young people. Stuhlmann portrays Nin as the voice of the young and the forerunner of the “new consciousness” (Preface to D IV 3). And perhaps her positive portrayal of the young is also a way of saying “thank you for being my readers.”

Yet apart from young, unknown characters, Nin, as usual, includes many famous names. The number of personages increases dramatically in volume three, in which she introduces France Steloff – the owner of cult bookshop Gotham Book Mart; Dorothy Norman – the Twice a Year magazine editor; painters (Yves Tanguy, Virginia Admiral, and Salvador Dali); writers (Robert Duncan, Sherwood Anderson, Kenneth Patchen, André Breton, Richard Wright, and Max Ernst); the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, the actress Luise Rainer, the composer Edgar Varèse, the actor Canada Lee, and the art collector Peggy Guggenheim. In volume four, she includes the filmmaker Maya Daren; the literary critic Edmund Wilson; writers (James Agee, Gore Vidal, James Merrill, and Tennessee Williams); and the sculptor Noguchi. In volume five she meets the writer James Leo Herlihy, the filmmaker Kenneth Anger, Reginald Pole. She mentions briefly her meeting with the actor Charlie Chaplin, and the writers Christopher Isherwood, and Arthur Miller. In Diary VI, we can read about two famous actresses: Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, and one actor Gregory Peck and the writer Allen Ginsberg. Some of them are mentioned briefly, others are made into full portraits, yet, in general, the number of famous names increase, in comparison to the first two volumes. On the one hand it probably reflects Nin’s life at those given moments. Yet, on the other hand, because of the brevity of some encounters and very sketchy nature of portraits, as in the
case of Charlie Chaplin or Marilyn Monroe, it is hard to resist an impression that Nin finally made some compromise as to what to include in the *Diary*. The publishers who rejected the *Diary* always considered the portraits of the famous as the main asset.

All four volumes also contain photographs of Nin’s artistic friends as well as photographs of their creative output, which is consistent with her growing focus on other people and her new self-portrait as observer and commentator. And thus, for example, in the third volume, there is both a portrait of Frances Field and a painting done by her, and in the sixth volume, there is a photograph of Millie Johnstone and of tapestry made by her. The volume richest in the photographs of artefacts made by others is *Diary V*. There are two sculptures by Cornelia Runyon, there is a picture of Annette Nancarrow with her self-portrait in the background. Volume five also contains three stills from films in which Nin took part: Kenneth Anger’s *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, and two films made by Ian Hugo (the artistic pseudonym of Nin’s husband, Hugh Guiler) – *Jazz of Lights* and *Bells of Atlantis*. By including these photos, Nin portrays herself once again as an insider in an artistic milieu.

**Conclusion**

To summarise, Nin’s involvement in her image production and the enhancement of her career constitutes an important part of her celebrity. Nin very actively participated in the creation of her own legend. She promoted her diary and devoted a lot of energy to see it in print. By publishing the *Diary* she entered the marketplace. Her *Diary*, like any other book, became a commodity. By publishing the self-presenting text, she sold ‘her life.’ And in a way, Nin became a commodity herself – she became a marketable personality. Her main contribution to the construction of her public persona consisted in the release of carefully coined self-portraits. These self-portraits, before reaching readers, went through a process of double construction. Nin first recorded her-*self* in the original diary. Then, preparing the diary for publication she carefully chose which of the whole spectrum of Nins she wants to present to the public. Taken out of their original context, these self-presentations were put together in a new way, which resulted in a very neat and controlled image of Nin. In consequence, all of her portraits are very cautious and moderate. There is no excess, no breaking of social norms, there is no scandal or controversy.
In making her self-portraits, Nin managed to preserve certain qualities of diary writing. Margo Culley writes that “While the novel and autobiography may be thought of as artistic wholes, the diary is always in process, always in some sense a fragment” (220). Nin’s Diary reflects to an extent this inherent feature of the diaries, as her portraits are constructed gradually and constantly acquire new dimensions. At the same time, however, it is difficult to resist the impression that there is something very deliberate about the way Nin presents herself. After analysing all six volumes a consistent picture of Nin the writer emerges.

Nin offers a very coherent narrative of her life and presents herself as, first and foremost, the writer. Throughout the six volumes, this portrait acquires new facets. Nin starts as an unknown writer in search of her own style. As a result of this search, she becomes a writer of feminine expression. Then she portrays herself as a hard-working and determined writer who nonetheless does not compromise on her writing. Nin can go as far as buying her own press and printing her own books, but she firmly refuses to change her novels and to write to satisfy the public taste. She is not a ‘sell-out.’ She does not write to be famous or rich but to communicate with the world which corresponds with her romantic notion of the artist as someone out of the ordinary, unique and authentic, which she so forcefully promotes. Nin also stresses an indispensable role of an artist in society: in her vision, the artist becomes a modern saviour of humanity.

The photographs that Nin includes in the Diary reinforce many of her word-portraits but also serve to enhance the illusion of authenticity of the Diaries. Reviewing the fourth volume of Nin’s Diary, Evelyn J. Hinz remarks that, “Diary IV includes illustrations of key figures, objects, and scenes, which give an interesting concreteness and historicity to the impressionistic quality of the work as a whole” (155). Hinz therefore regards photos as devices that anchor Nin’s text in reality. For her, and possibly for many other readers of Nin, photographs bear witness and confirm the veracity of Nin’s diaries. Critics tend to agree that we perceive photography as truer than any other representative art. Susan Sontag, for instance, thus explains a common preconception about photography: “Photographs furnish evidence. Something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we are shown a photograph of it. . . . A photograph passes for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened” (5). The inclusion of photographs in the Diary can be therefore regarded as a very effective way to reassure Nin’s readers about the authenticity of her Diary.
Rather than seeing Nin’s participation in the process of self-creation and self-promotion as a negative phenomenon and regarding Nin as a devious and dishonest manipulator, I want to point to positive aspects of Nin’s involvement. Although it would be naïve to assume that Nin had complete freedom in the making of her public self, she did demonstrate a great deal of agency and she managed to preserve some integrity by constructing and releasing her portraits as she wanted them to be. It has to be therefore acknowledged that Nin was a skilful self-promoter who took advantage of favourable cultural times to enhance her public standing.
CHAPTER THREE: PUBLIC RELATION OF THE SELF – ANAÏS NIN, FEMINISM AND CELEBRITY AUTHORSHIP

A book is judged almost entirely by a person’s need, and what people respond to is either a reflection of themselves, a multiple mirror, or an elucidation of their time, a concern with their problems, fears, or a familiar atmosphere which is reassuring by its familiarity. (Anaïs Nin)

Introduction

The ‘prolific years’ began for Nin in 1966, when volume one of her Diary was published and caught the attention of intellectuals, academics, and the general public. In volume VII of the Diary that opens in the summer of 1966 and describes the release of Diary I, Nin recounts the first glimpses of fame:

A month of good reviews, love letters, appearances on television. Has the sniping really stopped? I feel like a soldier on the front, amazed by the silence of the guns, wondering if the war is over. A month which made up for all the disappointments, the poison pen reviews, for all the past obstacles, insults. . . . Suddenly love, praise, flowers, invitations to lecture. (D VII 3)

Thanks to the success of her Diary, not only did Nin’s morale soar, but her financial situation improved considerably. For instance, Bair (451) records that in 1962 the five books by Nin available then – Seduction of Minotaur, House of Incest, Winter of Artifice, Under a Glass Bell, and Cities of Interior – earned her only $32.56 in royalties. By comparison, Linde Salber (409) declares Nin’s annual income as $9500 for 1966, and Bair (499) mentions that by the third quarter of 1973 Nin earned $62,000. Her earnings were therefore rising rapidly.

And so did her status. The importance given to autobiographical and confessional literature in the 1970s (see Russ, 1983; Felski, 1989), the challenges to canon formation by feminist critics (e.g. works by such feminist critics as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar), combined with Nin’s images of herself as
an independent woman-artist that she put forward in the *Diary* all contributed to turning her into a cultural icon. Nin’s name was emblazoned on T-shirts and appeared in crossword puzzles (Stuhlmann, Preface to D VII: vii). The popular rock group *The Doors* made the title of Nin’s book *A Spy in the House of Love* their own (to which Nin objected). The opening lines of their song “Spy,” released in 1970, are: “I am a Spy/ In the house of love/ I know the dream/ That you’re dreaming of” (Centing, “Spying” 11). Nin also became a very competent and sought-after public speaker. And although she gave lectures prior to the publication of the *Diary*, the demand for her public appearances increased dramatically after 1966.

In these fruitful years, Nin was also awarded many official honours. In 1973, Philadelphia College granted her the honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, and a year later, she was elected a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (Bair 503). She was also honoured by the United Nations in the International Women’s Year in 1975 (Bair 504); and in 1976, she was named the Woman of the Year by the *Los Angeles Times* (Bair 511). Nin’s works began to be studied in colleges. *Under the Sign of Pisces*, the first journal devoted to Nin, reported on the most interesting courses in which Nin was included: The *Diary* was part of the syllabus in courses organised at the Yale University (“Images of Women in Literature” by Dianne Alstad); at San Diego College (“Women Writers” by Joyce Nower); at Douglass College (“The Literature of Women’s Liberation” by Elaine Showalter); at the University of California, Santa Barbara (“Women and Literature” by Nancy Hoffman); and at Jersey City State College, where Nin’s works were taught regularly by Sharon Spencer (Centing, “Teaching” 6-7).

These successful years, from 1966 (the publication of the first diary) to Nin’s death in 1977, will be the subject of this chapter. The previous chapter investigated how Nin shaped her persona in the *Diaries*. With each consecutive volume Nin deployed a certain set of self-presentations. This chapter maintains the assumption that Nin was complicit in the construction of her public persona and the rise of her career. Apart from controlling her image, for example, Nin also took an active part in the promotion and the publicity process. In a letter to her husband, Hugh Guiler, on 8 December 1965, she wrote, “I have to watch Harcourt Brace like a hawk. They had [the] date of Diary as big as my name, which as a friendly bookshop suggested, will

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20 Harcourt Brace was the publisher of Nin’s *Diary*. The company merged in 2007 with Houghton Mifflin and is known nowadays as Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
drive away the young. For the sake of truth it has to be there, but not in marquee size letters on the black background. These people really don’t know their business.”

At the same time, as Nin’s popularity grew, she had to share the creation of her public persona with her audience. Critics of celebrity culture (e.g. Dyer, Marshall) point out that celebrity is a common product of celebrity production – by the celebrity him/her-self and the people responsible for the management of their careers (agents, editors, publishers) – and of celebrity reception – by the public. After 1966, not only were the Diaries widely reviewed, but Nin herself became a subject of press articles, interviews, TV and radio programmes, and even of a feature documentary film. By consuming and interpreting the images of Nin, her readers became co-constructors of her public persona. Consequently, Nin developed into a hybrid of self-creation and media invention.

“Institutional readers” (Templin 8) – such as journalists, reviewers, interviewers, academics – were especially important to the production of her public persona. They created textual representations that could reach a wide range of readers and were more enduring (and also more accessible) than ‘ordinary’ readers’ interpretations. “Institutional readers,” whose “personal voices,” as Templin notes, “are magnified by their institutional affiliation” (8), are the ones whose judgments are available to the public. As a result, they have the potential to influence other people’s opinions. This chapter therefore deals mainly with institutional readers – reviewers and journalists – and their reception of Nin.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part is devoted to press representations of Nin. I analyse mainly the reviews of the Diaries which were the response to the consecutively published volumes. These show how the Diaries were assessed but also what textual representations of Nin they accentuated and/or created. I also comment on Nin’s relationship with various critics, many of whom were her friends, and in the final section of this part, I briefly note how Nin ensured her fame by being not only the subject of reviews but also their author. In the second part I turn my attention to Nin’s public performances. Concentrating on interviews and lectures helps me to establish how Nin attempted to control her image and how she negotiated it with the media and her audiences. The third part very briefly comments on the visual representations of Nin.
Part One: Press Reception of Nin

Reviews: General trends

In the introduction to bibliography of writings on Nin, Rose Marie Cutting (xvi-xvii) comments on trends in the reviews of the Diaries. She says that the first diary received over thirty reviews in 1966 alone (she counts foreign reviews), and according to her, the favourable reviews outweighed the negative ones by two to one. As for Diary II, there was a decline of interest in comparison to Diary I, but positive opinions outnumbered the negative by three to one. Diary III received again fewer reviews in comparison to the previous volume but still there were more positive responses – by two to one, according to Cutting. As for volumes four and five, Cutting notes that there was roughly the same number of positive and negative reviews.

Nin’s diaries were reviewed in a number of different publications: influential review magazines (e.g. the New York Times Book Review, the Library Journal), important journals of opinions (e.g. the New Yorker), popular magazines (e.g. Newsweek), major American dailies (e.g. the New York Times, the Washington Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune). Some publications were very consistent in their opinions. For example, the Library Journal and the Nation assessed the great majority of volumes positively, whereas the New Yorker offered only very brief, highly ironic and rather negative comments. Most of the publications, however, recommended Diaries with varying levels of enthusiasm. For instance, the Los Angeles Times offered three extremely complimentary reviews (all penned by Robert Kirsch), but these were balanced by two very detrimental ones. Critics also did not agree which of the volumes was the best one. Some argued that the first two ones were the best; others pointed to the volume four (the Washington Post), others, like William Goyen reviewing for the New York Times Book Review considered volume five “the most unified and shapely” (n. pag.) while for some this volume was not remarkable at all (Nancy Hoffman in the New Republic).

The most common evaluation of Nin’s diaries is along the lines successful/unsuccessful writer. Opinions as to whether Nin succeeded in creating the diary vary. Reviewers are divided into those who consider her Diary a work of art, and those who see it as a creative failure. Usually these critics who like the Diary treat it as an artistic achievement and they frequently comment on the fact that it is un-diary like,
while these who dislike it accuse Nin of lacking in literary craft. This debate reflects a broader cultural dispute about autobiographical writings in general, and the function of the diary in the literary marketplace in particular. In her comprehensive introduction, Podnieks outlines the main debate over the status of the diary, namely whether diary writing is a deliberate or spontaneous activity, which in turn raises a question of authenticity of diary practice (5).

Reviewing volume one for the *Los Angeles Times*, Robert Kirsch calls it “one of the most remarkable in the history of letters” (B2). He says that it “becomes an odyssey, more powerful than a novel, though possessed of the same elements, beginning, middle, a climax” (B2). Karl Shapiro goes as far as claiming that Nin’s *Diary I* “is a new and beautiful kind, shining a strange light on literature itself” (157). He claims that Nin’s *Diary* has an exceptional form which combines the art of the novel and the art of the confession. Like Kirsch, he finds the diary has “the full dimension of the novel (character, “plot,” exposition, dialogue, casual action, and so on) as well as the normal characteristics of the journal intime” (155). And he adds that Nin’s *Diary* “stands the test of the most formal writing without surrendering the charm of authenticity which is usually the sole appeal of autobiography literature” (155).

*Diary II* receives a similar praise in the *Kenyen Review* from Duane Schneider, the future scholar of Nin’s works, who sees it as “a well sustained work of art” that distinguishes itself with “the originality of the style, a well-written prose” (137). According to him, “it is as art that the *Diary* commands our attention” (140). In a similar vein, Daniel Stern, who reviewed both *Diary II* and *IV* for the *Nation*, claims that Nin is in control of her writing, which is well-presented and well-constructed. He considers her *Diary* the work of a conscious novelist (“Princess” 312). Responding to volume four, he suggests, even in the title (“The Novel of Her Life”), that the *Diary* is more than what we usually think about the genre. According to him, Nin’s *Diaries* are “‘fictional’ representations of the modern era”, and her *Diary* is more like a novel (571). Also Anna Balakian, assessing volume four for the *New York Times Book Review*, notes that Nin’s *Diary* is like “no other in the history of letters”, and she adds that “the word ‘diary’ does not do her work justice. If the writing is spontaneous, we see a pattern emerging from the selections that constitute the specific volumes” (n. pag.). Yet, all this praise rings somewhat empty: as Kate Millett explains, those who consider Nin’s work a new kind of novel do so because “novels are respectable and journals aren’t” (6). This corresponds with Laura Marcus argument introduced in Chapter One, namely
that critics frequently affiliate autobiographical writings to more ‘recognised’ genres (234).

Nin’s volumes also receive diametrically different assessments in which Nin is deemed an unsuccessful writer: she is accused of being boring, humourless and too exalted. Thus, for instance, Henrietta Buckmaster, writing for the Christian Science Monitor, claims that there is no discipline in Nin’s writing and Nin lacks the necessary artistic craft. She finds Nin’s Diary repetitive, stating that the first half of Diary I in particular is “all talk, talk, talk, like a fountain using the same water over and over again” (5). One may say that it is a peculiar accusation, considering that repetition is a distinctive attribute of the diary genre. Jocelyn Knowles, writing in the Los Angeles Times, disparages Diary II as merely a collection of compliments collected in the years 1934 to 1939. She adds that “Miss Nin writes without benefit of second thought or evidence of editing. Her idea of a sentence seems to be a series of gushes separated by a series of commas” (C39). In the New York Times Book Review, Jean Garrigue thinks of “the plotless plot of the diary” as “the patched quilt of juxtapositions that it was in the first two volumes” (Rev. of Diary III n. pag.). She therefore sees the Diary as lacking in structure. Laurie Stone in the Village Voice, evaluating the series of six volumes, believes that Nin regards her “passive output” as her major work (43). This comment reveals Stone’s perspective on diary as a genre – diary, according to her, seems to be a mere by-product of life.

Nin is also often evaluated along the lines: insightful/ self-absorbed. Where some critics find a person of great sensitivity, perceptiveness and honesty (e.g. St. Louis Dispatch, Newsweek, Books Abroad), others see only egotism, exaggeration, and delusion (e.g. the New Yorker, the New York Review of Books). So, the former praise her for great perceptions and uncompromising portraits of herself and other characters, admire her for enormous humanity and sympathy towards her human fellows, and marvel at her power to resist destruction and corruption of the modern world. The latter deride her dramatic persona of “an injured romantic,” as, for instance, the New York Review of Books does (Mazzocco n.pag.); accuse her of being “her own best friend” (Whitman, New York Times 23) or describe her as being naïve, petty, vain and hungry for compliments (Broyard, New York Times 39). This difference of opinion reveals again disagreement about the value of diary as a genre and it brings to the fore a question whether a preoccupation with one’s self is worth our attention. On a more general level, the fact that critics differ so much in their evaluation of Nin’s Diary
demonstrates that literary works do not have intrinsic values. Rather, values are culturally determined. This supports Templin’s assumption that literary values are constructed and that critics’ judgements are ideological and dependent on a number of factors. Templin maintains that it is impossible for evaluators to “get outside experience and values and find a position of objectivity” (19). What decides then whether a given literary work is deemed a success or failure are frequently reviewers’ attitudes, values, political affiliations, literary preferences, and institutional loyalties.

Helping to maintain the legend of Anais Nin

An interesting phenomenon about the reviews of Nin’s Diaries is that despite various levels of enthusiasm there is a certain consistency of information given to readers in these assessments. It is especially visible in the case of the reviews of the first volume. Very often, before critics get down to actually summarising and evaluating Diary I, they provide some background information about Anais Nin herself. These pieces of information regarding Nin reveal, however, no more to readers than Gunther Stuhlmann did in the preface to the volume one.

In the preface to the first volume, Stuhlmann begins by commenting on Nin’s legendary status in the literary world. He mentions Henry Miller’s praising article about the diary, which appeared in 1937 in The Criterion magazine, and in which Miller states that Nin’s work “will take its place beside the revelations of St. Augustine, Petronius, Abélard, Rousseau, Proust, and others” (Preface to D I 1). Then, Stuhlmann discloses the size of the original diary (150 volumes or 15,000 pages of typewritten transcript). And finally, he provides some basic information about Nin’s literary achievement up to date, her family background, the inception of her diary, and her life prior to 1931. Information provided by Stuhlmann (who worked closely with Nin) can be condensed to the following three elements: (1) Nin’s status in literary circles and the mention of the long-awaited diary; (2) the story of the beginning of the diary and the size of the original diary; (3) the account of Nin’s origin (family, nationality, childhood).

These elements constantly recur in the reviews of Diary I. Each of the reviews of the first volume includes at least one of these three elements, and some (e.g. the Chicago Tribune) have all of them. What readers learn at this stage is therefore very limited and controlled by Nin and people collaborating with her. In effect, those
involved in reception of Nin repeat what the production side has given them. The constant introduction of these three elements contribute to making Nin into a legend and giving readers an impression of authenticity of the diary.

Let us consider the first element which is frequently mentioned in the reviews – Nin’s status in literary circles and/or the mention of the long-awaited diary. Some reviews refer to Nin as a legendary and/or mysterious figure in the literary world. It is very likely that they here reiterate what Stuhlmann wrote in the preface, which reads as follows: “For more than three decades, Anaïs Nin’s monumental diary, or journal, has been the subject of much rumor, gossip, and conjecture” (D I 1). And thus, Fanny Butcher in her review for the Chicago Tribune states that “Nin has become legendary among the literary intelligentsia of two continents” (7). The Christian Science Monitor literary critic, Buckmaster, is more suspicious about Nin’s position and she notes, “Anaïs Nin is one of these shadowy figures in the circles of art whose reputation has acquired a mystique. . . . One says knowingly ‘Oh, yes, Anaïs Nin” without knowing what one is knowing’” (5). Saturday Review begins its appraisal in a similar way: “Anaïs Nin has always been a strange, somewhat mysterious literary figure” (Bishop 29). Such descriptions of Anaïs Nin are in fact constructions of her persona as, at their best, legendary, at their worst, enigmatic and vague.

What is more, many reviewers of the first volume speak of Nin’s diary as a long-awaited and anticipated work. While it is true that Nin has been known to some literary critics, such as Edmund Wilson, and had a small circle of fans, it is hard to imagine that the general public was waiting for the publication of the diary with anticipation. But the reviews give exactly such an impression – as if Nin were a Messiah expected by the world – saying things like: “For a long time the publication of these diaries has been anticipated” (Kirsch, Los Angeles Times B2); “Miss Nin’s rich, rhapsodic, hubris-filled memoir, so solemnly awaited, so piously acclaimed” (Mazzocco, New York Review of Books n. pag.); or “All the while . . . there has been a diary which the world has not seen but has often whispered about” (Moore, St. Louis Dispatch B4). Also, Miller’s words – quoted by Stuhlmann – are frequently cited by others, which probably gives Nin’s work a little bit more credibility, since Miller was a popular figure in the 1960s.

Interestingly, both positive and negative reviews comment on Nin’s diary as a long-anticipated literary work. For example, the reviews of Diary I, both in the St. Louis Dispatch by a well-known professor of English, Harry T. Moore, and in the Chicago Tribune by a retired critic, Fanny Butcher, indicate this expectancy in their
titles. The former is entitled “A Long-Awaited Diary”; the latter “A Long Awaited Literary Flight.” The similar titles are the only thing that these reviews have in common however. Their evaluations differ enormously. Their final lines say it all. For Moore, “The book is deep, beautifully done, and always absorbing” (B4); while for Butcher, “With the publication of this portion of the Anaïs Nin diary, a long awaited literary flight to the moon has missed its promised rendezvous” (7). Nonetheless, such statements about the Diary, whether positive or negative, definitely played a part in creating an aura of mystery around Nin. Consequently, the reviews of the first volume presented Nin to the public as a mysterious, long-awaited, legendary figure.

When the story of the beginning of the diary, the size of the original diary, and the account of Nin’s origin (family, nationality, childhood) are mentioned in the reviews, they enhance the credibility of the Diary. The story of inception of the diary – as a letter to the father who deserted the family when Nin was eleven – conveys the impression of innocence and pathos about Nin’s undertaking. She did not begin it to describe the famous, but to communicate with her father. The beginnings of the diary are tragic, and the tragic is untouchable in our culture, veiled in a mystery. This automatically denies critics, who otherwise might have been willing to accuse Nin of building her own fame on the renown of others, an argument. Furthermore, when the size of the original diary is mentioned, readers are assured that there is original diary and the published version, although edited, is not an artificial fabrication. The sheer size of the diary gives an impression of something compulsive, organic, and therefore, real.

Nin as the embodiment of femininity

Nin is frequently assessed for the femininity she represents: both as a concept and as an embodiment of it. As noted in Chapter Two, Nin tried to establish herself on the diary pages, especially from the second volume onwards, as the voice of feminine consciousness. Many reviewers responded to these attempts.

Some reviewers, especially men, perceive Nin as the essence of a woman, the writer of feminine expression. For example, Robert Kirsch notes in the Los Angeles Times that “Of special interest is what she has to say to women. Few women diarist since the 18th century have so eloquently expressed the core of femininity” (B2). Of a similar opinion is professor Harry T. Moore who writes in the St. Louis Dispatch that “The diary is . . . an intense revelation of female experience – the word feminine
suggests too many frills and laces on the surface, while this journal really goes to the heart of existence. So, female it is” (B4). Although Moore rejects the word “feminine” as an adequate description of Nin, it seems that both reviewers refer to the same thing – Nin as an exemplar of true womanhood. *Newsweek’s* review of volume two is accompanied by the photograph of a young Nin sitting on the beach in the swimming costume/summer dress with a caption “Nin: Real female.” Saul Maloff, the author of the piece, writes, “washed out to sea by the steady pulsing rhythm of her verbal ballet, the reader finally has to admit that Durrell was right the first time – there is something seductive about such relentless femaleness” (36).

For these critics Nin embodies “femaleness” and “the core of femininity” and their accounts resound with a certain nostalgia for such true womanhood. Their reviews also suggest that femininity is something natural and rooted in the core of our existence. Thus, they perpetuate the assumptions of biological essentialism according to which women were/behaved/spoke in certain ways that were distinct from that of men and did so because of natural propensities ‘emanating’ from their genetic make-up.

By contrast, many female reviewers distance themselves from the concept of femininity proposed by Nin. Jean Garrigue in the *New York Times Book Review* claims that Nin’s insights may be helpful to some women, especially those who struggle with rejecting the traditional model of womanhood. But in general, she questions Nin’s archetypal femininity and her usefulness as a role model for contemporary women (Rev. of *Diary III*). Similarly, Audrey C. Foote, evaluating volume six for the *Washington Post*, expresses her astonishment that “this romantic, delicate very 19th-century lady . . . has become a monstre sacre to the young, and particularly to young feminists” (M4). She believes that Nin’s feminism is very out-dated because Nin fights for women’s fulfilment in love and art, rather than sports and career (M4).

There are also women critics who are indignant at Nin’s attempt to promote herself as the representative of women. Knowles, author of a very negative review of *Diary II* in the *Los Angeles Times*, writes, “Most exasperating is her determination to establish herself as a spokesman for womanhood” (C39). Similar discontent can be found in Nancy Hoffman’s review for the *New Republic*. She observes that Nin has become “the champion of feminine inner self” and that Nin found an audience in women who focus on Nin’s self-development, her evolving identity. However, in Hoffman’s eyes “Nin’s popularity signifies the perpetuation of a female preoccupation with self at the expense of authentic action in the outside world” (31).
Nin’s femininity becomes the main point of evaluation in the *New Yorker*’s very brief, ironic, and anonymous reviews. The review of the second volume says that this portion continues the key themes of the first one, such as friendship, work and femininity. And the comment on femininity is thus expanded: “Miss Nin has always been preoccupied with femininity . . . in practice, it seems to have meant self-sacrifice to the point of self-destruction, plus a self-consciousness that is not wholly appealing” (83). The review of volume five states that after Nin has “exhausted herself for an assortment of ungrateful men. . . . She has finally put her efforts into herself” (159). In a similar vein, the review of *Diary VI* points out that “with the help of psychoanalyst, she learns at last that being feminine is not the same as being a doormat” (120). These comments are all the more significant because the reviews which contain them are very short and they highlight even more Nin’s concept of femininity.

So, according to the majority of reviewers, Nin should not be a model for contemporary women (but it is often noted that she is). Nin’s concept of femininity is seen as being at odds with the ideals of the women’s movement. Her preoccupation with personal liberation and psychoanalysis as a means of achieving it is in conflict with a collective action aiming to resolve social problems encountered by women, as proposed by early feminists. However, as the section on Nin’s public performances will reveal, Nin manipulated her ideas and her image to meet her feminist followers half way.

**The business of reviewing**

We tend to think about reviews as unbiased and spontaneous judgements of a book. But the reality of the reviewing business is frequently different. Joe Moran, for example, argues that nowadays reviews, interviews and cover stories are carefully managed by the publishing houses (39-40). Richard Ohmann in his article “The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960-1975” quotes a 1968 study which revealed a correlation between the number of advertisements that publishing companies place in the *New York Times Book Review* and the number of reviews they receive from the magazine. He finds that the biggest advertisers get the biggest number of reviews (203). For Nin the reviewing business was not a secret. She knew, as I indicated in the previous chapter, that being published with a prestigious company would guarantee publicity and reviews.

What is more, it is important not only to be reviewed but to be reviewed in the right place. Ohmann lists the eight most influential review magazines in the United
States in the 1960s and 1970s and these are: the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Republic*, the *New Yorker*, *Commentary*, *Saturday Review*, *Partisan Review*, and *Harper’s* (204). According to him, the literary work “had to win at least the divided approval of these arbiters in order to remain in the universe of literary discourse” (205). Following Ohmann’s classification, Nin’s *Diaries* were reviewed by five influential American magazines. The *New York Times Book Review* assessed all the volumes and the reviews were rather positive. Additionally, the *New York Times* wrote two reports, one on volume two (very brief and scathing), and the other on volume four (neutral). The *New York Review of Books* did only one review (of the first *Diary*) and it was rather harsh. The *New Republic* reviewed the fifth and sixth volumes, the former one received negative appraisal and the latter one got a neutral assessment. The *New Yorker* included very brief notes on volumes I, II, V and VI, all of them highly ironic. *Saturday Review* pithily mentioned the first volume in an article “Pick of the Paperback” and then reviewed volumes II, V, and VI. The second volume got a very favourable review from Anna Balakian and the remaining two received rather negative appraisals.

Although the majority of the cultural arbiters showed little enthusiasm for Nin’s work, Nin secured favourable evaluations in what Ohmann considers as the most influential review magazine – the *New York Times Book Review*. According to him, “The single most important boost a novel could get was a prominent review in the Sunday *New York Times* – better a favourable one than an unfavourable one, but better an unfavourable one than none at all” (202). The large number of readers of this periodical, reaching about a million and a half in that period, was, as Ohmann suggests, incomparable to any other literary magazine. The *New York Times Book Review* was read widely by intellectuals and academics, but also by people who, shaped, albeit indirectly, reading preferences, such as bookstore managers or librarians. What is therefore very significant is the fact that Nin’s diaries and later her erotica were regularly reviewed by the *New York Times Book Review*. What is more, the first volume of Nin’s *Diary* got the prestigious front page review in this magazine. Penned by Jean Garrigue, the review mainly provided some basic information about Nin and her diary, and an outline of main events of the volume. At the end, it positively summarised the diary as “a rich, various and fascinating work” (“Self” 1).

Moreover, not only the prestige of the magazine, but also the name of the reviewer counts, as some critics are more estimated than others. Charlotte Templin and
John Rodden, in their respective studies of Erica Jong’s and George Orwell’s reputations, point to the importance of a writer being supported publicly by another one, especially one who is well-known. Templin remarks that “Recognized writers have tremendous cultural authority and can, as book reviewers or in other ways, single out a new writer for a special kind of attention” (10), and she recounts how significant for Jong’s reputation were positive reviews of John Updike and Henry Miller. Yet, at the same time, dividing reviewers into three categories – literary journalists, academic critics and novelists – she argues that the last group is more prone to extra bias because of the competitive nature of literary market. She explains, “It would not be unusual for a writer who has asked Jong for a blurb for his novel – and been refused for any one of a number of reasons – to bear a grudge that would influence his review of a Jong novel at a later date” (32). A writer’s power to make or break one’s reputation emerges clearly in Nin’s relationships with Henry Miller and Gore Vidal.

Not only did Nin portray famous people in the Diary, she also used her well-known acquaintances to forward her career. Nin’s most famous best friend was Henry Miller. Both Nin and Miller exploited their friendship to achieve their common goal – to become recognised authors. Their mutual support dates back to the 1930s. During that time, Nin supported Miller financially, gathered money to print his Tropic of Cancer, and provided it with a laudatory preface. Miller, in turn, tried to help her to print the diary and as early as 1937 he praised it in the Criterion. His statement that Nin’s diary constituted “a monumental confession which when given to the world will take its place beside the revelations of St. Augustine, Petronius, Abélard, Rousseau, Proust, and others” (Miller, “Un Etre” 147) was often cited once the diary was published: Cutting observes that Miller’s words are “probably the most frequently-quoted encomium to Nin’s diary” (ix). And, although over the years Miller and Nin drifted apart, he always remained her supporter and spoke positively about her writings.

Templin considers Miller a prestigious opinion leader and she points to the vital role he played in promoting Erica Jong’s literary career (22). Miller was a very popular, if controversial, figure in the American marketplace in the 1960s. And before Nin’s diary found a publisher, she engaged herself in another project, namely the publications of Miller’s letters to her. Miller granted her copyright to his letters in 1962 and his side of their correspondence appeared in 1965 entitled Henry Miller: Letters to Anaїs Nin. For the publisher of her novels, Allan Swallow, who was excluded from this publication, the whole endeavour was “trading upon Miller’s name” (qtd. in Bair, 470).
And trading it was indeed. How important Miller was for launching Nin’s career can be seen in a letter Nin received from her husband Hugh Guiler in January 1965. He wrote:

Bay\textsuperscript{21} offered $500 dollars for your novel, or two of them, if he could get the Miller letters for $600. You remember Peter Owen\textsuperscript{22} finally paid $2000 for the Miller letters and Gunther feels you should have at least $1500 for them from Bay. Also, he does not want him to be taking you only as a package with Miller, but feels he should be interested in doing your novels for their own sake. . . . In general Gunther wants to stop anyone from taking you only as a package with Miller, which he thinks is not good for you.

Two important points emerge here. First, Nin and her agent Gunther Stuhlmann were using Miller’s letters as bait to entice the publishers. Second, Nin was regarded as Miller’s supplement and Stuhlmann was determined to make Nin into an author in her own right.

Nin herself was aware of Miller’s importance to her diary. “He has enormous, almost unbelievable power, because as you know, in America once a name is made, then everything happens,” she observed in a letter to her husband. In the same letter, she also mentioned that she and Miller eventually reconciled and he who took the diary with him to the hospital to read through them. She noted, “This is a turning point for the fate of the diary” (Nin to Guiler, Feb. 1965). Also the transcript of the first diary reveals that Nin originally intended to include even more of Henry Miller than she did in the published version. For instance, in the transcript, the first description of Henry Miller is much more extended: It contains an additional three-page story of Henry Miller’s beginnings as a writer.

Apart from lending his name to Nin’s cause, Miller also expressed positive opinions in the media. For instance, in 1966 he penned an article for the *Village Voice* which appeared next to the review of *Diary I*. Miller presents the *Diary* as an exceptional and candid record of a unique person. He thus comments on the original volumes of the diary which he has seen: “The record is tumultuous, almost unbearably naked, often clairvoyant. . . . It is my impression that no woman has ever written in like manner, and very few indeed are the men who have had the courage to reveal the truth

\textsuperscript{21} Andre Bay – an editor of Editions Stock in Paris.
\textsuperscript{22} Peter Owen – Nin’s publisher in the UK.
so wholeheartedly” (“Miller on Nin” 5). He also paid homage to Nin in the prologue to a feature documentary, *The Henry Miller Odyssey*, introducing her as “an author of the now famous Diary . . . an inspiration to, and a protectress of so many striving artists, including yours truly, Henry Miller” (Centing, “Miller Odyssey” 4).

While Miller is an example of how literary support from a known writer may enhance another writer’s career, Gore Vidal, Nin’s ex-friend, serves as a good illustration how personal animosity between writers may have negatively influenced Nin’s reputation. Vidal wrote a review of *Diary IV* (in which he starred) for the *Los Angeles Times*. It begins with the account of the meeting with Nin during which she asked him for the release of his portrait in volume four. He implies that she did not show him the entire portrait – “several fine warts were withheld for the current showing” (S1). He then provides some information about Nin and does so in a very ironic way, commenting, for example, that “she played at being a poor artist” while in fact she was married to a wealthy businessman (S1). Eventually, he moves on to an equally ironic summary of volume four (S1). His version of *Diary IV* makes Nin look vain and petty. For example, he implies that Nin ended her friendship with Maya Daren (a filmmaker) because the latter made her look old in her film. He also insinuates that Nin omitted a lot from the fourth volume, including at least two very meaningful relationship of her life, and he issues a warning to literary historians: “deal warily with Anaïs’ ‘facts’” (23). He accuses Nin both of editing out essential elements in her life from the published version and also of making up certain facts. He writes, “She is dealing with actual people. Yet I would not recognize any of them (including myself), had she not carefully labelled each specimen” (5). He also alleges that her *Diary* was never the honest and secret endeavour that Nin claimed it to be. He quotes Nin’s saying that “Writing in a diary developed several habits: a habit of honesty (because no one imagines the diary will be ever read)” and then he comments, “this was written in June, 1946, when I was trying to get Dutton to publish the childhood diary” (5).

The review is accompanied with an eye-catching caricature captioned “Anaïs Nin and Gore Vidal, circa 1945.” The caricature depicts Nin and Vidal in bed: Vidal fast asleep, Nin, smiling, is scribbling in what we can assume is her diary by the candlelight. The picture therefore quite bluntly suggests that Vidal was not only Nin’s friend but also her lover (in volume four Nin wrote about Vidal as her friend). Vidal’s assessment was a crucial moment in Nin’s career – it was one of the first attempts (if not the first one) to provide some serious corrections to Nin’s neatly coined image. His
review definitely sparked an interest as Nin was later asked about it in several interviews. The Nin/Vidal relationship also became a theme of the Village Voice article, “Anaïs Nin vs. Gore Vidal: Bon Mots and Billets Doux.” Ann Morrissett Davidon recounts their low-key battles and discusses the nature of their friendship. She wonders how it is possible that two so different individuals with so different attitudes and beliefs were once good friends fascinated with each other (80-2). And even in 1980 – nine years later – his article is mentioned in another review. Katha Pollitt, evaluating volume seven of the Diary, refers to Vidal’s review in which he states that Nin “played at poverty” (S1), when she asks: “how else are we to know if her portrait of herself as a martyr to her friends is accurate – or, as Gore Vidal has suggested, the fantasy of a wealthy woman who played at Bohemianism?” (“Apologia” 24).

There is also another factor that needs to be considered about the reviewing business – Nin’s own participation in it. First of all, many of the critics, even those who dislike the Diary (e.g. reviewers from the New Yorker and the New Republic), agree that Nin becomes more mature and less self-focused in volumes five and six. Whether it is a ‘natural’ progress of Nin as the person, or whether it is Nin’s response to earlier reviews cannot be determined unequivocally. However, it is a fact that Nin, as Bair (492) notes, collected everything that was written about her, and therefore she knew what reviewers liked and disliked about her Diary. It is highly possible that, in creating subsequent volumes, she responded to criticism levelled at her.

And Nin’s attitude towards the reviews and critics was far from passive. She often contacted reviewers in order either to thank them for favourable comments or to reprimand them for negative ones and enlighten them about her works. For example, she must have written an accusing letter to Robert Kirsch, the book review editor in the Los Angeles Times, for her archive holds his letter in which he thus defends himself: “As a long time admirer of your work I cannot understand your allegation that I have ‘not allowed reputable critics’ to review you. I assigned your books to responsible reviewers” (Kirsch to Nin). Such a reply must have been prompted by her accusing letter to him. Perhaps that is why later Kirsch took upon himself reviewing most volumes of Nin’s Diary. And each of his pieces was an accolade. So, later Nin wrote him a thank you letter, saying “Of all the things which have been said, written about the Diaries, you wrote what has the deepest meaning for me” (D VII 122).

Secondly, Nin also became acquainted with many of her reviewers and critics. Bair remarks, “Through letters, she began friendship with many persons who wrote
about her work, including Harriet Zinnes, Wayne McEvilly, Duane Schneider, Benjamin Franklin V, Nancy Scholar Zee” (486). She also befriended Bettina Knapp, Sharon Spencer, Evelyn Hinz, Lynn Sukenick, Deena Metzger, Daniel Stern, Judy Chicago, Anna Balakian and her sister Nona Balakian, who worked for the New York Times Book Review. Nin was therefore very skillful in, what nowadays is a crucial component of a successful career, namely, networking. Having critics as her friends meant that she could influence their opinions. For example, Diary VII contains Nin’s letter to Bettina Knapp, reading: “Your review [of the Novel of the Future] is wonderful. . . . Do you mind on page 2, line 16 leaving out ‘particular with the creatures of his fantasy,’ as it may be misunderstood. . . . I hope they [the Village Voice] take it. It sounds so warm they may suspect a friendship. I hope not” (D VII 73).

Finally, many of these reviewers turned into Nin’s devoted critics. Bettina Knapp, Evelyn J. Hinz, Sahron Spencer, Duane Schneider and Benjamin Franklin V all ended up writing full-length studies on Nin’s works. The first person to produce a critical study on Nin’s work was Oliver Evans. Before he began writing on Nin, he studied Carson McCullers, and Nin reviewed his study in Books Abroad. At the beginning of their cooperation, Nin was pleased with his critique of her works. On 11 May 1965, she wrote to Peter Owen, her British editor: “Oliver Evans has just finished a fascinating study of it [the diary]. . . . He is the first to write about the Diary, to have total access to it, and the only critic I have fully collaborated with.”

Her full collaboration, however, meant constant supervision of Evans’ work in progress and a very detailed criticism of it. And Nin never stopped at just criticising: she also demanded changes. For instance, in one of her letters to him, she gave a detailed report on his study and suggested corrections, such as: “Page 20 footnote: ‘To the political commitment of the movement, however, Miss Nin has remained steadfastly indifferent’. This may cause trouble later, as the next volume contains my conflict with just such a commitment and dramatization of it. I would perhaps avoid it.” In the same letter, she also asked him to refer to her as Anaïs Nin and not Miss Nin. She says: “Miss Nin sounds like ‘Miss Pin’, ‘Prim’ etc. Is that polite in criticism?” (Nin to Evans, May 1965).

As Evans’s work progressed, Nin became more and more dissatisfied with it. She accused him of changing his perspective in the last chapter and assessing her work from a realistic point of view (Nin to Evans, October 1965). Evans replied to her
accusations saying, “You know I have the greatest admiration for your work. . . . A 60,000 word ‘blurb’ would be meaningless, and even if I am mistaken in my judgments it is better to be sincere than to be guilt of mere panegyric which no one would take seriously” (Evans to Nin, n.d.). As a result, Nin never spoke about his work positively. When asked at one of her lectures to identify critics who best understood her work, Nin pointed to Evelyzn Hinz and she often gave Oliver Evans as an example of the critic who misinterpreted her works (Woman Speaks 98).

Nin the reviewer
The best way to ensure the interest of the media is to expose oneself to public view. In order to stay in spotlight one may choose not only to be a subject of various media commentary but also its author. And that is exactly what Nin did. Not only was she the subject of many articles and reviews but she also authored many of them. Her name could be encountered as often inside an article as under it. By writing reviews, articles, and blurbs Nin maintained her fame. Nin reviewed several books for the New York Times, such as The Complete Plays of D.H. Lawrence; Diary of a Century by Jacques Henri Latrigue; and Between Me and my Life: A Biography of Romaine Brooks. She also wrote a review of a critical study on Carson McCullers by Oliver Evans and reviewed two books by one her favourite contemporary writer, Marguerite Young. Nin’s name was also used to endorse some writers and her comments appeared on back covers of such books as Miss MacIntosh, My Darling by Marguerite Young, The Painted Bird by Jerzy Kosinski, Knowing Woman advertised as “the feminine psychology women have been waiting for” (advertisement n.pag); Androgyny: Toward a New Theory of Sexuality by June Singer, to enumerate just a few.

Types of books she chose to evaluate reveal further how she constructed her public persona as it gives us an insight into associations Nin was slowly building for herself. Her review of Lawrence’s plays, for example, further highlights her admiration for the author and her understanding of his works and, in a way, it indirectly promotes her own study of the author. Her approval of Marguerite Young’s output reflects Nin’s own interests and writing style. In endorsing Young’s difficult writing, Nin gives her own works more authority. And the review of Androgyny is in line with her developing identity as a women’s representative.
Part Two: Nin’s Public Performances

General comments
The presence of the author in the public eye has become a crucial element of the modern literary career. Glass observes, “through live readings, interviews, and promotional appearances, authors were increasingly expected to offer up their personalities as a promotional component of their work in the literary marketplace” (17). Nin was aware of the importance of public encounters with her readers, and as a result gave many lectures and interviews. They provided her with a great opportunity to control her image which she launched in her Diary. Speaking in public gave Nin a chance either to reinforce or challenge the self-representations of the Diary. Although, as volume seven – published posthumously – reveals, Nin was occasionally tired of her fame (see analysis of Diary VII in Chapter Four), in fact, she performed the role of a public author extremely well.

Making Mark Twain a case study for his second chapter, Moran shows how various media reinforced Twain’s fame. He claims that newspapers and magazines created representations of Twain thus arousing the desire to meet the ‘real’ person that was fulfilled through lectures given by the author (19). The same phenomenon is apparent in Nin’s public life. It is a self-perpetuating machine: the more active and publicly visible Nin is, the more the media notice her, and the more the public wants to see her on stage.23

Nin began lecturing in the 1940s and 1950s. Real demand for Nin as a public speaker increased, however, after the publication of the Diary. Between 1966 and 1973 Nin lectured widely. Hinz (Introduction xiii) notes that Nin was the most active as a speaker in the years 1966 to 1973, and Fitch (388) mentions sixty lectures from fall 1972 to the spring of 1973 alone. Similarly, commenting on the interviews given by Nin, Cutting (xix) notes that Nin was one of the most frequently interviewed of twentieth-century authors, and DuBow (Introduction xi) adds that most of these interviews took place between 1966 and 1972.

What is more, Bair notes that “Anaïs Nin realized how much her personal appearance enhanced the sales of her books and she did everything she could to

23 For instance, not only were Nin’s works discussed in the press, but also her public appearances were frequently reported in newspapers.
capitalize on it, including registering with the respected W. Colton Leigh Lecture Agency” (481). This indicates Nin’s great self-promotion acumen, especially when we consider what Moran says about the trends in promoting American authors. Moran claims that book advertising has been taken seriously only for the last two decades. Furthermore, he states that “Publishers have also realized the cheapness and effectiveness of forms of publicity which concentrate on the author . . . a ten-city tour costs the same as, and reaches considerably more perspective customers than, a full-page advertisement in the New York Times Book Review” (37). If that is the case, then Nin was ahead of her times in this respect, promoting her books through public encounters with her audience.

Her books were usually on sale during her lectures. Sometimes she arranged book selling herself. For instance, before her arrival for the lecture at Southern Illinois University, she sent a letter asking for two favours – one not to mention her relationship with her husband, whose films she wanted to show, two – to make her books available during her visit (Nin to Bruce Harkness). In fact, these activities provoked negative criticism from some critics. For instance, Estelle Jelinek strongly criticised Nin for using the women’s movement events as a sales opportunity. She declares, “I am not impressed with her appearances at fund raising for women’s centres or her promotion of women’s journals because I see these . . . as opportunistic effort to spread her name and sell her books” (53-4).

Nin’s public appearances not only enhanced her visibility but also brought her financial gain. In fact, Salber claims that lectures and meetings, and not sales of her writings, were the main source of Nin’s income after the publication of the Diary (409). Indeed, the more Nin became famous, the more she was able to charge for the lectures and speeches. For example, in November 1963, Nin bemoaned in a letter to her husband Hugh Guiler that “UCLA gives 2500 for three lectures to Carson, Moravia, Tennesse, and here I am at 100 a shot.” Ten years later, as Bair reports, she lectured for a minimum fee of $750, and in 1974 she was even offered as much as $1000 for a lecture in Fresno (499; 502).

Recalling Nin’s popular lecturing tours in the 1960s and in the 1970s, Estelle Jelinek writes:

Nin has travelled across the country speaking at colleges and feminist events, sometimes solo, sometimes in conjunction with other women. Always it is she,
This account brings to our attention several noteworthy aspects of Nin’s popularity. First of all, it points to Nin’s rising status at that time. Nin is depicted as a celebrity: She is the one who attracts people to the events. She is a celebrity who brings together various social groups, yet, at the same time, she reaches a very particular audience which consists mainly of white, middle class women. Secondly, it is apparent that because of her growing fame, Nin’s name began to be used for marketing purposes, particularly advertising events. Thirdly, the fact that Nin’s lectures were so well attended confirms the importance of encountering the ‘real’ author. Fourthly, Nin’s participation in those events suggests her own involvement in the process of self-promotion. And finally, this account highlights the significant role of photography in constructing Nin’s public profile, since it is Nin’s picture that is printed in newspapers to advertise lectures and seminars.

A critical study of Nin’s performances was carried out by Elyse Lamm Pineau, who focused on unpublished audiotapes of Nin’s lectures, interviews, and discussions. Pineau examines how Nin enacted her diary persona during those events. She argues that Nin becomes an embodiment of the legendary self created in the *Diary*. She examines Nin as “a living text” who “speaks from within the text rather than about it, working actively to blur her identities as author and subject” (234). According to Pineau, during lectures, Nin gave the impression that the three layers of her experience – “her lived reality as the writer of the *Diary*, her inscribed reality as the Diary heroine ‘Anaïs,’ and her performance reality as a celebrity lecturer” – were “in seamless continuity” (236). Pineau’s analysis of Nin’s opening remarks reveals how Nin created the atmosphere of intimacy and complicity with her audience, inviting them to share the responsibility for the event, and thus giving them a sense of sisterhood and community that was especially important in the early stages of the women’s movement. She also identifies two strategies that Nin used in order to maintain control over the informal discussion that normally followed the lecture (known as ‘furrawn’ from Welsh – the intimate talk). First, Nin demanded from the readers familiarity with her *Diary*. Second, she refused to answer questions she considered too personal.
Because my access to original lectures was limited and because Pineau has already provided a very useful critique of Nin’s lectures, I focus mainly on the interviews and I occasionally refer to the official version of her lectures, *A Woman Speaks*, the existence and shape of which is another evidence of Nin’s active participation in the construction of her public persona and enhancement of her career. The fact that Nin’s lectures were gathered, edited and published indicates Nin’s urge to shape and control her image. Her lectures were rearranged to fit neatly into the eight chapters into which the book was divided.

*A Woman Speaks* was edited by Evelyn J. Hinz\(^{24}\), one of Nin’s friends-critics, and authorised by Anaïs Nin herself. It was published in 1975 and consists of some of Nin’s lectures, seminars and interviews. In the introduction to this edited collection, Hinz explains how she went about the process of editing the material. Instead of presenting it in a chronological order, she decided to cut the material and assemble it in a new way. As a result, the book consists of eight chapters and each of them is built up from the excerpts taken from various public appearances which Hinz found representative and which she categorised as suitable for a given section. Seven chapters include the question/answer part at the end, which follows the format of Nin’s lectures. These decisions were made in order to give readers an impression of attending Nin’s lecture, because as Hinz explains, “My aim throughout has been to generate for the reader the *effect* which Nin’s addresses have upon her listeners; my goal has been to transcribe her presence rather than simply to record her words” (Introduction xii). Therefore, accuracy and chronology were sacrificed in the name of Nin’s *effect*. Rather than take a critical stance towards her material, Hinz participated actively in creating the legend of Anaïs Nin.

Apart from explicating her editing methods, Hinz also explains why Nin’s audience feels the need to encounter Nin the person. She says that the audience wants to be reassured that the life recorded in the *Diary* is possible and that the person who recorded it is real. Never questioning the authenticity of Nin’s *Diary*, Hinz continues that there are three ways in which Nin assures her readers that “there is a continuity between what she has written and who she is” (Introduction ix). One of these ways is simply Nin’s physical presence, which Hinz describes as follows: “As one watches her approach the microphone one never has the feeling that here is the author coming out

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\(^{24}\) Hinz wrote earlier a critical study on Nin’s works, which Nin approved, and she was also appointed by Nin as her official biographer in 1974 (Bair 518). Hinz never fulfilled her role.
from behind the hard covers of her book but rather that here is the woman stepping out from between its pages. It’s quite as if one were sitting and reading the Diary and suddenly looked up to see the image one had formed become real” (ix). A second way of authenticating “Nin” is her voice, and the third is the fact that although Nin speaks mainly on contemporary issues, she refers all the time to her diary, which, as Hinz notes, gives an impression that the contemporary Nin is in accordance with the Diary Nin (ix-x). Hinz’s observations are valuable if looked at critically. They indicate how Nin contributed to the creation of her persona. But that is not what Hinz originally intended. For her, the above comments are a description of the status quo. Hinz therefore contributes to perpetuating the myth of the ‘real’ Nin.

As for the content of the collection itself, there are three main themes that run through the eight chapters. First, Nin emphasises the importance of a strong inner life. She maintains that in order to change the world, we need to change ourselves first, and that the more people are devoted to their personal growth, the more society benefits from it. Second, she applies the importance of a strong inner core to women, stating that the women’s movement is too focused on the external – legal and cultural – obstacles. She, in turn, highlights the inner, psychological barriers that prevent women from fulfilling their potentials, such as guilt, timidity, and lack of confidence, and insists that women should work first on getting psychologically unrestrained. Third, she stresses the importance of the artist and the creative process to our lives. She regards the artist as the magician who “holds the anti-toxins to cure us when we are shattered” (175). In A Woman Speaks, Nin therefore strongly defends her views about the roles of the psychology, artists and the women’s movement. As it will become evident in the following section, once confronted directly by her audience, Nin was more willing to negotiate her opinions.

Interviews – general information

My main source of interviews is a collection entitled Conversations with Anaïs Nin (1994) edited by Wendy M. DuBow. This book comprises twenty-four reprinted interviews, carried out originally between 1965 and 1976. I have excluded two interviews from my study since they were intended for an audience outside of the United States. Instead, I have included one interview from the Village Voice which was omitted from the collection. As a result, my analysis consists of twenty-three interviews, the majority of which – sixteen – were conducted in three years from 1970.
to 1972. The year 1971 was especially eventful for Nin, since nine interviews took place that year. Interviews represent different media: one was conducted on TV, five on the radio, and seventeen in the press. The press interviews can be further divided into those which came out in newspapers (five interviews), magazines (six interviews) and journals (six interviews). As far as the magazines are concerned, four interviews appeared in popular women’s magazines (*Mademoiselle, Vogue, New Woman, Everywoman*), one appeared in a literary and political magazine (*Ramparts Magazine*), and another in a feminist magazine (*The Second Wave: A Magazine of the New Feminism*). As for the six journals, there are two review periodicals (*Chicago Review, The New Orleans Review*), and the other four are literary and/or feminist journals (*Shantih: A Quarterly of International Writings, Moving Out: A Feminist’s Literary and Arts Journal, Twentieth Century Literature, and Helicon Nine: A Journal of Women’s Arts and Letters*). It becomes apparent in the course of the examination that the medium of the interview and the audience for which it is intended determines to a considerable extent the content and style of an interview and consequently the image of Nin.

An interview is a particularly interesting example of image production. It is a space where an image is negotiated between an interviewer and interviewee, where two sides of celebrity making – production and reception – interact. An interviewer is guided by the interests of an audience for whom the interview is intended and therefore s/he is likely to focus on those aspects of the Nin persona that correspond with his/her readers’ likings. For instance, in the interview for *Everywoman*, the women’s magazine, many questions posed to Nin regard women and the contemporary issues regarding them. Nin is asked, for example, whether she believes that her diary will help women develop new literary forms, instead of imitating men; who is her favourite woman writer; and in what ways women’s liberation has affected her life and consciousness? (Jay 133-136). In the interview with Jeffrey Bailey in *The New Orleans Review*, whose intended audience is classified by education rather gender, Nin is asked an entirely different set of questions, and women are not the centre of the discussion. Rather than being directly asked about it, the subject of women’s liberation appears in the course of conversation, and we may assume that it is only for this reason that Nin is asked more about this issue. The interviewer himself seems to be more interested in Nin’s famous friendships, her house in Louveciennes, her life in Paris of the 1930 and in New York in the 1940s, and her writing routine.
And although Nin is not in charge of the questions posed to her, she can control and manipulate these questions to her own advantage. For instance, at some point in the interview for The New Orleans Review, Bailey asks Nin the following question: “How do you react to the criticism . . . that you are self self-obsessed; . . . [critics] seem fond of using the term ‘Narcissistic’” (Bailey 243). On the one hand, simply by bringing up this common accusation against Nin, he perpetuates a certain image of Nin, Nin as a Narcissist, but on the other hand, because it is an interview, and not an article or a review, Nin has an opportunity to defend herself. And she does, by answering: “I laugh at this criticism because I think it comes from Puritanism. I think it comes from the Puritan conception that looking inward is neurotic, . . . that writing about yourself is immodest” (Bailey 243). As a result, in interviews the power of creating an image is divided between Nin and an interviewer (and the medium that s/he represents), and an interview gives rise to a Nin public persona with certain highlighted attributes and characteristics. It is, therefore, a jointly constructed image.

The content and style of the interviews
The content of the interviews can be broadly divided into nine of the most frequently recurrent themes. These are:

- the story of Nin’s life;
- the diary;
- Nin’s growth as an artist and woman;
- Nin and other artists;
- Nin’s writings and work routine;
- psychoanalysis;
- the women’s movement;
- Nin’s current status and her good relationship with students;
- love, sex, sexuality.

‘The story of Nin’s life’, as the heading suggests, are the moments in the interviews when Nin is asked about her life. Although interviewers ask Nin about various stages of her life, she usually provides information that has been already included in the Diary. The most frequently mentioned part of her life contains the abandonment by her father. When Nin talks about ‘the diary’, she describes its beginning, her reasons for publishing it, its authenticity. In the majority of interviews Nin is asked to comment on her growth
and struggles as a woman artist. Some questions elicit conversations about Nin and her famous friends, Nin and the writers who influenced her, and Nin’s status as the writer in the context of other contemporary women writers.

Many interviews touch on Nin’s writing style, her novels, and comparisons between her fiction and diary writing. As far as the topic of ‘psychoanalysis’ is concerned, apart from general commentary on the subject, Nin talks a lot about psychoanalysis as a help in shedding false personas. Nin is also frequently asked to explain Rank’s controversial statements regarding women which she included in the Diary. The most recurring remarks about ‘the women’s movement’ concern Nin’s dislike of the women’s hostile attitude towards men (Kate Millett is often mentioned as an example of such an attitude), Nin’s ideas about the importance of inner development as opposed to the collective action represented by the women’s movement, and Nin’s views about masculinity and femininity. As for the last identified theme, ‘love, sex, sexuality,’ Nin is regularly asked to comment on homosexuality and the Gay Rights Movement, sexual liberation, love, marriage and relationships in general. These are the major themes included in the interviews. However these topics are not distributed evenly through the interviews and what is comprised in a given interview depends greatly on the medium used and the audience at which the interview is aimed.

While some subjects, like ‘the diary’ or ‘Nin and her relationship to other artists,’ can be encountered in any type of interview, whether for TV, radio or press, other themes are almost exclusive to certain media. For instance, the newspapers and magazines tend to focus on Nin’s life story, while the literary journals almost never ask Nin about that subject. Conversely, the newspapers and magazines rarely talk about Nin’s writings in detail, whereas the journals devote a lot of space to thorough discussions regarding Nin’s novels, writing style, poetic prose, and/or her daily writing routine. Or, to give another example, while Nin’s attitude towards and her status in the women’s movement are widely commented on in the majority of the interviews, the journals (with an exception of feminist Moving Out: A Feminist’s Literary and Arts Journal) and the newspapers (with an exception of The San Francisco Chronicle) ignore this topic altogether.

Magazines seem to concentrate on the aspects of Nin that are related to the topics then relevant to the contemporary female audience, such as the women’s movement, psychoanalysis (which, although regarded unfavourably by many, was widely discussed), Nin’s growth as an artist, and the struggles she encountered as a
woman writer. In turn, the radio interviews tend to be thematic. So, for example, the 1965 interview for KPFK-FM Los Angeles concentrates almost exclusively on Nin’s friendship with Henry Miller, the newly released Miller’s *Letter to Anaïs Nin* edited by Nin herself, and Nin’s diary. The 1970 interview for the same radio station focuses on Nin’s attitude towards women’s movement as its title, “Anaïs Nin on Women’s Liberation,” overtly suggests. And the interview broadcast on WBAI Chicago radio station in 1971 is largely devoted to Nin’s writings.

The interviews differ not only in their content but also in style. In this respect, the interviews which are turned into articles, rather than following the usual question/answer format, are the most striking. All five newspaper interviews and one magazine interview (from *Mademoiselle*) fall into this category. Instead of taking the form of question and answer, these interviews are turned into unified texts. Nin’s statements are paraphrased or inserted in the form of direct quotes, but the main part of such converted interviews consists of descriptions and an interviewer’s impressions of Nin. This dramatically changes the presentation of Nin. The interviews turned into articles usually include more comments on Nin’s appearance, dress, voice and demeanour than standard question/answer interviews do. Also their vocabulary differs considerably. The language used is more vivid and witty and there are plenty of epithets and comparisons. If the converted interviews represent one end of a style continuum, the journal interviews represent the other. The journal interviews are generally composed in a very professional manner. There are no jokes, no catchy phrases, no sharp comments. They focus on literature, on Nin the writer, her literary output and her writing style.

Therefore, as far as Nin’s portraits are concerned, it can be said that the converted interviews make use of ‘direct characterisation’, while the journal interviews employ ‘indirect characterisation’. Direct characterisation is any word, phrase or sentence which directly describes Nin. In contrast, indirect characterisation has to be deduced by the reader from the general content of an interview. Rather than being described directly with the use of adjectives, Nin’s portrait is being constructed in the course of discussion. Consequently, the portraits of Nin in interviews which use direct characterisation are more straightforward, more powerful and memorable than those using indirect characterisation, which is more subtle and more open to different interpretations. It comes as no surprise that popular genres, such as newspapers and magazines, are more likely to use direct characterisation. (Although TV and radio
interviews also belong to popular genres, they never make use of direct characterisation, but for different reasons than literary journals. On TV we can see and hear the person talking and therefore we do not need any descriptions. On the radio, elaborate descriptions of an interviewee sitting next to the presenter would probably be embarrassing for both concerned.)

Popular genres play a particularly important role in shaping Nin’s public persona. The aim of popular genres is to report on the latest events, newsworthy happenings and prominent people, so if something or someone is ‘worth’ being dealt with in newspapers, magazines, or on the radio and TV, it usually ‘means’ that the subject has the popular appeal at a given time. It can therefore be deduced that the more frequently Nin is mentioned in popular genres, the more well-known she is at the time.

Important issues

As noted above, the portrait created in an interview is the joint creation of an interviewer and interviewee. So what kind of portraits of Nin do we get from these twenty-three interviews? First of all, by no means do we get one, consistent, unified portrait. On the contrary, various Nins emerge, as various are descriptions of her eyes, which for some are green-dark (Eckman 172), for others aquamarine (Edminston 44) and yet for others translucent blue (Kaminski 195); or her voice, which sounds small and tremulous like that of “an adolescent girl who is embarrassed to draw attention to herself” for one interviewer (Stocking 98), while for another it is “snake-goddess voice dispossessed, seductive, and calm” (“Anaïs Talks” Vogue 92).

Interviewers’ main source of information about Nin is her Diary. Therefore, Nin’s portrayal in the interviews is frequently based on Nin’s self-created portraits. The majority of the examined interviews, eighteen, were conducted before 1973. At that time four volumes of Nin’s Diary were available to the public. The portraits of the Diary that are pursued in the interviews are that of Nin the woman writer and Nin the friend of artists. At the same time, the interviews help to create a new major portrait – that of Nin the exemplar of women’s liberation. Instead of tracing Nin’s portraits, I propose to consider a series of important questions and issues concerning Nin’s portrayal in the interviews. First, how do the interviews give an impression of accessing the ‘real’ Nin and do they contribute to the creation of her legendary persona or do they question the authenticity of Nin and her Diary? Second, is Nin’s self-presentation as an extraordinary artist challenged or reinforced in the interviews?
Third, is Nin presented as a feminist or rather an embodiment of femininity or both and what are the consequences of such presentations? Finally, how is Nin related to the youth and peace movements?

Getting to know the 'real' Anaïs Nin

An interview is a space where a “reality-effect” is created. A “reality-effect,” as Marshall explains, is an illusion that through information we receive about the star, particularly out of their constructed world in film, music, or sport, we get to know the real person (Introduction 3). The purpose of an interview is to bring the subject closer to the audience, to give an impression that we can get to know the subject intimately. In the case of Nin, interviews are also expected to fill in the information gap about Nin and provide the audience with insights into her present life (her past is included in the Diary).

In order to achieve this “reality-effect,” some interviewers describe Nin’s apartment, dress, looks, her demeanour, and/or provide details of an interview meeting, as, for example, does Susan Edmiston in Mademoiselle writing: “She [Nin] sits primarily in her chair. Each time a phone rings – and it rings every fifteen minute on average – she rises lightly, effortlessly” (45); or “She served tea with the thinnest slices of lemon” (50). These observations make Nin more ‘real’ to her readers, but they also emphasise her popularity (her phone rings constantly) and her sophistication (the thinnest slice of lemon). Whereas Edmiston creates a busy Nin, Susan Stocking constructs a ‘homely’ Nin. She writes, “She wears no jewellery and shows no sign of her often elegantly robed public self. Instead she slips around in sandals and a simple Indian madras dress that falls lightly to the floor” (99). Stocking’s description suggests that during the interview she encountered not Nin the public persona but Nin the private person. Nin has disrobed of her public self, represented by her elegant dress, and presents to Stocking her homely self, clad in a simple, although not ordinary dress (the dress is after all Indian). Such inserted comments allow the audience to imagine Nin more clearly, giving an impression that the audience participates in and witnesses the dialogue. They provide a glimpse into what seems Nin’s private, so therefore ‘more genuine,’ self.

Nin’s Diary is a frequent theme in the interviews and Nin often reassures her readers that the Diary contains her real self. Unlike the author of fiction, for whom an interview is an opportunity to create a public persona, Nin has to authenticate the Diary
persona and to demonstrate that the *Diary* persona and the public persona are harmonious. So, when Barbara Freeman begins the interview for *Chicago Review* with the comment: “Talking to you right now seems at the same time to be completely natural and yet . . . who am I talking to? There is a difference between a book and a person in the flesh,” Nin replies: “There isn’t very much with me, because I’ve always tried to match the work and the life” (186). This is one example of how Nin maintains the illusion that she and the *Diary* are one. In another interview she claims that the diary is not literary, thus implying again that the diary is genuine (Stern & Browning 212). She also states in several interviews that the diary was kept secret and for that reason it is an expression of her genuine self.

Interviewers’ comments also help to create an illusion of authenticity. One of the interviewers, Evelyn Clark, says that she was surprised by the directness and honesty of the *Diary*. She says that “it does not have any of the constructions of literature” (Williamson, Clark, Reyes 85). Another interviewer calls the *Diary* “the repository of the authentic you” (Berwick 59), and yet another claims that “Anaïs Nin has told the world more about herself than most of us would tell our most intimate friends” (Stocking 98). Erica Jong, a popular novelist in the 1970s, is quoted calling Nin “that great truthsayer” (McBrien 209). Nevertheless, some interviewers question the image of Nin’s *Diary* persona as genuine, truthful and consistent with Nin the person, and thus Nin the public persona begins to fracture.

Such is the case in an interview by Carol Getzoff of the *Village Voice*, which, like many other interviews turned into articles, follows a structure typical of a celebrity profile or a feature interview identified by Baum:

A. The meeting of journalist and star in either domestic setting or café.
B. The description of the casual dress and demeanour of the star.
C. The discussion of their current work – which is essentially the anchor for why the story is newsworthy.
D. The revelation of something that is against the grain of what is generally perceived to be the star’s persona – something that is anecdotal but is revealing of the star’s true nature. (qtd in Marshall “Intimately Intertwined” 320)

Getzoff begins her article by recounting the circumstances of meeting with Nin. She describes her arrival at Nin’s door with cookies from Bruno’s bakery and being welcome by “Anaïs, gracious with smiles” (17). Then she provides a detailed account
of Nin’s appearance: “Her hair is honey colored, done up in the back. She wears whitish makeup that lies like a cover over the lines in her face. Her dress, long with a plunging neckline, is made of a brightly colored Indian cotton. It shows her to be sexy and soft at the same time” (17). After that, she narrates their conversation. Getzoff says that they have decided to concentrate on the present, since Nin’s past is well-known through her *Diaries*. The fourth part indeed reveals Nin’s ‘true nature.’ What is revealed in this particular interview, however, is far from Baum’s “anecdotal,” as Getzoff seriously questions the authenticity of Nin’s portrait in the *Diary*. She relates how Nin claimed that her diary was her anchor and her secret space in which she was able to record her angry self who despised housework. Getzoff notes that she cannot imagine Anaïs Nin slaving in the house, since the *Diary* presents a “much more exalted creature” (17). She comments, “I begin to wonder if the woman I know from the diaries is a full and honest portrait of the woman sitting in front of me” (17). She therefore questions, what Pineau termed the “seamlessness” between the Nin diary persona and her public persona.

She is not the only one. Other interviewers expose Nin’s persistent refusal to discuss her present life and her determination to keep it as secret as possible. Susan Stocking, for instance, in her interview converted into an article for the *Los Angeles Times*, talks about how Nin tries by all means to preserve her privacy, forbidding Stocking even to describe her house (98). She rightly observes, “She gives the past but not the present” (Stocking 103). Three interviewers also ask Nin about Gore Vidal’s controversial review of *Diary IV*. As I mentioned earlier, written in a very ironic tone, it revealed several details from Nin’s life which she tried to keep secret, and it denounced Nin as a poseur and cheat. Nin dismisses all his accusations, saying that he is the one who lies. Nonetheless, the seed of doubt is sown. By entering the public sphere, Nin is no longer able to control tightly her portraits and from now on her image will multiply.

*The (extra)ordinary Nin*

As Chapter Two has established, Nin presented herself in the *Diary* as a unique individual, an artist. In his study of fame, Leo Braudy remarks that “a famous person has to be a socially acceptable individualist, different enough to be interesting, yet similar enough not to be threatening or destructive” (8). Similarly, Dyer observes that “what is important about the stars, especially in their particularity, is their typicality or
representativeness” (*Stars* 47). As far as Nin’s presentation in the interviews is concerned, on the one hand, there are many descriptions of her persona as extraordinary, even exotic. On the other hand, she is described and, perhaps surprisingly, describes herself as being ordinary, as doing all the usual things that other people do.

Unlike in her *Diary*, in the interviews Nin’s extraordinariness does not cluster around descriptions of her artistic vocation but rather around descriptions of her looks and her origin. In an interview-article entitled “Portrait of Anaïs Nin,” Edmiston writes, “Her face is *sui generis* [from Latin meaning unique, of its own kind]: immense, round, aquamarine eyes, almost unreal, like the glass of a doll. . . . Her hands, like her legs, are so youthful it’s almost eerie – as if she’d made an illicit bargain in time” (43). Many of these descriptors point to the peculiarity of Nin’s appearance so that altogether this fragment makes Nin into an unreal, unearthly creature. The comment about an illicit bargain with time suggests an alliance with evil forces, recalling Dr Faustus and his selling his soul to the devil for immortality.

Another interview/article, this time by Eckman of the *New York Post*, also makes Nin into someone unusual. Eckman describes Nin thus: “swathed in ankle-length black gown and white-lined swirl of shepherd’s cape, her face serene and ageless, looking not unlike a medieval saint enshrined in a niche” (172). Her smile is akin to “a stone madonna’s smile that curves her lips but left the rest of her features immobile” (172). This account depicts Nin as supernatural, still, distant, giving the impression of an inhuman and artificial figure. Nin’s otherness is also highlighted when her origins are mentioned. For instance, Edmiston writes, “she was raised in Paris and New York, the daughter of a Danish mother and Spanish father – whose separate elements, as in a subtle blend of spices, cannot be distinguished” (47). Nin is therefore frequently made into the exotic, supernatural and eerie ‘other.’

Moreover, as Nin’s reviewers did, Nin’s interviewers also refer to her often as a living legend. Pacifica Radio presenter observes, “you have become a legend in your own time, a mythical figure” (Hoffman 143). Three other interviewers make similar observations. Studs Terkel of WFMT-FM Chicago radio station, in his first question posed to Nin, comments, “Her life is almost a legend . . . and yet very real indeed” (152). Marja Eckman begins her article entitled “The Non-Legend of Anaïs Nin” with a remark: “There was Anaïs Nin, literary legend, cult heroine, darling of this generation of undergraduates . . . ready for 10 a.m. interview” (172). And Barbara Freeman asks
Nin in the *Chicago Review*, “why you, more than other writers, have been made into a myth, a legend to be worshiped?” (191).

Nin herself tries to soften this aura of extraordinariness. She either denies being out of the ordinary, as she does in an interview with Eckman, saying that she does not like to be made into a legend because it dehumanises her. She portrays herself as an ordinary woman who does “all the things that people do. . . . I keep house, I sew my hems, I mend stockings, I cook” (all ‘perfectly feminine’ activities) (172). Or she expresses her dislike of being idealised but shows at the same time an understanding for people’s need of legends and symbols. In the radio interview with Studs Terkel, she observes, “I think we need legends probably, and we make them up as we go along” (152). This comment also suggests that Nin is conscious of the inherent constructedness of a legend and the fact that it is made up of readers’ expectations.

The best example of the balance between the ordinary and extraordinary Nin can be found in the interview-article for *Mademoiselle* entitled “Portrait of Anaïs Nin.” On the one hand, the author of the article describes Nin as an almost religious figure among students, saying, “There is no single explanation for the growing cult. People say she ‘enchants and ensorcells’ them” (Edmiston 44). Nin is therefore pictured as a magician or even a witch who has the power to cast spell on others. Yet, on the other hand, Edmiston presents Nin’s experiences as universal and Nin herself as a very friendly and open person. She writes, “Much of her appeal must come also from the fact that she has lived out many almost universal dreams: she is the complete woman. . . . Also, not to be underestimated, by exposing her fears and weaknesses as well as her strengths in the *Diary*, she has communicated a sense of approachability and accessibility: everyone writes to her by her first name” (45). She is therefore a mixture of the familiar and the exotic.

Nin’s portrait as the representative of women also reflects the dialectic ordinary/extraordinary. On the one hand, Nin tries to convince her audience that she is no different from them. During her lectures she recalls, for example, how shy she used to be as a teenage girl and young adult. So, in reassuring tones, she communicates to her audience that she understands their dilemmas, and sympathises with their difficulties, since she has experienced them too. In the interview with Stocking, Nin declares, for instance: “All your life you are told you’re different from other people, and suddenly the diary revealed not the differences at all, but the sameness, which made me very happy. It was a confirmation of what I’d said in the diary, that of the personal life
is lived deeply enough, it becomes really everybody’s life” (101). Nin therefore presents her life as universal and herself as an everywoman. On the other hand, however, she takes on a voice of wisdom: She has lived her life and has plenty of advice to offer. She is the one to represent them.

Nin’s public appearances too point simultaneously to Nin’s ordinariness and extraordinariness. In the 1960s and 1970s the divide into high/low culture was still strong and there were certain expectations as to what a respected writer was supposed to be and to do. For example, “Jong reports that when she began to appear on television in 1975, many writers still refused to make television appearances, seeing them as a breach of writerly decorum” (Templin 71). Nin defied the rules that placed her as an author in high culture by allowing herself to be interviewed, photographed, and recorded. This probably helped her to tone down her idea of the author as special, which she strongly supported in her Diary. But, on the other hand, the person who does appear on TV, radio or in press is by default an unusual individual, a celebrity.

Nin – an embodiment of femininity or a feminist?

Interviewers often comment on Nin’s femininity, although to a lesser degree than reviewers do. Susan Stocking describes Nin as “the very essence of femininity” (99), and details Nin’s appearance: Nin’s hair is “slightly parted in the middle, sweeping in gentle half-moons from the centre of her wide forehead, back over her ears and up into the modest roll atop her head”; her skin “though wrinkled and masked by the make up, seems ageless and opalescent as the insides of the shells on her fireplace”; her eyes “edged in heavy mascara under Jean Harlow eyebrows” (99). So, carefully coiffed and made up, Nin stands for femininity. Stocking’s piece is not the only one which gives us such a detailed account of Nin’s physique. Interviews turned into articles in particular expand on her looks: her hairdos, her skin, her eyes, her smile, her posture, her silhouette and her dresses. And although there is no denying that Nin was very preoccupied with her self-presentation, media representations of Nin certainly reinforced this aspect of her by bringing it to the attention of an audience. It is hard to imagine that equally elaborate descriptions of appearance would characterise interviews with male authors.

As far as Nin’s relationship to the women’s movement is concerned, it was far from straightforward and many of the interviewers comment on that. Susan Edmiston observes that, “Although Anaïs Nin’s Diary is an essential document in the history of
feminism and she and the movement regard one another with a great deal of mutual curiosity, they have not formed any kind of alliance to date” (48). In a similar vein, Susan Stocking notes, “Feminists who recommend the diary as the documentation of feminine consciousness regard Anaïs Nin with curiosity, occasionally with hostility” (102). However, the interviewer who best summarises the contradictions inherent in this relationship is Beverly Stephen in her interview-article entitled “A Heroine for Feminists” in The San Francisco Chronicle25, which opens with the following words:

Who could have guessed that many new feminists would find a heroine in a soft-spoken 68-year-old woman who refuses to generalize about men as “oppressors.” Who does not have much sympathy for slogans like “male chauvinist pig.” Who feels no need for drugs. Who can wear a long black dress in the middle of the afternoon. Who can befriend a man like Henry Miller. (116)

In the above fragment emerges not only the portrait of Nin but also the portrait of a feminist that exists in the press in the 1960s. A feminist is first and foremost anti-men. She sees all men as oppressors and she is not afraid to call them “male chauvinist pigs.” She is also anti-feminine. She, unlike Nin, is not soft-spoken and does not care about her clothes. As Flora Davis explains, during the early stages of the second wave, the media frequently portrayed feminists as “militant men haters” (109). Davis says that whenever the media wanted to feature a feminist in their article or programme, they usually chose radical feminists because they almost always guaranteed controversy. She quotes Gloria Steinem who admitted seeing memos directing talent bookers to ‘get the nuts’ onto TV shows (108).

However, Nin’s attitude towards, and her relationship with, the women’s movement changed over time. Three radio interviews – in 1965, 1970 and 1971 – and an interview from the feminist magazine The Second Wave: A Magazine of the New Feminism (1971) document this change. The 1965 radio interview opens DuBow’s collection of interviews and it is the only interview included from that year. In 1965, only Nin’s novels were available and the first volume of the Diary was being prepared for publication. Introducing Nin, the interviewer, Frank Roberts, announces that they are going to discuss the recently published letters from Henry Miller to Nin and her diary that is to appear soon. And indeed these issues are the main focus of their

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25 This interview was later reprinted in the Washington Post with a different title “Anaïs Nin: Timeless and Universal Perceptions”. The fact that editors changed the titles is very telling itself.
conversation. Nin recounts how she met Miller, how their friendship began and developed, how she managed to get to know the side of Miller which had been hidden from the world. As far as Nin’s relationship to the women’s movement is concerned, there is not a single mention of it. And while this may be explained by the fact that the movement itself was in its budding stage, another element of this talk is striking, namely the way in which Nin presents her Diary. She recommends it as the completion of the Miller letters, saying that “the diary adds to letters. What is not in the letters is here” (Roberts 13). Thus her Diary is presented, or in other words, advertised, as a source of extra information about Miller and other well-known personages, rather than a work on its own.

Whereas in later interviews Nin will emphasise her struggle as a woman and artist as the main theme of the Diary, in 1965 she maintains, as publishers have done before, that the major asset of the Diary are the portraits of people she knew. Nin says, “I sometimes jokingly call the diary ‘the diary of others’ because everyone’s association with a diary is that it’s a self-portrait. My diary contains very large portraits of major characters and many minor characters” (Roberts 11). And even when the interviewer declares “the diary is a self-study as much as it is a study of others” (Roberts 11), Nin insists that “It certainly is me in relation to others, but I do feel that I have a gift for bringing out others, what you might call a feminine gift; therefore, the person I’m relating to is as complete as my own personal growth” (Roberts 11-12). She therefore almost erases herself and her mention of “a feminine gift” suggests that Nin attends to others before she attends to herself. She implies that making portraits she gives as much as attention to others as she does to herself. This presentation of the Diary will be completely modified in later interviews.

Her lectures confirm the fact that prior to the publication of Diary Nin did not count on becoming an important figure in the women’s movement. During her lecture at the University of Mexico she says, “I know that you think that you discovered me when I published the Diary, but actually I discovered you” (A Woman Speaks 140). And then she goes on to say that she used to think that her story was a story of one woman, a unique story, but she realised soon after publication that it was the story of many women (140). It can be said that Nin became a heroine for women by accident, rather than intentionally. She quickly embraced, however, a new identity, that of a representative of women.
In the 1970 radio interview, entitled tellingly “Anaïs Nin on Women’s Liberation,” Nin is described as “an authority and a considerable oracle” on women’s liberation and she is invited to the studio to express her opinion on that matter, which constitutes the big part of the discussion (Loeb 27). So five years from the previous interview, in which Nin’s relation to the women’s movement did not come up, Nin is proclaimed an expert on the subject. However, Nin’s ideas about the emancipation of women are not necessarily in accord with the ideas represented by the women’s movement, which by then is in full swing. At that stage of her career, Nin still perceives inner inhibitions as the main problem for the development of women, and self-examination as the main solution to those interior obstacles.

Although Nin recognises that those inner inhibitions and social restrictions were imposed on women by culture and society, she believes that such cultural restraints allowed women to develop some positive qualities, such as compassion (Loeb 30). In voicing such beliefs, Nin reinforces the stereotype of women as carers and nurturers. What is more, she stresses the importance of becoming aware of the obstacles and trying to overcome them individually, while the women’s movement in the 1970s strongly supported collective action and championed political reforms as an answer to women’s difficulties. That is one reason why her position in the women’s movement is ambiguous. Another reason is her strong disapproval of the movement’s hostile attitude towards men. “Second wave” feminism, as Beasley explains, was to extent directed against men, who were seen as possessing power and control over women. Patriarchy became a key term used in many feminist debates of the time (Beasley 19). So although in this interview Nin is directly characterised as a specialist on women’s liberation, as the interview progresses, Nin’s ambivalent position towards and within the movement becomes apparent.

Nonetheless, what changes dramatically in this interview, in comparison to the previous one, is the way Nin presents her *Diary*. It is no longer introduced as the story of others; now it is the story of Nin’s struggles and the exemplar of the inner self-examination. She says: “The value of the diaries lies in their being a notebook of this very difficult journey, of peeling off what you have been taught, how you have been conditioned” (Loeb 28). The presentation of the *Diary* as an exploration of her growth and a testimony to her fight with obstacles, rather than as a sourcebook of famous friends’ portraits, is the recognition of her real audience and their needs. When Nin was talking about her in-press *Diary* in 1965, she did not know who her readers would be
and what would appeal to them. And since her publishers always emphasised the portraits of the famous as the main asset of the diary, Nin seemed to adopt their views. By 1970, the time of this interview, she knew who read her and what was appreciated about her writing. Her main audience were women and the young who identified with her liberation. This changing presentation of the *Diary* is also a perfect illustration that the text “becomes” only in contact with its readers: Nin’s readers focused on different aspects of her *Diary* that she initially intended. In a way, they brought to life another text and possibly determined Nin’s editorial decision in creating the subsequent volumes. Her audience was also instrumental in constructing her public persona, in the sense that they demanded from Nin to become what they expected. Dyer observes that audiences play an active part in producing meanings for celebrity: they search for values in stars that they can refer to their own experiences (*Stars* 19).

In 1971, in another radio interview Nin is asked to explain her position towards the women’s movement. She provides this brief account of her changing relationship with the movement:

> at first . . . I was a little amazed by the mass, group movement. . . . But then I met some very remarkable young women, and I began to learn from the movement things I didn’t know, things outside of the range of my experience. I learned from them something that the individual struggle doesn’t teach you – that is, how do you solve these problems. If I was the victim of the abortion, how do I manage that? I realized these women were answering and solving some of these problems. . . . I became really very much interested. Finally, I have connected with the women’s liberation movement in Harvard. We had a long talk where we tried to make a bridge between two ways of approaching liberation: one psychological and the other social. (Hoffman 144-5)

Nin, needless to say, is a representative of a psychological approach, whereas the movement represents a social approach. Her initial attitude towards the movement is described as initially one of surprise (although the previous interview indicated rather dislike), followed by curiosity and then by understanding. Although Nin does not compromise on her ideas, she is willing to accept some of the views of the women’s movement and negotiate a common ground. And this seems like a very clever step, which can be regarded as another strategy of self-promotion: The women’s movement can bring Nin more readers, if only by recommending her books, inviting her to lecture,
or writing about her in their magazines. It can be therefore said that Nin appropriates some feminist ideas to her own advantage.

However, the same applies to the women’s movement which also appropriates Nin. As a relatively new social force, it needs famous ‘faces’ to support and promote it. And since Nin is very popular with the young and women, in shoring up the movement, she can attract new followers. She is therefore of use to the women’s movement as its supporter. Nin and the women’s movement form, therefore, a symbiotic relation. A good example of such symbiosis and mutual gain is the interview for *The Second Wave: A Magazine of the New Feminism*, which is a partial transcript of the discussion between Nin and members of the Boston-based organisation *Female Liberation*. The discussion took place a day after a sponsored evening with Anaïs Nin organised by this group.

The joint effort to understand each other’s viewpoints can be clearly seen. At the beginning of the talk, the participants of the discussion try to explain their attitude towards Nin and her writings. One of them, Nancy Williamson, says: “We tried to describe [during the event open to the public preceding the discussion] how we see you and your work in relation to the women’s movement. We know there is hostility, that what you say about individual responsibility is misconstrued to exclude collective action” (Williamson, Clark, Reyes 75). They therefore attempt to clarify any misconceptions concerning Nin’s approach to organised effort as if they wanted her to be more in accordance with the movement’s ideals. They try to salvage Nin for the movement.

And when later Nin asks whether they find her writings useful and what else she can do for the movement, the question which itself is a very symbolic gesture towards the movement, Williamson replies, “What we hoped would happen last night was to bring you together with the women’s movement in a situation where people from a variety of places would be present. It wasn’t just a movement event” (Williamson, Clark, Reyes 90). Another participant, Clark, adds, “Our job is to create ways to broaden the movement” (91). And Williamson further elaborates, “The magazine [*The Second Wave*] is one of the ways we’ve created so far. And bringing you here is another” (91). Perhaps because of Nin’s ambivalent position towards feminism and her ambiguous status within the women’s movement, Nin is able to attract an audience which normally would not be interested in the movement itself. People who come to such events might do so not because of their interest in the movement, but because of
their interest in the celebrated author of the *Diary*. Nonetheless, it gives the organisers an opportunity to introduce their ideas to new audiences and to spread their message. Nin’s name is thus used to lure a wider audience and possibly to recruit new supporters of the movement.

So, on the one hand, some groups within the women’s movement considered it beneficial to engage Nin in women’s liberation. And as a result, articles on or interviews with Nin could be found in such feminist press as *Ms.*, *The Second Wave*, or *off our backs*. *Ms.* magazine, for instance, reprinted a few times fragments of Nin’s *Diary*; Nin’s name appeared on their two petitions: “We Have Had Abortions” petition – a part of campaign to legalise abortion – and “Petition for Sanity” which argued for the freedom of sexual choice; and after Nin’s death, Alice Walker provided a very personal obituary. On the other hand, Nin herself noticed the impact of the movement on women and its significance to her own career. She became more willing to embrace some of the movement’s ideas and she even went so far as to declare herself a feminist in one of her lectures, saying: “I don’t know what a ‘radical feminist’ is, but I am a feminist” (*A Woman Speaks* 33).

Nin also started to write on feminism. In 1972, she wrote two articles on the women’s movement. One, entitled “Notes on Feminism,” was written for *The Massachusetts Review*; another appeared in the *New York Times* under the title, “Liberation: A Simultaneous Happening.” The former carries the message which Nin conveyed in many of her lectures, also those included in *A Woman Speaks*. She begins by saying that her contribution to the women’s movement is psychological. She also maintains that political problems can only be solved by emotionally strong and mature individuals, and that is why she emphasises self-development. She also believes that women are more humane and sensitive and they should nourish these qualities, and she suggests that instead of imitating men, they should create and define the world on their own terms (25-8).

The latter article, perhaps more significant because of the status of the newspaper in which it was published, was Nin’s attempt to explain the origins of the movement. Nin attributed the liberation of women to psychoanalysis, the organised political effort of the women’s movement, and the formation of consciousness-raising groups. Estelle Jelinek later criticised Nin for this article in *off our backs*. She was indignant that Nin was being given a role of a voice of the women’s movement and she accused Nin of ignorance about the foundations and development of the movement.
This new identity – Nin the representative of women, Nin the feminist – was used to advertise Nin’s works. Differences between how the first and then fourth volume were advertised highlight this shift. The first volume was advertised solely through quoting the positive reviews and statements about the Diary by well-known people. People whose opinions are quoted include: Jean Garrigue from the New York Time Book Review (it is also noted in small print that it was a front page review); Maxwell Geismar, Robert Kirsch from the Los Angeles Times; William Goyen; Harry T. Moore from the Chicago Daily News; Marguerite Young, and Karl Shapiro from the Book Week. Newsweek is also cited. The quotes, unsurprisingly, are full of strong approving words, such as “rich . . . fascinating work”; “a fantastic and great book”; “remarkable”; “an exalting investigation” (advertisement for Diary I 45).

The advertisement for Diary IV, apart from using the usual praise by others, foregrounds Nin’s popularity among women. The first sentence of the advertisement, in a big bold font, reads: “She was liberated long before women dared use the word” and later she is described as “one of the first women to try psychoanalysis”; “the rage of the college campuses, a truly independent, free-thinking woman” (advertisement for Diary IV BR15). A review from Austrian Die Presse describes Nin as “perhaps the most interesting, the most emancipated woman of her world, a very impressive woman in every respect” (BR15). Nin is therefore advertised this time as a champion of female liberation.

Press also responded to the new identity. For example, the San Francisco Chronicle, reporting on the event called “Female of the Species,” claims that Nin’s partaking caused the sale of all 1000 tickets for the event, and describes her as “the new heroine of San Francisco’s ticket-buying women’s movement” (Wallace 2). The Los Angeles Times mentions Nin in an article “500 Attend Ceremony for Times Women of the Year,” when she was one of ten women who were honoured in 1976 (Siegel 1), and later the newspaper devotes a whole article to Nin dubbing her a “Feminism’s Beacon” (Diehl 1). The Wall Street Journal entitles their review of A Woman Speaks “A Feminist Writes Without Hostility” (Fuller). Press reports, however, do not always regard Nin’s involvement in the women’s movement positively. The Village Voice article, “Who chose these women, and why?,” assesses the event held at the Edison Theatre on November 1972 that featured Nin and three budding artists. The author, Bertha Harris, finds that putting Nin together with inexperienced artists was a failure, and she calls Nin “a crowd gatherer” (71). She believes that the budding artists would
be much better off if staged without Nin who was far too experienced an artist. Harris is also sceptical about the feminist message or the aesthetic value of the whole show. About Nin’s performance, she writes, “Anaïs Nin lowered her mask, picked up her “Diaries” and once again there appeared a woman who is an artist, who seeks to be feminist, speaking primarily on the thinking and doings of men” (71).

Similarly, the new Nin got various responses from self-declared feminists. For instance, Estelle Jelinek’s article, which first appeared in 1974 in *off our backs* under the title “Anaïs reconsidered,”26 was one of the harshest attacks on Nin. Jelinek strongly objects to Nin’s ‘feminism,’ and she considers Nin’s concept of woman as “an alternate form of sexism” (47). For Jelinek, Nin embodies traditional femininity. She explains that Nin celebrates such traits as female intuition, sensitivity and ability for compassion, which have been usually used against women. Referring to Nin’s diary and her need for playing roles, Jelinek concludes that Nin “is still playing roles. Currently, it is that of a feminist” (48). She accuses Nin of cultivating elitist views, which is expressed in her criticism of ordinary life, her emphasis on the artist, her rejection of politics and her encouragement of an individual struggle. Jelinek concludes her article, “She may be an inspiration and model for struggling creative artists, but she is not a feminist; in fact, some of her views are outright sexist. . . . Nin is using the women’s movement for her own end – to sell her books” (54).

A totally different view of Nin is given by Kate Millett – one of the most famous names in the women’s movement of the 1970s. Millett wrote an article on Nin for French newspaper *Le Monde* in 1976 and then in 1992 it was translated and printed in a periodical devoted to Nin, *Anaïs: An International Journal*, as “Anaïs – A Mother to Us All: The birth of the artist as a woman.” The piece is extremely laudatory. Trying to establish which American woman had the greatest impact on Millett’s generation, she writes:

For if I were to say what writer matters to us most now, is spread over crammed miles of bookshelves, coast to coast, in the little women’s bookstores springing up everywhere, or the women’s sections now framed off in every trade store, is devoured whole in women’s study classes, is carried in ragged denim bags from class to coffeehouse, to part time job, to meeting, to assignation, to unemployment line, is

26 The article was later elaborated and included in the collection *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin* (1996) under a different title, “The Critical Evaluation of Anaïs Nin.” All quotes are taken from the version of the article included in Jason’s book.
memorized and corresponded to in arcane illusion, is both basic primer and ultimate grace of sophistication, is mother to us all, as well as goddess and elder sister – it would have to be Anaïs Nin. (4)

Such praise for Nin seems odd when we consider that Nin never liked Millett’s works and Millett disapproved of Nin’s friend, Henry Miller. But Millett praises Nin regardless.

So, Nin’s relationship with the women’s movement changed over time. Despite the fact that Nin was represented as an embodiment of femininity, the bond between Nin and the movement was formed; a bond that was likely benefit both.

_Peace and love Nin_

In the interviews Nin frequently has an opportunity to express her peaceful attitude which permeates various levels of her existence. Nin opposes any forms of hostility, whether it is the war on men declared by feminists, or the war fought in Vietnam (Loeb 34). She promotes personal freedom and portrays herself as a person who hates prejudice towards others. In one of the interviews, she says “Either we transcend all labels – negro, woman, foreigner – or we are doomed” (Edmiston 43). Nin is also depicted as a peace-promoter by others. Susan Stocking writes about her: “She’s stood for hours at the wake for Martin Luther King Jr. She’s signed petitions for Another Mother of Peace and circulated others for abortion reform. She’s given readings with the local Poets for Peace” (103).

Nin believes in a couple – in two people, whatever gender but living in harmony, and in “liberation through love” (Edmiston 50). Asked whether she thinks that bisexuality will ever become a norm, Nin responds, “The norm would be no judgement” (Jay 141). She is supportive of The Gay Liberation Movement, stating that “The only abnormality is the incapacity to love” (Oringer 73). Nin’s ideas developed considerably. Although she has always been surrounded by young homosexual men, in the past she had expressed many prejudiced statements about homosexuality. For example, in _Diary III_, in describing the relationship between her two homosexual friends, she compared one of them and his behaviour to “a caricature of woman. A bad imitation of woman” (D III 170).

Nin’s popularity in the 1960s and 1970s arose not only from her association with the women’s movement but also from her association with the anti-war movement and
with racial tolerance, both of which struck a chord with the young. Her idea of total liberation expressed in the interviews can be said to be ahead of her times. The feminism of the early 1970s will be later criticised by black women for its focus on white women and by lesbians for its focus on heterosexuality.

**Part Three: The visual Nin**

In the previous chapter I argued that Nin was involved in shaping her persona not only through the means of text but also the use of the visuals. This part reconfirms this thesis, but it also demonstrates what has already been noted in this chapter, namely that once Nin became famous, she partially lost control over her image. So, on the one hand, Nin actively participated in the creation of her visual representation. For example in a letter to her husband, Hugh Guiler on 8 December 1965, she writes: “Marlis’ photos not good for publicity. She cannot retouch them and she did not use soft focus so I will stick to Chris Larson. The ones you like.” The photo she used for publicity shows her at the typewriter (see Fig. 3.7). Nin is looking away from the camera. She smiles. Her hand rests on the typing machine. What is striking about the photograph is the fact that Nin looks ageless as the photo was clearly retouched, erasing any signs of age. Nin’s face is free of wrinkles and she gleams a truly ‘Hollywood smile.’ This publicity photograph was one of the most frequently reproduced pictures of Nin in the press.

On the other hand, Nin, like any celebrity, could not escape unflattering photographs altogether. In 1971, *Vogue* featured an interview with Nin, accompanied by the picture of Nin taken by a well-known photographer Irving Penn (see Fig. 3.6). In a letter to André Bay, Nin complained about the photograph, saying that it was “the ugliest photograph ever taken of me. It was strange that the minute he stepped into my apartment I had the intuition that this cold man *did not see me*” (D VII 178). Penn’s photo stands indeed in stark contrast to Larson’s picture. Nin’s face, partly hidden in her turtleneck, reveals every wrinkle, making her the 68 year-old women she then was.
However, these pictures, whether flattering or not, served a potent marketing function. As Linda Haverty Rugg writes, “Photographs of celebrities arouse longing in viewers. Celebrity images promote the body as product, the self as marketable commodity” (42). Nin’s photographs therefore had an important role: to stimulate a desire to encounter the real Nin and to see her performing and authenticating her self.

Fig. 3.6 Anais Nin by Irving Penn

Not only did Nin use photography to publicise her image, but she also took advantage of another powerful medium – film. In 1973, *Anaïs Observed: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin* – a documentary directed by Robert Snyder – was released. This documentary can serve as a good closing point of the discussion of Nin’s celebrity as this sixty-minute film gives us a very condensed portrait of Anaïs Nin. What becomes apparent after the first few scenes of the film is the fact that Snyder’s documentary
reinforces Nin’s own self-presentation as the writer and the artists’ friends so forcefully promoted in her *Diary*. The film does not reveal much about Nin’s private life, despite the fact that we are allowed a glimpse into Nin’s personal space: apart from a few scenes, the best part of the film was shot in Nin’s house. There are many scenes that show Nin’s working space and that picture her either with a pen and a notebook or by a typewriter. And even when Nin is shown by her swimming pool, in the garden, or in her living room, her monologue always pertains to art and artists. Nin repeats the same things that she previously described in the *Diary* and which constitute the content of her lectures. She reminisces her childhood, her arrival to America, her life in Paris, New York and Los Angeles. She lists people who inspired her (e.g. D. H. Lawrence), and whom she admires (e.g. Lou Andreas-Salomé). She talks about her famous friends (e.g. Henry Miller, Larry Durrell, Otto Rank, Noguchi, Maya Daren, Martha Graham), with some of whom she is shown conversing (there is, for instance, a scene when she chats with Henry Miller). As a result, Snyder’s documentary participates in the creation of the legend of Anaïs Nin the writer and it stands in a stark contrast to Philip Kaufman’s biopic on Nin, *Henry and June* made in 1992 (analysed in the next chapter).

Snyder’s film also exposes the fact that Nin’s self-presentations were very consistent through various media. This corresponds with the observation made by Wendy DuBow in the introduction to the collection of interviews with Nin. DuBow states that “Although repetition is a part of any collection of interviews, in Nin’s case it is especially thought-provoking.” (Introduction xviii). And she speculates on the reasons why Nin kept repeating herself: “She may have repeated herself in order to curtail speculation about her life by presenting a neat picture, or in an attempt to control the information circulating about her. Or it might have been necessary to compose a neat picture in order to survive the onslaught of personal inquiries” (xviii). Whatever Nin’s reasons, the fact remains that on a variety of occasions and using a variety of media, Nin presented a carefully shaped persona.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated that once Nin’s popularity grew, her carefully created *Diary* portraits were subject to negotiations. The Nin public persona became a product of self-creation and media construction. To an extent, Nin continued to maintain control of her image. She was a skilful self-promoter and networker, as the section on the reviews
revealed, and she persisted in influencing others so that their portraits of her were in line with her self-presentation. She also modified her image and her identity to suit the needs of her audience. Her embracement of the new identity as the representative of women, created for her by both her readers and the women’s movement, serves as a good example of that. It also shows the malleability of identity, which rather than being a stable entity, emanating from a psychic interiority, is constantly reconstructed.

However, in the years of her public visibility, Nin partially began losing power over her image. It has been established that any public persona is a product of a dialectical process of self-construction and media invention. Examination of the press reception of Nin has revealed that while some commentators reiterated Nin’s self-portraits, presenting her, as she and her editors did, as a legendary woman writer; others, such as Gore Vidal, challenged her neat self-presentation by revealing intimate details of Nin’s life, thus dealing blows to her reputation. Irving Penn’s photograph has also served as a potent example that once the person enters the public sphere, s/he is forced to relinquish control and to let her image proliferate. Still, despite the fact that her image began to crumble, during these most prolific years of her literary career, Nin was mainly regarded as a writer and a representative of women. It is only after her death that serious corrections to her portraits emerge and her image truly begins to multiply.

This chapter has also shown a close relationship between Nin and the culture that elevated her as a cultural authority. The analysis of interviews revealed that initially Nin and her publishers valued her diary for the portraits of the famous people included in it, thus misjudging what the real audience would find interesting about Nin’s writing. Nin’s audience was not attracted to the famous surnames that garnished the *Diary*, but to Nin’s struggles as a woman and a writer in a patriarchal society. Nin’s text, after all, like any text, was like a vacant apartment, ready to be furnished by its new tenants. As Michel De Certeau explains, just like “Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories” so the reader’s world “slips into the author’s place” (xxi). Nin’s readers endowed her diary with new meanings, which Nin later tried to espouse.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated Nin’s status and role as a celebrity. Nin’s public persona became a commodity: her name was used to endorse products (e.g. books of other authors), events (e.g. her lectures and other public appearances), and ideas (e.g. appropriation of Nin by the women’s movement). She was also used as the
point of departure for debates of such issues as femininity, feminism and diary as a genre.
CHAPTER FOUR: SUCCESS, SCANDAL, SEX AND THE SEARCH FOR THE ‘REAL’ ANAÏS NIN

in every individual lies a different vision of the same object: the biographer, the autobiographer, the photographer, the filmmaker… (Anaïs Nin)

Introduction

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Nin actively constructed her public persona during her lifetime. To an extent, she was also responsible for its construction after her death: while some writers are careful to protect their privacy (for example, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Henry James and Willa Cather destroyed their private writings), Nin ‘exposed’ herself. Selling her diary to the University of California, Los Angeles, she was aware that it would be eventually available to the public. She also, allegedly, agreed to the publication of unexpurgated diaries, although opinion about that is divided among Nin’s friends (Fitch 408).27 Instead of leaving her audience with the image she cautiously coined together with her editors and publishers – ‘the soft’ and easily acceptable one – she chose to stay in the spotlight even posthumously. However, the issue of Nin’s posthumous existence is more complicated than that. Ultimately, the creation and dissemination of her image was beyond her control. It was now up to her estate, her editors, publishers and readers how she was portrayed.

Nin’s afterlife consists of several significant milestones that changed her public image which she had endeavoured to control so forcefully during her lifetime. These four following dates – 1977, 1986, 1990,1992 – and the events that are associated with them, together with the decade of the 1990s which is marked by the desire to discover the ‘real’ Nin, gave rise to some prominent new portraits of Nin. First, shortly after Nin’s death in 1977, the volume of erotic stories, Delta of Venus, was released. Apart from getting Nin onto the best seller list, it also triggered a new association for her name: Nin became connected with sex. Then in 1986, twenty years after the publication of Diary I and nine years after Nin’s death, the first volume of the unexpurgated diaries, 27 According to Fitch, “Daisy Aldan and Renate Druks remain convinced to this day that publication of the erotica, as well as unexpurgated diaries, is in poor taste and not what Anais wanted” (408).
Henry and June, was published. Not only did Nin’s image gain in eroticism but it also acquired a new dimension (or rather re-acquired its old and for a while neglected dimension), namely Nin as Henry Miller’s friend and collaborator. The adaptation of this diary to the screen four years later, in 1990, reinforced these two portraits of Nin: Nin as a sexpot and Nin as Miller’s sidekick. Because of the media hype which accompanied the release of the movie and because of the film’s potential to introduce Nin to new audiences, this event was particularly crucial to Nin’s afterlife. Finally, in 1992, the second and probably most controversial volume of the unexpurgated diary series, Incest, appeared, initiating another powerful image of Nin – Nin as an incest/trauma survivor. This instalment also revealed that what Nin described as a stillbirth in Diary I was in reality a late-term abortion. As will become apparent in the course of this chapter, this revelation in particular disappointed and estranged many of Nin’s readers.

The release of unedited diaries constituted a turning point in Nin’s posthumous reputation. It was during this period that most of the biographical material on Nin was produced. It seems as if everyone wanted to determine who was the ‘real’ Anaïs Nin, to set facts straight. Or, perhaps, to look at it from a different perspective, everyone wanted to benefit from the rising tide of the ‘Nin controversy.’ The number of biographical writings that appeared on Nin throughout the 1990s is startling. Nin became a subject of two biographies in English and one in German; two fictionalised accounts of her life, one in French and one in English; numerous memoirs by her friends and contemporaries; and an examination of her life from a psychological perspective. The 1990s can therefore be described as the decade of the search for the ‘real’ Nin.

In 1992, a fictionalised account of Nin’s life, Anaïs Nin: Naked Under the Mask, was translated from French into English. Written by Elizabeth Barillé, it was a novel based on Nin’s life. The first biography in English, Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin, written by Noel Riley Fitch appeared in 1993. It was followed two years later by Deirdre Bair’s Anaïs Nin: A Biography (1995). Both authors are award-winning writers. Fitch writes extensively on expatriate writers and intellectuals in Paris. She is the author of Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties (1983), Hemingway in Paris: Parisian Walks for the Literary Traveller (1989), and the more recent Appetite for Life: The Biography of Julia Child (1997), to enumerate just a few. Bair wrote, among other things, biographies of Samuel
Beckett and Simone de Beauvoir. The former won her the National Book Award, as later did Nin’s biography. Out of these two biographers, only Bair had access to the entire Nin archive\(^28\). As she recalls in an interview with Paul Herron, before embarking on the project she demanded exclusive access to archival material which she was granted (“Making” 29). These two biographies contributed in particular towards establishing Nin as an untrustworthy narrator at best, and as a liar, at worse. But they also multiplied Nin’s images, presenting her, for instance, as a bigamist or hypochondriac.

In 1996, two collections of memoirs were published: One entitled *Recollections of Anaïs Nin by her Contemporaries* (1996) was edited by Franklin V, a co-author of critical study on Nin’s writing *Anaïs Nin: An Introduction*, another, *Anaïs Nin: A Book of Mirrors* (1996), was compiled by Paul Herron. These two books gave Nin’s friends, scholars, and family members an opportunity to share their memories of Nin and to assess their relationship with her. Many pieces included in these two collections counterbalanced often unflattering images of Nin generated by Fitch’s and Bair’s biographies, presenting her as an inspiring individual. The search for the ‘real’ Nin continues into the twenty-first century. The two most recent biographical accounts were written by Nin’s friends: In 2002, Margot Duxler published *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin*; a year later, Maryanne Raphael released her *Anaïs Nin: The Voyage Within* (2003). While the former, who is a clinical psychologist and a fiction writer, offered the analysis of Nin’s emotional life from a psychological perspective interspersed with her memories of Nin, the latter composed a biographical novel, in the mode of Barillé’s.

This chapter is organised around these milestones in Nin’s afterlife. However, instead of presenting my analysis chronologically, I distinguish and discuss some major portraits of Nin circulating after her death. First, I focus on the most prominent image of Nin – Nin as a sexpot, as the process of eroticisation of Nin’s image runs through the whole of her afterlife. Next, I analyse three portraits that are closely connected with the erotic Nin, namely Nin the seductress, Nin as Henry Miller’s sidekick, and the eternally feminine and exotic Nin. I then recount how these new portraits of Nin, together with the revelations of incest and abortion included in unexpurgated diaries, contributed to her fall as a feminist icon. In the next section, I concentrate on Nin’s affair with her

\(^{28}\) Fitch occasionally refers to the unpublished journal, but definitely not to such extent as Bair does.
father and how Nin’s critics have tried to come to grips with it. A new portrait of Nin emerges from this analysis – Nin as an incest/trauma survivor. Then, I briefly comment on Nin’s status as a liar, created mainly by her biographers. Finally, I conclude my examination of Nin’s afterlife with a section on Nin the writer, or rather how Nin went from being a successful writer to a “major minor one.”

**Nin as a Sexpot**

*Delta of Venus* 1977

The most prominent aspect of Nin’s posthumous existence is the ever-growing eroticisation of her image. The process started innocently with the release of Nin’s erotic stories. Nin agreed rather reluctantly to their publication, because, as Bair indicates, she scorned them and they “either embarrassed her or made her deeply ashamed (depending on the mood on any given day)” (515). Released a few months after Nin’s death, *Delta of Venus* (1977), ironically, got her onto the bestseller list for the first time and provided financial security for her two husbands (Bair 515-6). Two years after the success of *Delta*, another volume of Nin’s erotic writings was published under the title *Little Birds* (1979).

Nin claimed to have composed these stories in the 1940s to order for a wealthy collector who, as she recalled in *Diary III*, repeatedly told her to “concentrate on sex” (D III 61). In the preface to the first volume of erotica, Nin offers a sort of an explanation-excuse for issuing the material, not anticipating the success that it would bring her:

> Here in the erotica I was writing to entertain, under pressure from a client who wanted me to ‘leave out the poetry.’ I believed that my style was derived from a reading of men’s works. For this reason, I long felt that I had compromised my feminine self. I put erotica aside. Rereading it these many years later, I see that my own voice was not completely suppressed. . . I finally decided to release the erotica for publication because it shows the beginning efforts of a woman in a world that had been the domain of men. (*Delta of Venus* n.pag.)

In the article “The Making of *Delta of Venus*,” John Ferrone, the editor of the collection, confirms Nin’s hesitancy about publishing the material but he also reveals that the “the famous collector was a myth” that Nin discovered shortly before her death.
Ferrone explains, “‘He’ was actually an underground business, one of several operating in New York during the thirties and forties, that commissioned erotica and then sold copies of the manuscripts privately” (57). Nin, however, decided to adhere to the version she presented in the third volume of the diary. After all, an underground business does not sound as innocent and mysterious as a private collector. There is a certain charm about the collector whom Nin describes in the diary as an eccentric and bizarre nymphomaniac.

*Delta of Venus* is to an extent the work of its publisher John Ferrone. He recalls being given 850 pages of erotic stories and an almost complete editorial freedom. He quotes a letter he got from Rupert Pole saying, “Anaïs says delete, patch, new titles, whatever” (Ferrone, “Making of Delta” 55). And so he did. He shortened and rewrote Nin’s lengthy narratives and provided them with beginnings, endings, and new titles. He writes that “slightly more than half of the 850 pages ended up in *Delta*, and another thirty percent was used in the second volume, *Little Birds*” (56). He was also responsible for the title of *Delta of Venus*. Although the galleys reached Nin before her death, she was unable to evaluate the edited erotica because of her declining health. Ferrone’s extensive involvement in the rewriting process makes the signature ‘Nin’ problematic: To what extent is *Delta of Venus* Nin’s and to what extent Ferrone’s?

As far as the reception of Nin’s erotic stories is concerned, most reviewers assessed both volumes favourably. Nin’s erotic writings were repeatedly described as delicate, emotional, sensual, poetic, sensitive, and elegant. Moreover, many commentators pointed out that Nin managed to create an original form of erotica – erotica from a woman’s point of view. For instance, writing about *Delta of Venus* in the *New York Times Book Review*, Harriet Zinnes presents Nin as the forerunner of the American tradition of women’s erotic writings. She contrasts Nin’s erotic stories with the male equivalents and believes that Nin invented a new language to describe sexual experiences (“Collector’s Item” 11). Michelle Leber, assessing *Delta* for *Library Journal*, went so far as to describe the book as “full-bodied, feminist erotica” (1044).

Not everyone, however, regarded Nin’s erotica as an appropriate and successful exploration of female sexuality. For example, Susan Wood, writing for the *San Francisco Chronicle* (the article reprinted from the *Washington Post*), claimed that Nin’s erotic writings in no way contributed to an understanding of sexuality and she urged readers to remember that they were originally written for a wealthy customer (42). The *New Yorker*, instead of a review, offered a three-page parody of Nin’s stories
entitled “The Delts of Venus (Selections from Another Volume of Early Writings by Anise Nun)” (33-35). Its author, Charles McGrath, follows the format of Nin’s stories, offering even a preface in which he thus caricatures Nin’s motives for writing the erotica: “I was so poor that for days on end I ate nothing but string and leaves” (33). McGrath makes fun here of Nin’s explanation that a lack of money forced her to produce erotic stories.

Nin’s erotic writings also became entangled in the debate on pornography taking place in the 1980s. In 1985, the Chicago Tribune reported on Andrea Dworkin’s speech at the American Bar Association. Dworkin, a leader of anti-pornography movement along with Catherine MacKinnon, spoke about the harmful impact of the pornography on women. She is quoted as saying “and we don’t want even Anaïs Nin to be a vehicle of our oppression” (Polaman 1). Dworkin therefore considered Nin’s erotica on equal footing with pornography. However, while some condemned Nin’s erotica, others adapted it for either stage or screen. For instance, the Chicago Tribune reported on two theatrical adaptations, both by Karen Goodman. In 1987, Prop Theatre offered an adaptation of Delta of Venus. The reviews of the play stated that Nin offered the exploration of the erotic from a female perspective (Bommer 6) and that it explores “Nin’s delicate, fascinating emotions” (Sid Smith 3). In 1991, another theatre company adapted Little Birds (Sid Smith 3). Later, Zalman King, the director of 9 ½ weeks, made an erotic film – Delta of Venus (1995)– (very) loosely based on Nin’s erotica writings and her life.

Above all, Nin’s erotica proved to be popular among a general audience. The collection appeared on the New York Times Best Seller List for thirty-six weeks (Ferrone “Making of Delta” 58). But although it sold well, it did not receive the same attention from academia. Most of Nin’s critics chose to ignore it. Writing about the reception of Nin’s work in academia, Philip Jason observes that the two volumes of erotica “add little to Nin’s stature” (Anaïs Nin 51). Since the publication of Delta in 1977 through 1993, Jason lists only five critical articles devoted to Nin’s erotic stories as well as a chapter in the revised edition of Sharon Spencer’s study, Collage of Dreams (1981) (51-2). This situation improves a little after 1993 (e.g. Helen Tookey devotes some space to discuss it), but, as the contents of two journals devoted to Nin’s scholarship (Anaïs: An International Journal (1993-1997) and A Café in Space: The Anaïs Nin Literary Journal (2004-present)) suggest, Nin’s critics still prefer to comment on her diaries and novels rather than on her erotica.
There is, therefore, a disparity between the popular and the academic Nin: while the public has favoured erotica, the critics have largely ignored it. But precisely because the erotica enjoyed popular success, its release was an important step in amending Nin’s image. The publication of erotica was the first point which sparked off the process of eroticisation of Nin, simply by connecting Nin with the sexual. Nin became a self-proclaimed (as she wrote in the preface to Delta) “madam of a house of literary prostitution” (n.pag.). But while in Delta of Venus Nin figured just as an author of erotic fantasies, in the first unexpurgated diary Henry and June published in 1986, she became the prime star of sexual adventures.

Henry and June – the diary 1986

Although Nin’s partner and the head of her Trust, Rupert Pole, is listed as the official editor of Henry and June, the main editorial decisions were made again by John Ferrone, the editor of her erotica. Well aware of the publishing trends, Ferrone knew that the market was saturated with Nin’s diary writing. He explained this in one of the letters to Pole, on 5 March 1985:

I feel that there is no way that we can start a third diary series. People are confused enough with two.29 Also, apart from dedicated readers, people in the publishing industry are tired of the never-ending diary; I’m talking about buyers, bookstore chains, sales reps; and it has become increasingly difficult to get review space. We’ve gotten a handful of reviews, at best, for the last two volumes [The Early Diary vol. 3 and 4].

(Ferrone “Making of Henry and June” 9)

Ferrone’s words serve as a potent reminder that book publishing is a commercial venture and books are products to be sold. And what sells is an interesting story.

What Ferrone considered interesting was a “very intense, concentrated” account of Nin’s relationship with the Millers and an omission of Nin’s reflections which he termed “philosophizing” (“Making of Henry and June” 9). As the correspondence between him and Pole reveals, Ferrone was extremely hardnosed about the editing process. He had a very strong and uncompromising vision of Henry and June. In the introduction to the correspondence between himself and Pole, Ferrone explains how he went about the editing of this unexpurgated volume: “I saw as a model Anais’s well-

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29 At this point, two series of Nin’s diaries were available – first seven diaries (mostly published during Nin’s lifetime) and four volumes of the Early Diaries, published posthumously.
 manicured editing of the first diary . . . Anais had not hesitated to cut, add, refine, and possibly invent” (“Making of Henry and June” 8). Ferrone hence was quite ruthless with the material. After five months of editing the volume, he wrote to Pole on 11 November 1985:

I went through it six times, each time carving away a little more, until I thought we were down to the essential story. So don’t tell me your favourite line is missing. . . . You and Gunther may both disagree with my handling of material here and there, but editing is a very subjective process. Every editor would do it in a different way. (Ferrone “Making of Henry and June” 11)

Again Ferrone’s words are very illuminating. Not only do they reveal a great extent of editing, confirming that Nin’s original diary was pared down until only “the essential story” was left, but they also account for the fact that a different editor would create an entirely different story of Nin.

Ferrone’s editing consisted not only of narrowing the focus of the diary but also of rewriting the original entries, even the ones that Nin had already rewritten. Chapter Three of this study cites Nin’s description of meeting Henry Miller from both the original diary and the first ever published diary, Diary I. I refer readers to these fragments (found on pp. 54-55) in order to compare them to the following unexpurgated version:

I’ve met Henry Miller. He came to launch with Richard Osborn, a lawyer I had to consult on the contract for my D.H. Lawrence. When he first stepped out of the car and walked towards the door where I stood waiting, I saw a man I liked. In his writing he is flamboyant, virile, animal, magnificent. He’s a man whom life makes drunk, I thought. He is like me. (Henry and June 5-6)

So, neither published version corresponds to the original entry of Nin’s diary. Henry and June, which claims to be unexpurgated, is so in the sense that it contains an abundance of a new material about Nin, but it preserves neither the structure nor the style of Nin’s original diary.

Consequently, rather than being ‘unexpurgated,’ Henry and June is differently expurgated and its role in conveying the ‘truthful’ story of Anaïs Nin’s life is therefore rather ambiguous. Commenting on Henry and June and comparing it to the first, expurgated volume of the Diary, that covers roughly the same years, Philip Jason notes,
“reading the volumes consecutively or even side-by-side, weaving back and forth between entries written about the same time, does not give readers the texture of the source or of the evolving Nin we are always seeking” (“Dropping” 202).

It is important to acknowledge Ferrone’s/Pole’s editing of *Henry and June*, firstly, because their contribution complicates the authorship of the *Diary*, and secondly, because their editing shapes Nin’s persona. Although Nin allegedly intended to publish an unexpurgated version of the diary, we can only speculate how she herself would go about it. As Ferrone states, “every editor would tackle this ms. in his own way” (“Making of *Henry and June*” 13). We will never know if she would be content with Ferrone’s/Pole’s editing of *Henry and June*. By rewriting her diary without her input, Ferrone and Pole became co-authors of *Henry and June*. They, especially Ferrone, were the ones who decided what out of a vast quantity of original material would get published. They decided what shape and form the new volume would take, and as a result they significantly modified Nin’s self-portrait.

By concentrating exclusively on Nin’s relationship with her husband, Henry Miller and his wife June, and on Nin’s sexual awakening, Ferrone dramatically changed Nin’s self-presentation. Chapter Two demonstrated that Nin introduced herself in *Diary I* predominantly as the budding writer. The first pages of *Henry and June* present a different Nin, a Nin that was virtually absent in the first seven volumes – a Nin preoccupied with sexuality. From the very beginning, *Henry and June* is saturated with sexual connotations and new vocabulary enters the diary. Nin fucks, masturbates, swallows sperm, experiences orgasms, and discovers clitoris – “the small core at the opening of the woman’s lips” (*Henry and June* 71). She describes “hours and hours of coition” (82), mainly with Miller but also with her husband Hugo and, later in the book, with her psychoanalyst, Allendy.

Whereas *Diary I* opens with a description of Louveciennes and Nin’s house, *Henry and June* begins with description of her husband, Hugo, and Nin’s reflections on marriage, love, desire and sex. Nin confesses that both her and her husband long for more stimulating sexual experiences, such as orgies, yet at the same time, she fears that such cravings if fulfilled will destroy their intimacy, and ultimately their relationship. And while both Nin from *Diary I* and Nin from *Henry and June* crave to expand, develop and lead an intense life, in the case of the former Nin it means to devote all her energies to writing, in the case of the latter it signifies the need for “an older mind, a father, a man stronger than me, a lover who will lead me in love” (*Henry and June* 1).
This statement becomes a guiding light for the *Henry and June* Nin, whose principal objective is the search for sexual fulfilment. Therefore, instead of a writer in search of appropriate modes of expression, her own language, there is a woman in search of a suitable man and exciting sexual experiences.

As early as page 9 of the book, there is a very visual description of a failed oral sex with Nin’s publisher, Drake, which reads as follows:

> My curiosity for sensuality is stirred. I have always been tempted by unknown pleasures. He has, like me, a sense of smell. I let him inhale me, then I slip away. Finally I lie still on the couch, but when his desires grows, I try to escape. Too late. Then I tell him the truth: women’s trouble. That does not seem to deter him. ‘You don’t think I want that mechanical way – there are other ways.’ He sits up and uncovers his penis. I don’t understand what he wants. He makes me get down on my knees. He offers it to my mouth. I get up as if struck by a whip. (*Henry and June* 9)

This is just one of many descriptions of sexual acts which fill the volume. This is not to argue that the focus of *Henry and June* on the sexual makes for a bad reading. On the contrary, the book provides a very insightful exploration of ambiguous human emotions. It captures the contradictory feelings experienced by a couple: On the one hand, there is a desire to maintain the illusion of eternal love; on the other hand, there is a craving for more varied sexual experience. The volume explores the feelings of hate and love directed towards the same person, the simultaneous need to belong and to be free.

At the same time, however, it does present Nin in a very narrow way: Nin is almost exclusively preoccupied with sex and love. Just as Janet Malcolm criticised Plath’s mother for publishing their correspondence, claiming that she handed Sylvia Plath over “to posterity in . . . a stained bathrobe and unwashed face” (34), Ferrone can be criticised for handing over Nin in her underwear (and frequently without it). Following the success of *Delta of Venus*, Ferrone, rather than making available to the public Nin’s diary in its original form, released another volume of erotica, this time involving the real personages. Because *Henry and June* was released twenty years after the first volume, it reached not only Nin’s devoted audience but also a new generation of possible readers and it presented them with a brand-new portrait of Nin. The press, which during Nin’s lifetime treated her mainly as a writer, now became interested in Nin as a passionate lover. For example, the caption to Nin’s picture that accompanies
the review of *Henry and June* in the *Los Angeles Times* reads: “Anaïs Nin (about 1929): Lover of Henry Miller and others” (See n.pag.). Nin was no longer celebrated for her struggles as a woman and an artist. Instead, her sexual adventures were under the spotlight. The publication of *Henry and June* was very important to Nin’s posthumous reputation. For existing Nin’s fans, her carefully coined image collapsed and caused a lot of unease and disappointment with which her readers had to come to terms. For those who joined Nin’s fandom with the release of *Henry and June*, Nin became mainly known as a sexual libertine and Miller’s collaborator. The subsequent three volumes of unexpurgated diaries: *Incest* (1992), *Fire* (1994), and *Nearer The Moon* (1996) will also largely focus on the erotic.

**Henry & June – the film 1990**

The importance of *Henry and June* for Nin’s afterlife lies also in the fact that this volume was adapted for the screen, thus introducing Nin, a very specific Nin, to an even broader audience. The film *Henry & June* was made by a well-known director, distributed by a major studio and starring then recognisable and today famous actors. Directed by Phillip Kaufman and distributed by Universal Pictures, it starred Maria de Medeiros as Anais Nin, Uma Thurman as June Miller, Fred Ward as Henry Miller, Richard E. Grant as Nin’s husband – Hugh Guiler, and Kevin Spacey as Miller’s friend, Richard Osborne. Released in 1990, *Henry & June* earned $1,032,492 during the first screening weekend, and $11,567,449 in total (IMDb The Internet Movie Database), which is a respectable sum of money, especially for a NC-17 rated film. As Jody Pennington notes, *Henry & June* and *Showgirls* (1995) were the only NC-17 rated movies which grossed over ten million dollars (91).

*Henry & June* initially received the feared X rating, which usually meant a commercial death for a film as movie theatres refused to screen X-rated films and newspapers refused to advertise them. However, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which is responsible for the movie rating system in the United States, modified the rating system a few weeks before the planned release of *Henry & June*. The MPAA replaced X rating with a new NC-17 category and *Henry & June* was the first recipient of the new rating. This modification came down to a change of the category label as both categories stood for exactly the same thing: no one under 17 was admitted to the screening. Nonetheless, it was believed that a new rating would help to
remove the stigma of the X rating which had become associated with the pornography industry. The initial branding of *Henry & June* with an X rating and then the transformation of the X to an NC-17 were hotly debated in the press, and as a result the film received extra publicity and became the face of the change.

Consequently, Kaufman’s film, which got enormous attention in the media upon its release due to a coincidental change of the rating system, introduced Nin to new audiences. It is highly probable that many people back then, and perhaps even nowadays, saw/see Nin before they read her.³⁰ Paul Herron, currently the editor of the journal devoted to Nin, *A Café in Space: The Anaïs Nin Literary Journal*, became familiar with Nin and Miller through the movie. In the introduction to *Anaïs Nin: A Book of Mirrors* (1996), which he edited and which consists of various recollections of Nin, Herron narrates the beginning of his acquaintance with both writers thus: “As the credits rolled, I discovered that this Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin weren’t fictional characters – *they were real people who had written books about what we’d just seen!* I was chomping at the bit – I had to buy this *Tropic of Cancer* and the *Diary*, and there wasn’t a moment to lose!” ([original italics] xxxiii). The film, therefore, has the potential to revive Nin and bring her to the attention of a new group of readers. In their study *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (1987), Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott demonstrate how film adaptations of Bond affect the novels. They say, “The Bond novels . . . reach us already humming with the meanings established by the films and, as a consequence, have been hooked into orders of intertextuality to which, initially, they were not connected” (qtd. in Storey 56-7). The same can be said about Nin, her diary and the film *Henry & June*: the film will forever constitute an inter-textual reference to her and her works. So what sort of Nin does Kaufman offer to his viewers?

Kaufman tries to recreate as faithfully as possible Nin from the 1930s. His film is rich in intertextual references. Thanks to audio-visual possibilities of the movie, viewers can hear and see what can only be imagined when reading Nin’s journal. For instance, Kaufman included many music pieces dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, many of which were written by Nin’s favourite composers, such as

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³⁰ Brenda Silver, for instance, demonstrates that many readers are more likely to associate Virginia Woolf with Albee’s play *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* than with Woolf’s actual works (102).
Debussy, Satie, and Chopin, whom she often praised in the pages of her diary. Apart from exposing viewers to the music from the 1930s, Kaufman re-created an atmosphere of Paris by incorporating original photographs by Brassai and fragments of films that Nin mentioned in her diary, such as *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc* (1928) and *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) by Buñuel and Dali. He also included a glimpse of Nin’s original childhood journal and a picture of adolescent Nin. Above all, Maria de Medeiros, the film’s Anaïs Nin, as reviewers of *Henry & June* stated repeatedly, bears a striking resemblance to the character she plays (see fig. 4.8 and 4.9).

![Fig. 4.8 Maria de Medeiros as Anais Nin](image1)

![Fig. 4.9 Anais Nin](image2)

However, viewers should not be misled by this apparent authenticity, since Kaufman’s film, just like the diary on which it is based, presents only a very narrow part of Nin’s life, and as a result, it presents Nin to the film audience, and to Nin’s potential readers, in a very particular way. It fossilises Nin in a forever young and sexually adventurous pose, since the main concern of the film is Nin’s sexual awakening. *Henry & June* as a Hollywood production follows certain classical rules of Hollywood narrative style, according to which a plot of the film should have “a clear

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31 Kaufman even included a piece by Anais’s brother Joaquin Nin Culmell who himself was a composer and pianist.
forward direction” and should concentrate on a small number of characters whose goals should be established at the beginning of the film and achieved at the end of it (Lehman and Luhr 29). In an attempt to produce a coherent film narrative, Kaufman condensed further the already condensed diary. Thus, the first scenes of the film establish Nin as a sexually curious, yet not very experienced, person. After meeting Henry and June, she begins to explore the realm of sexuality. The movie ends with Nin’s splitting from June and Henry. Kaufman got rid of, for instance, Nin’s psychoanalysis, her affair with Allendy, but most importantly, he stripped Nin of many dilemmas regarding her affairs.

He did so by transforming many of prose fragments of Nin’s diary into dialogues. Although Nin’s diary is full of conversations, Kaufman took some of the reflective passages, not addressed to anyone, and changed them into dialogue. For instance, both in the film and in the movie this line appears: “I have three desires now, to eat, to sleep and to fuck” (although in the film Nin does not actually say “fuck,” both the way she pauses and the following scene of love making clearly suggest what she was about to say). While in the book Nin does not address anyone in particular, in the film Nin says it to Miller. In the diary, Nin simply expresses her craving for more experience and more intense existence, and she actually identifies Miller as someone unable to meet these desires: She writes, “I want to bite into life, and be torn by it. Henry does not give me all this” (Henry and June 179). Therefore, the same sentence appears in totally different contexts.

The way Kaufman portrays Nin shapes what viewers, especially those who have never heard about Nin, find out about her from the movie. Let us consider the first few scenes and how they introduce Nin. The film opens with a scene at a publisher’s office. Nin discusses her book on D. H. Lawrence. However, the publisher is more interested in Nin herself rather than her book. He is curious how she came to know so much about sex, because, as he asserts, “you write about sex with such an authority” (H&J). Nin replies that she has gotten her information from literature and from the erotic pictures she discovered in her new apartment. Nin sounds very naïve and innocent talking about her discovery with a childish enthusiasm. This sequence is a series of shot/reverse shots (Nin/the publisher) and a series of flashbacks to the discovery of the pictures narrated from voiceover. In the final shot of this sequence, the publisher enters the frame from the left, bends over and starts to kiss a rather confused Nin. It is a very unexpected turn of events, both for Nin and for the viewer (although Nin did have an affair with her publisher, in the diary the romance is built up gradually).
In the third sequence, Nin writes in bed by her sleeping husband (see fig. 4.10). She wears a white, fluffy nightgown. The light is soft and reddish, and the scene is built up mostly from close-ups of Nin, which creates a sense of intimacy. While Nin writes in her diary, her voiceover simultaneously narrates what she records, which is the story of what really happened at the publisher’s office. She relates how the man not only kissed her but also caressed her body, including her “most secret, sensitive part.” Then Nin lifts her eyes from the diary, looks into the camera and says from the voiceover: “I tell Hugo only part of the story” (H&J). The scene slowly fades out.

Fig. 4.10 Maria de Medeiros as Anais Nin in bed writing in the diary

The film therefore introduces Nin as a writer, but at the same time, her writing is from the very start closely connected with sexuality. At the publisher’s office she is not treated as a partner in business but as a sexual object. It is her body, and not her creation, that is desired. In the third scene, and throughout the rest of the movie, Nin is established as a sort of ‘boudoir’ or ‘leisure’ writer, since apart from one scene, close to the beginning, in which Nin is seen at the typewriter, most of her writing takes place in bed. Kaufman’s representation of Nin’s writing as a leisure activity in the film becomes particularly evident when contrasted with his presentation of Miller’s writing. When Nin writes, she does so in bed and the voiceover makes her thoughts ‘audible,’ which creates intimacy and provides spectators with an insight into her secrets. It is due to the fact that Nin is pictured writing the diary and not fiction. When Miller writes, he does so at the typewriter, in an artistic frenzy, smoking cigarettes, and sometimes writing continuously for a few days. The audience does not get to ‘hear’ his thoughts: the only sound accompanying him is the clicking of the typewriter. However, the viewers can see the results of his labour – the mounting pile of typewritten pages. What is more, most scenes in Miller’s house take place around his workplace: his desk with typewriter and various notes pinned to the wall. At Nin’s house, most of the action and writing is confined to the bedroom. Although Kaufman does present Nin as a writer, her writing and the progress of her ideas become secondary.
What is more, because of the specificity of film as a genre, Kaufman shapes Nin’s character not only through its content (i.e. actions she performs, words she utters, gestures she makes etc.) but also through its visual presentation (i.e. how she looks, dresses, poses etc.). And thus, Nin is strongly eroticised through the costumes she wears and the poses she assumes in the film. Whenever we see Nin writing, she wears some kind of negligee. In one scene she is stark naked (fig. 4.11). She lies passively on her back, looking into the camera, her open diary lies beside her. Only her bent knee prevents us from seeing, as Nin puts it, “her most secret, sensitive part” (H&J).

![Fig. 4.11 Maria de Medeiros as Anais Nin naked in bed](image)

This scene is framed like a picture; there is no movement; only Nin’s voiceover is audible, as if she were writing in her diary. As Laura Mulvey explains, cinema offers a number of pleasures, one of which is scopophilia – pleasure in looking (2184).

According to Mulvey in a patriarchal society, “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. . . . In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” ([original italics] 2186). Thus exposed, Nin is here clearly to satisfy viewers’ pleasure. Kaufman’s film and his portrayal of Nin supports the conventional hegemonic position by which women function as the object and not the subject of the gaze.

The film also contains several scenes of a fully dressed man and a skimpily dressed Nin. One such scene takes place at the beginning of the movie, when Nin, wearing just a slip, talks to her fully-clad cousin Eduardo. Another one, probably more significant, occurs half-way through the movie, when Miller visits Nin upon completing his book, *Tropic of Cancer*. He comes into Nin’s room, eyes her up and down (and so does the camera), takes out his manuscript, puts it on the shelf, and says “finished” (H&J). He then goes towards Nin, who is dressed in a long, black lace, see-through negligee, and they start kissing passionately. The sequence preceding this one shows Miller as an inspired artist with a cigarette dangling from his mouth frantically typing at
his typewriter. Continuous fade-ins and fades-outs suggest the passing time. There is no indication as to what Nin does with her time when Miller works. But the movie suggests not much, since Nin does not have any writing of her own to show him. She just seems to be waiting for her man, looking impeccable in her sexy outfit and carefully applied make-up.

The film presents a highly sexualised image of Nin, thus diminishing her role as a writer. This eroticised image of Nin clashes with an image she created for herself during her lifetime by carefully editing her Diaries. Nin presented herself mainly as an artist. The film therefore contributes to the process of eroticisation of Nin which began with the publication of her erotica and then the first ‘unexpurgated’ diary, Henry and June. Since then there has been a great emphasis on Nin’s sexual affairs rather than on her literary achievement. Not long after the release of the movie, the first biographical accounts of Nin were published, both under very suggestive titles: Anaïs Nin: Naked Under the Mask (1992) and The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin (1993).

Anaïs Nin: Naked Under The Mask 1992

The title of this fictionalised biography is supposed to connote uncovering the real Nin. But it also, more literally, brings to mind a naked Anaïs Nin. Elizabeth Barillé, the author of this account, (re)creates Nin’s story, imitating Nin’s voice as well as voices of her family members and friends. For example, the choice of Nin’s name is told from the perspective of Nin’s mother. Barillé writes: “In desperation, I asked him [Nin’s father] to choose a first name for the baby. ‘Anaïs,’ he said. I shuddered. . . . It was the name the Ancient Persians had given to Venus; its ambiguity rang like a perverse incantation in my ears. What sort of future was he imposing on his daughter by giving her the name of a temple prostitute?” (7). Barillé associates for us Nin’s name with “a temple prostitute.” Hers is just one account of the origins of the name Anaïs. Fitch proposes another. According to her, Anaïs derives from a Syrian war goddess (18). Moreover, in her narrative, Barillé implies that Nin’s mother did not like the name, which is unlikely, as her own mother and one of her sisters bore the name. Barillé’s account is therefore highly fictionalised and her story is shaped in order to have an intended effect: to highlight the erotic elements of Nin’s life. By suggesting that Nin’s promiscuity was cast on her like a spell, she implies that Nin was destined to become a prostitute of the literary world. So, Barillé’s fictionalised biography made its own contribution to eroticising Nin.
From the very introduction Noel Fitch keeps the promise of the title of her biography, *The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin*, and concentrates chiefly on Nin’s erotic encounters and controversial elements of her life. She highlights love affairs, infidelities and romances of the writer. Fitch’s introduction opens (as every chapter in the book does) with the quote: “I am a writer. I would rather have been a courtesan” (3). This fragment, taken from Nin’s diary, chosen as a motto of the introduction, serves its purpose well as it gives readers a foretaste of Fitch’s attitude towards her subject. Fitch’s biography is written to shock and to focus on the sexual. Out of the immense sea of possible Nin quotes, Fitch picks up one in which Nin expresses her desire to be a harlot rather than a writer, thus justifying her search for the erotic Nin.

In the introduction, which serves as a condensed portrait of Nin, there is hardly a paragraph in which Nin is not described in erotic terms. Both quoting others and being herself creative with names, Fitch calls Nin “a Donna Juana” (4); “Madonna of St. Clitoris” (5); “Venus with an over-bite” (5); “a diva . . . with a shy, virginal side” (6); “a courtesan in Paris” (6); “an American Eve after the fall” (7). In addition to these direct labels, Fitch builds an erotic portrait of Anaïs Nin in more nuanced ways. Her text overflows with erotic wordings, as for instance, when she refers to Nin’s writing as “the literary disrobing in her diary” (3), or “literary striptease” (5). She also compares Nin to Madonna, the pop icon known for bold sexual performances. Most likely alluding to a documentary film *Madonna: Truth or Dare* released in 1991, she writes, “While asserting that the ultimate dare is to tell the truth, they both conceal themselves” (5). By drawing this comparison, she reinforces an already existing image of the controversial and erotic Nin.

The tone set up in the introduction is followed in the rest of the book. Fitch’s language is saturated with eroticism and the life of Fitch’s Nin orbits largely around the sexual. Nin is filled with either sexual longings, sexual energy, erotic dreams of orgies, or sexual frustrations. Reporting on the periods which are covered in the unexpurgated diaries, Fitch provides very elaborate descriptions of Nin’s sexual encounters with various people. Her narrative technique consists mainly of rewriting Nin’s own accounts. This is evident, for example, in the portrayal of a sexual act involving Nin and Drake (which I quoted above when discussing *Henry and June*). Fitch’s passages reads as follows:
Finally, she allows herself to be placed on the couch, yet lies very still. She lets him inhale her perfume, pleased that they share a sense of smell, but then panics again, trying to deter him with “woman’s trouble.” He declares that there are other, less routine, ways. She is confused about the situation. He unbuttons his fly and tells her to get on her knees, which she does. When he offers his penis to her mouth, she stumbles to her feet as if whipped. (101)

Fitch therefore follows very closely Nin’s diary and she simply rephrases Nin’s utterances. She creates very vivid erotic scenes, unravelling them slowly and garnishing them with spicy details. Because she writes in the present tense, she gives her biography an air of a novel. Events unfold before the reader’s eyes and the biographer seems to be absent from the story. (The use of the present tense was one of the main accusations made against Fitch’s biography in the reviews, as critics believed that it does not allow for enough biographical distance.)

Narrating periods of Nin’s life which are not covered in the unexpurgated diaries, Fitch does not provide as much visual detail, due to the lack of access to the Nin archive, but she does her best to keep the list of Nin’s lovers updated. She painstakingly investigates men who slept with Nin. She is also one of the Nin critics who are keen on demonstrating parallels between Nin’s life and her fiction. Therefore, not only does she provide names and details of Nin’s lovers but she also indicates their fictional equivalents.

Because, like many biographies, Fitch’s biography of Nin traverses the academic and the popular, it contributed significantly to strengthening the image of Nin as a sexpot. Consequently, by 1993, with *Delta of Venus, Henry and June* (both the diary and film), and *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* available in the marketplace, the erotic Nin becomes iconic. Soon another biography will appear, also making a contribution to Nin’s erotic portrait, although not so apparent as in Fitch’s account.

*Anaïs Nin: A Biography* 1995

Bair’s biography of Nin, entitled simply, *Anaïs Nin: A Biography* appeared in 1995. Bair provides a more detailed account of Nin’s life than Fitch did, due to her access to Nin’s archives and due to the fact that from the very start she established good working relations with important people in Nin’s life, such as Nin’s partner, Rupert Pole, Nin’s agent, Gunther Stuhlmann, Nin’s brother, Joaquin Nin, and Nin’s friends. Recalling the
initial stages of her project in an interview with Paul Herron for *A Café in Space*, Bair says that all the important people in Nin’s life welcomed the idea of her authoring Nin’s biography. However, once the biography was written, their attitude towards Bair and her book changed (“Making” 29). Although Bair displays more self-reflexivity and distance than Fitch, and her biography was better researched and more professional, many people close to Nin did not approve of it. Rupert Pole and Gunther Stuhlmann were particularly dissatisfied with her final product. In the interview, Bair says that Pole felt hurt and Stuhlmann wrote her “a scathing letter, saying something to the effect of ‘you have betrayed our trust’” (“Making” 33). The biography therefore put an end to a good relationship between Bair and the Nin estate.

At first sight, Bair’s biography seems to be (and to a certain extent is) more balanced than the one written by Fitch. But on closer inspection, Bair too makes a contribution to building up the erotic portrait of Nin, if only by extending the list of Nin’s sexual partners. Although Fitch tried her best to give us the erotic Nin, her limited access to Nin’s archive meant that her record of Nin’s lovers was incomplete. For instance, the actor Norman Bel Geddes, who only makes a fleeting appearance in Fitch’s biography, joins the list of Nin’s erotic conquests in Bair’s. Frank Waldo, who is presented as just an acquaintance in Fitch’s account, in Bair’s book is identified as Nin’s lover. Donald Friede, with whom, according to Bair, Nin participated in her first orgy, is nowhere to be found in Fitch’s biography. There is nothing wrong with Bair’s desire to keep the records straight and to inform her readers about Nin’s life, as long as the balance is right, which in the case of Bair frequently it is not. By preferring some of Nin’s utterances over others – Bair has a penchant for quoting the most controversial of Nin’s statements which put her in a bad light, such as, “a woman should be nourished with nothing but sperm” (198) – and by describing Nin’s sexual encounters in a certain way, Bair frequently portrays Nin as a weak, men-dependent, and dissatisfied woman.

Let us, for example, compare Bair’s account of Nin’s first orgy with Donald Friede and Mary with Nin’s own included in the third unexpurgated diary, *Fire*[^32] (1995), which appeared a year before Bair’s book. The orgy that Nin describes in two and a half pages is reduced by Bair to two paragraphs. Above all, reading Bair’s account of this sexual experience, one has an impression that Nin did not enjoy it, whereas Nin’s version reveals more complexity of feelings and emotions. For example,

[^32]: It needs to be remembered that *Fire*, like the rest of ‘unexpurgated’ diaries, was edited.
Bair opens her report thus: “With Friede and a woman she calls ‘Mary’ . . . Anaïs Nin participated in her first orgy and her first complete lesbian experience, ‘tasting woman’s vagina,’ which she did not like at all” (219).

Before we get into such intimate details in Nin’s account, the scene slowly unfolds and the erotic climate is built up gradually. First, Nin describes her journey to the hotel to meet Donald Friede and she goes over her plans for the visit: she is determined to steer him away from sex. Once in the hotel, she receive a phone call from Donald who informs her that he will be late and asks her to help herself “to cigarettes, a drink, and a pornographic book called *The Prodigal Virgin*” (*Fire* 229). As Nin reads the book, she gets aroused, and her desire to explore the body of another woman intensifies. Finally, Donald arrives, followed shortly after by a woman called in an ‘unedited’ diary Airline (Mary in Bair’s version). The trio first talks and drinks whiskey and then the fondling begins, which Nin describes very vividly (e.g. “he had a finger inside of her and inside of me”; “for a long while the three of us lay entangled, caressing, sucking, biting, kissing, with fingers and tongues” (230)). And only then Nin tells about her first experience of tasting vagina. She writes: “I tasted a woman’s vagina with my lips. I did not like it. It was a strong seashell dish. I did not like the smell” (230). So true, Bair was right – Nin did not like it. But while Bair stops here, Nin carries on: “But I did like it when she offered her backside. I loved her breasts, her mouth, and it amused me that while we caressed Donald and fulfilled our female obligations, our real interest was in each other. Over his body we looked at each other with something like closeness” (230). And when Donald falls asleep the two women keep on kissing, caressing and complimenting each other.

Bair concludes her discussion of this sexual act writing that, “all that she and Donald Friede did with Mary left her curiously unmoved” (219), which suggests that Nin did not enjoy the experience; while in *Fire* we read that although Nin did not have an orgasm, “the moisture was flowing and I was excited” (230). Most of all, however, while Bair gives us this clinical portrait of Nin’s orgy, Nin provides us with some commentary of the event. And the value of Nin’s diary lies frequently in her reflections, needless to say, omitted from Bair’s biography. Nin writes, for instance, that she likes people like Donald and Arline because they can abandon themselves and become free “from care and jealousy” (*Fire* 230). For Nin they represent “Silence of feelings. Relief from feeling” which she has longed for (231).
Although the third unexpurgated volume *Fire* emphasised Nin’s sexuality, as it continued revealing Nin’s affairs which were growing in number and diversity (Nin began participating in threesomes, tried out various sexual positions, and had sex with many different men in one day) and although the Nin trust indisputably capitalised on her sexual affairs, *Fire* still managed to convey the complexities of Nin’s life. Bair, partly because she was forced to present her biography in a manageable size, but also partly due to the handling of the material and due to the way she chose to write about Nin, frequently reduces Nin to ‘a body in heat,’ thus playing a part in constructing the erotic portrait of Anaïs Nin. What is more, while the series of unexpurgated diaries revealed a great deal about Nin’s most intimate existence, they only covered the period up to 1939. Therefore, biographies of Nin, both by Fitch and Bair, were responsible for revealing, for example, the fact that she committed bigamy.

In the next part, I examine the powerful sub-portrait of the erotic Nin: Nin as a seductress.

**Nin the Seductress**

The title of Margot Duxler’s book – *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin* (2002) – is worth some attention as it consolidates seduction as a recurrent theme associated with Nin which underpins her erotic portrait. Seduction is one of the most frequent images employed in descriptions of Nin. Writing about modern stardom, Stephen Hinerman claims that the circulation of popular, recognizable images plays a crucial part in constituting the celebrity (456). He states that,

> one way that stars are made in the twentieth century is through consistent patterns of visualization constructed in various (often analogous) narrative settings, which are then repeated until recognized by audiences as being associated with a particular star. In addition, certain verbal descriptors attach to the stars of popular culture. Written accounts of those stars will often employ these predictable descriptors. (456)

Seduction is used to describe either Nin herself, her behaviour, her writings or even her relationships with the readers. Nin is portrayed as a seductress or Donna Juana by reviewers, her writing is conceptualised in terms of seduction by her critics, and her life is fitted into a pattern of seduction by her biographer.
The image of seduction was initiated by Nin herself who frequently referred to herself as a seductress and the word seduction reappears frequently on the pages of her diary. The concept of seduction entered Nin’s diary with Dr Allendy’s analysis. Allendy told Nin that as a child Nin wanted unconsciously to seduce her father and because she failed, she had since behaved and dressed in a seductive way. For Allendy, her seductive manner was a clear indication of her lack of confidence (D I 94). Nin soon used the seduction metaphor to describe herself and to understand her own behaviour. For instance, after showing her breasts to Allendy (because she considered them too small and wanted a reassurance of her femininity), she questioned, “Did I have to show him my breasts? Did I want to test my charm on him?” (D I 99). Allendy gave her therefore new means to express herself, which will forever influence her self-understanding, and later will encourage critics to employ freely the image of seduction.

One of the first critics to use the image of seduction in respect to Nin’s writing was Lynn Luria-Sukenick. She describes Nin’s diaries as “seductive rather than confessional, extending to the reader a subliminal invitation to fall in love – with her, and the world – and she instinctively knows, having been traditionally feminine in many respects, the importance of concealment to the arousal of desire” (176). Another academic employing the seduction image is Nancy Scholar. Similarly to Luria-Sukenick, she conceptualises Nin’s diary as a tool that helps her to seduce readers by giving them a false impression of authenticity. According to Scholar, Nin seduces her readers with a mixture of candour and mystery. As an example, she quotes the above mentioned passage of the diary, where Nin shows her breasts to her psychoanalyst. The reader, she says, becomes an additional witness in this unexpected gesture of exhibitionism (38). “This is autobiography as seduction: the writer invites and excites her readers with intimate suggestions, and then vanishes behind her mask,” Scholar states (40).

Fitch in her biography also frequently uses the image of seduction. Fitch presents Nin as a seductress, regarding even such an innocent endeavour of an eleven-year old as starting a diary as a way “to convince – to charm and seduce – her father to rejoin them” (4). She explains that this description of the origin of the diary is Nin’s own, and to prove it she refers readers to a footnote where she quotes Nin’s actual account of the conception of the diary, born out of her “desire to keep a channel of communication with the lost father” (qtd. in Fitch 421). While Nin’s explanation sounds perfectly ‘normal’ – she wanted to keep in touch with her father after he
abandoned the family – Fitch’s erotically tinged wording implies controversy and odd behaviour: in her account Nin becomes a Lolita who wants to win over her father.

Duxler in her book entitled suggestively, *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin*, also makes seduction the main theme of Nin’s work and life. She explains that, “Seduction is an important defensive strategy. It is designed to protect an individual from the overwhelming trauma of disconnection from, or loss of, a crucially important relationship” (106). She not only regards Nin’s relationships as an act of seduction but her whole existence is interpreted in these terms. Duxler’s interpretation differs little from the one Allendy provided for Nin a few decades before.

Thus, ‘seduction’ has become one of, what John Rodden calls, watchwords. For Rodden, a watchword is “a common noun or adjective associated with an author or work” (110). He distinguishes between primary and secondary watchwords. For him, descriptions of George Orwell as an “outsider,” “loser,” “maverick” are secondary watchwords of the primary watchword “rebel” (117). Seductress is one of the most frequently used watchwords referring to Anaïs Nin and one that contributes significantly to the construction of her erotic image. While Nin’s critics and biographers stick mainly to the image of seduction, reviewers invent secondary watchwords such as “Donna Juana,” “temptress,” “femme fatale,” “courtesan,” “playgirl of the western world” to spice up their evaluations of both unexpurgated diaries and biographies.

**Nin as Henry Miller’s Sidekick**

Another significant posthumous portrait of Nin, and one interrelated with the erotic Nin, is that of Nin as Henry Miller’s sidekick. As the previous chapters demonstrated, Miller was crucial to launching Nin’s career to the point that her agent feared that Nin was treated as “a package with Miller.” Nin eventually managed to escape being “a package with Miller,” and after the publication of the diaries she became known as a writer in her own right. Even Kate Millett – the most famous feminist to reclaim Nin by praising her and calling Nin “the mother of us all” – who heavily criticised Miller’s writings in her *Sexual Politics*, seemed to forgive Nin her involvement with Miller. And Nin herself, as the collection of her lectures, *A Woman Speaks*, proves, talked increasingly about women, rather than men, who fascinated or influenced her. However, the release of *Henry and June* in 1986 re-established the association Nin-Miller. By narrowly
focusing *Henry and June* on Nin’s relationship with the Millers, Ferrone, the editor, brought Nin’s relationship with Henry Miller to public attention.

A year after the release of *Henry and June, A Literate Passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller* (1987) was published, expanding further on the relationship between Nin and Henry Miller. (One side of their correspondence – Miller’s letters to Nin – edited by Nin was published twenty-two years earlier, in 1965.) *A Literate Passion* focused mainly on their personal relationship. In the words of the editor of the Miller-Nin correspondence, Gunther Stuhlmann, “Space limitations . . . made it necessary to eliminate material peripheral to the personal story – lengthy discussions of Dostoevsky, Proust, Joyce, D. H. Lawrence; detailed critiques of one another’s work-in-progress; ruminations on films, books and so on” (Introduction xix). Again, the focus of the correspondence was on the personal aspect of the Nin-Miller relationship rather than on their professional development. Undoubtedly, this publication was possible due to the earlier release of *Henry and June* which generated interest in the Nin-Miller relationship.

The story of Miller and Nin gripped the imagination of their audience, and as a consequence, most plays on Nin refer to her years spent in Paris and recount the adventures of this ménage à trois. For instance, out of three plays which were staged after Nin’s death and which were reviewed in the *New York Times*, two were devoted to the Parisian period: *Anaïs Nin: The Paris Years* (1986) and *Anaïs Nin: One of Her Lives* (2006). The release of the film *Henry & June* in 1990 tied Nin even more strongly to Henry Miller. The story of Miller and Nin is appealing for at least two reasons. Firstly, it involves *two* well-known authors. Secondly, these two celebrities are entangled in a love triangle. The story of Nin and the Millers therefore satisfies the appetites of the audience at the turn of the twentieth century, hungry for tales about celebrities and love. This trend is evident in a growing number of films devoted to the lives of famous writers, many of which focus on their love lives. By repeating similar scenarios, however, texts such as *Henry and June*, reduce Nin’s life to time spent in Paris, and freeze Nin in a relationship with Henry Miller. Consequently, her relationship with Henry Miller became one of the most recognisable ‘characteristics’ of Nin.

This association is not necessarily beneficial to Nin as sometimes she is pushed into the background and the focus is on Miller who is regarded by many as the more famous of the two. For instance, the release of the film *Henry & June* which coincided with the change of the movie rating system in the United States, was accompanied by a
large number of press articles. The American press relating the change of the rating system often included and discussed *Henry and June* as the first recipient of a new rating. Reading these articles, it is easy to get the impression that *Henry & June* is a film about Henry Miller rather than Anaïs Nin. Despite the fact that the movie was based on Nin’s book and despite the fact that Kaufman’s intention was to portray Nin’s sexual awakening, the press gave a greater prominence to Henry Miller.

Nin’s name did not appear in a single headline the way Miller’s name did. For instance, the *Los Angeles Times* announced, “Henry Miller Meets the MPAA Movies: Philip Kaufman’s very adult ‘Henry and June,’ a tale of the controversial author’s days in Paris, apparently is the latest recipient of the dreaded X rating. Its U.S. release is in limbo” (Mathews 1). The *San Francisco Chronicle* also implied that Miller is the main protagonist of the film, entitling their two articles thus: “Philip Kaufman’s story of Henry Miller ménage ran into problem,” and “Henry Miller – On Trial Again?” (Stone F2). And while some of these articles gave an equal importance to Nin in the main text, others persisted in eliding her. For example, for Hal Hinson from the *Washington Post*, the movie was about “the American writer Henry Miller . . . and his wife, June . . . and their friend and lover, Anaïs Nin” (D1). Hinson did not even acknowledge that the film was based on Nin’s work. In fact, not a single review discussed how faithful (or not) the film is to Nin’s book, which usually takes place when adaptations of literary works are evaluated.

**The Eternally Feminine and Exotic Nin**

Nin’s eroticism is also conveyed through the portrayal of her persona as feminine and exotic. Erica Jong, for instance, opens an article on Nin’s unexpurgated diaries with the remark: “Anaïs Nin: the very name conjures exoticism and eroticism” (203). As emerged from the analysis of Nin’s portraits in the previous chapter, Nin was frequently constructed as both an essence of femininity and an extraordinary person.

The association of Nin with femininity was reinforced after her death by the creation of the perfume called ‘Anaïs Anaïs’ (Fig. 4.12). In the preface to her biography of Nin, Fitch writes that Nin inspired the Cacharel perfume ‘Anaïs Anaïs,’ released in 1978. She quotes a letter from Durrell to Miller in which the former announces: “It will please you to know that the new Cacharel scent named after Anaïs
(‘Anaïs-anaïs’) is a great success” (412). Fitch also mentions that Cacharel used Nin’s diary fragment “A silky fragment of woman” as its slogan (492). Asked in a private correspondence about how she knew that the perfume was inspired by Nin and not simply by the name “Anaïs,” Fitch replied that Rupert Pole, Nin’s partner and at that time executor of her estate, in a private conversation with her confirmed that Cacharel asked for his permission to use Nin’s name. Fitch was, unfortunately, unable to provide further details of this arrangement, and neither was the Anaïs Nin Trust (e-mail to the author). We may therefore never find out the particulars of this deal (especially financial ones). Nonetheless, it remains a fact that Nin inspired and posthumously endorsed one of the first celebrity perfumes.

Fig. 4.12 The perfume ‘Anais Anais’
The perfume, still very popular today, stands for femininity. The Cacharel official website advertises the fragrance as “delicate and ultra-feminine” (Anaïs Anaïs advertisement). The perfume container, in white and soft pink colours, is adorned with pink lilies. While white lilies commonly symbolise innocence and purity, the addition of pink colour makes them look more sensual, and the open petals of the pictured lily suggest labia. The early advertisements for the perfume used Sara Moon’s drawing of very feminine women among flower petals (see Fig. 4.13). The advertisement was maintained in soft shades and soft focus. The perfume therefore promotes a specific kind of femininity – soft, delicate and sensual. Although very few people outside the Nin circle recognise today Anais Nin’s inspiration of this perfume (and it is impossible to state whether (and how many) people in the late 1970s made the link between the perfume and her persona), nonetheless the fact that she did influence the creation of this ultra-feminine fragrance certifies that at a certain moment in time Nin stood for femininity, in one of its most traditional guises – voluptuous, fragile, graceful, elusive.

People who buy ‘Anaïs, Anaïs’ may not know that it was named after Anaïs Nin, but those who know Anaïs Nin are more than likely to associate her name with the perfume. This is due to persons, such as Noel Fitch or Judy Chicago, who remind the public of this fact. The opening and closing lines of Fitch’s introduction to The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin acknowledge that Nin’s name was used by Cacharel. The opening remark reads thus: “Anaïs, Ah-nah-ees. Her name has inspired numerous legends of love and literature and a perfume by the French house of Cacharel” (3). The closing statement reiterates these words and sums up Nin as “a key figure in illuminating the Age of Aquarius. . . . A dozen parodies. . . . Six books of criticism. Two dozen
university dissertations. A French perfume. A legend” (9). Also Judy Chicago, a feminist artist, begins her internet essay entitled tellingly “Anaïs Nin: writer or perfume?” by saying that, “History has not been kind to Anaïs Nin. Within a year of her death, Cacharel produced a perfume called ‘Anaïs Anaïs,’ as if all that was left of her life and her work was the exotic odor of a memory” (“Writer or Perfume?”).

Another space that highlights Nin’s femininity and also creates her as an exotic individual are two biographies of Henry Miller: Always Merry and Bright: The Life of Henry Miller, An Unauthorized Biography (1978) by Jay Martin, and The Happiest Man Alive: A Biography of Henry Miller (1991) by Mary V. Dearborn. In both narratives Nin is introduced as a mythical woman. Since Miller perceived Nin as an exotic and mysterious woman, she is so (re)constructed by his biographers. Commenting on Miller’s description of Anaïs in a letter to his friend Emil Schnellock, Dearborn writes, “What he wanted to convey to Schnellock was Nin’s total exoticism, what he [Miller] saw as her ‘Oriental’ mystery” (141). Following this thread, Dearborn describes Nin’s background as being “as exotic as her clothes and her home” (142). In a similar vein, Martin says, “The more he knew her, the more mythical, ever-changing, did Anaïs seem. He called her Schneewitchen, Snow-white, but he also detected Moorish, Jewish and African forebears in her. Like Ayesha, she had to be obeyed – but she demanded nothing but his good” (267).

Nin’s extraordinariness is expressed through their depiction of her house. Jay Martin, writing about Miller’s first visit to Louveciennes, states, “Everything seemed slightly touched by the extraordinary and mythical” (240). Both biographers make Louveciennes attractive and both mention the fact that Nin’s house was situated on the estate once belonging to Madam du Barry, Louis XV’s legendary mistress. Additionally, Martin paints an idyllic village scene: “The Watteau-like Louveciennes scene, the green pastures dotted with cows, the trees moving in the clear breezes, the whole quiet pastoral atmosphere came to have a healing effect upon him [Henry]” (266). Louveciennes is not so enchanting in the accounts of Nin’s biographer. In Bair’s narrative, Louveciennes is an “unfashionable, tumbledown village” (103).

As for Nin’s house itself, both Dearborn and Martin describe it in detail and both note its peculiarity. Dearborn portrays it as an “enchanted cottage, filled with color, bright accents, and curiosities from other lands” (142). For Martin, it has a Moorish atmosphere (266). Both biographers mention the Arabian lamp lighting the entrance. In general, they build up the picture of an extraordinary, bewitching place.
Additionally, for Martin, Nin and her house symbolises stability. He likens Nin’s home to the old civilisations, “China or Egypt or Araby, where everything had long ago arrived at its final determinations, and against the background of which the individual could confidently stand” (266). Nin is therefore portrayed as a solid rock on which Henry can rely. Her surroundings are described as having calming effects on Henry. (Bair again demystifies the charm of Nin’s abode. While she acknowledges Nin’s own portrayal of her charming house, she corrects her version, saying “Actually, the house was dilapidated and impossible to heat” (103)). All in all, Miller’s biographers by adhering to Miller’s accounts of Nin, perpetuate the myth of her persona as exotic and mystifying. Fans of Miller will, therefore, long associate Nin with mystery and extraordinariness.

The exotic and feminine Nin is also reiterated in various memoirs of Nin. People comment on her exotic name (e.g. friend and author Valerie Harms); on her unusual clothes, which for some are elegant (e.g. Rochelle Lynn Holt) while for others bizarre (e.g. writer William Claire and Nin’s niece, Gayle Nin Rosenkrantz, who recalls her as “an exotic looking, strangely dressed woman” (1)); on her distinctive appearance: for some attractive (e.g. Nin’s critic, Duane Schneider, describes Nin as “a beautiful woman” “extremely attractive” (Recollections 55)), for some enchanting (e.g. critic Suzette Henke describes her as “a princess out of fairy tale” (Recollections 120)), for others artificial (e.g. psychotherapist and teacher Shirley Ariker writes that, “Everything about her was false. Her face was like a mask” and her black hair “made her face all the more unreal” (75)).

These four interrelated portraits: the erotic Nin, Nin the seductress, Nin as Henry Miller’s sidekick and the feminine and exotic Nin, being continuously reiterated and reconstructed in various times and places, contributed significantly to the fall of Nin as the women’s liberation icon.

**Nin the (Fallen) Women’s Liberation Icon**

After Nin’s death and before the first unexpurgated diary, *Henry and June*, appeared in 1986, the last, seventh, volume of the first series of diaries was released in 1980. It opens in the summer of 1966, after the publication of the first Diary when Nin became a widely recognised writer. The form of this diary differs from the previous six volumes, partly because Nin’s diary keeping decreased over the years, and partly because its
editing was taken over by Rupert Pole. *Diary VII* is largely devoid of any internal probing and consists primarily of Nin’s descriptions of her journeys, lectures and interviews, occasionally interspersed with her comments and observations. She reports visits to Japan, Hong-Kong, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Tahiti, Mexico, Bali, Morocco, and describes in great detail places, houses, people, customs. These journeys are also documented in the enclosed photographs. Nin is shown in various places, either on her own or with local people, such as a Cambodian rickshaw driver or Mexican children. In some pictures the place is depicted through attributes characteristic of it. For example, the picture of Nin in Japan portrays her in a kimono, sitting on cushions and sipping presumably tea in a ‘Japanese style.’

As the previous chapter demonstrated, during her most prolific years, Nin acquired a new identity – that of a women’s representative. *Diary VII*, published posthumously in 1980, reinforces this portrait of Nin and summarises her stance on feminism. In its pages, Nin comments frequently on the women’s movement and her contribution to it. She refuses to align herself with any social movements, and feminism is no exception. And although she states a few times in the seventh volume that she supports women’s liberation, she seems to have her own understanding of what this liberation should involve. Her answer to feminists’ demands is, as usual, an individual fight and an inner change. She writes, “Liberation is a work of one’s own. Political problems can be solved only when we are ready from within, well oriented and self-respecting” (187).

As a result, there is a particular animosity between Nin and feminists, especially those of Radical and Marxist orientation, visible during some of the lectures recounted in the *Diary*. Nin believes that the women’s movement is not clearly defined, and she opposes its militant dimension. In a letter to a reader she explains that she is interested in the liberation of women “but the few I have met are warriors, and I can’t work with them” (158). She feels that there is too much hostility towards men and that women, instead of reading women writers, waste their energies on criticising men writers, like Norman Mailer or Henry Miller (158). She disapproves of “the men haters, the artificial lesbians, the vociferous, bitter, violent women who achieve nothing” (283). In turn, feminists resent her for the lack of involvement in political and social issues, for supporting male artists, for the way she dresses and her soft manner of speaking (248). However, her lack of social involvement, rather than being directed against feminism, is in accordance with her nurtured belief in the special role of the artist. Nin, as we
already concluded, nourishes a very romantic vision of the artist as someone special, above society and its down-to-earth concerns.

Nonetheless, however ambivalent her position in the women’s movement, Nin portrays herself as a representative, friend of, and inspiration for women. She writes: “Everyone knows that I have at least half of the feminist women behind me, and many more who are not feminists but consider me a pioneer in independence, a heroine, a legend, a model, etc.” (222). At one point in *Diary VII*, five pages are devoted to excerpts from readers’ letters (200-204). The cited passages, which are from one sentence up to seven sentences long, are interesting not only because they cast a light on what the readers find interesting about Nin, but, first and foremost, on what Nin (and Pole) considered important to quote (it must be also remembered that the letters were chosen out of thousands of others and there is not, for example, a single letter of critique, which I do not believe was not received by Nin).

First of all, Nin emerges as an inspiration for women, arousing in them various desires, such as to rediscover the lost, forgotten and/or neglected self, to continue writing or to become a writer, to be independent, to accept themselves for who they are, to pursue their dreams. Secondly, her readers strongly identify with her, her struggles, and her sensibility: “I know that you have been through everything I go through in my own struggle to find my full humanity” (D VII 201); “You describe so clearly what I feel every second of my waking and dream existence” (203); “You are writing my life also” (203); “In your Diaries I see the person I am and the person I want to be” (204). Thirdly, she also quotes two letters that relate her to the feminist movement, yet see her as being different from it. “After a long period when I read only feminist propaganda and fiction” reads one of the passages, “it was a clear day and cool air to read your Diary” (201). Another fragment praises her personal and intimate manner of dealing with problems that touch contemporary women: “There are women who roar and demand to be heard. You are so much more effective because you whisper in our ears and by so doing touch our very souls” (202). Thus, Nin’s portrait is painted indirectly, using the words of others. Because the selected fragments are very short, specific, taken out of their original context and, most significantly, very admiring, they reconfirm her portrait as a women’s representative. It is given an extra authority when it is confirmed by others. However, these quoted passages also indicate that Nin’s diary and
her public persona produced a para-social interaction\(^\text{33}\) with her readers. Many people identified with Nin and her story.

The seventh volume met with harsh criticism. Assessing it for the *New York Times*, Katha Pollitt asserted that Nin’s “distinctive blend of vanity and hypersensitivity has never been so galling” (“Apologia Ended” 7). She accuses Nin of keeping secret essential facts of her life, such as her husbands and the source of her financing, and she decries anyone who ever considered Nin’s work as “unvarnished self-revelation” (24). She considers Nin as a construct and “the quintessential male-directed woman” and believes that volume seven “may make even devoted Ninians blush for their heroine” (7, 24). In a similar vein, James Wolcott in his review for *The New York Review of Books* labels Nin’s admirers as “Ninnies.” So, not only is Nin under attack but so are her readers. The ridicule of Nin’s readers, called dismissively Ninnians, Ninnies or Ninophiles, reflects the negative appraisal of women writers and their readers. As Heilburn notes writing about the reception of Virginia Woolf, “either a woman author isn’t studied, or studying her is reduced to an act of misplaced religious fanaticism” (quoted in Silver 149). In his scornful review, Wolcott also deems Nin’s career as “a masterpiece of self-promotion,” and, believes that “the hilariously vain *apercus* [glance, view, perception, insight] of Volume Seven will do more damage to her reputation than the cruellest slice from villainous Vidal” (n.pag.).

However, although *Diary VII* was heavily criticised, a more serious blow to Nin’s reputation as the women’s representative came with the publication of her unexpurgated diaries, as many memoirs of Nin testify. One example of disillusionment with Nin is expressed in *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin* (2002). The author of the book, Margot Duxler, was Nin’s admirer and friend. In the first chapter, Duxler situates herself in relation to Nin. First, she introduces herself and provides her family background: Brought up by very strict and religious Jewish parents, Duxler admits to feelings of alienation from her family and a lack of understanding between herself and her mother, for whom marriage was the ultimate goal of a woman’s life. Next, Duxler describes how upon discovering Nin, she felt that she found herself a mentor. Nin embodied for her freedom, sensuality, creativity – everything that Duxler’s parents

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\(^{33}\) The term para-social interaction, as Sherryl Wilson informs us, was developed by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl in 1956 and it “describes the process by which viewers feel that they have come to know a television personality” (163). As an example of para-social relationship Turner gives the death of Princess Diana to which many people around the world reacted with some kind of emotional attachment (23).
despised and everything that Duxler believed in. Duxler therefore identified with Nin and found her persona very inspirational. And she was not the only one. Two collections of memoirs, *Recollections of Anaïs Nin by her Contemporaries* (1996) and *Anaïs Nin: A Book of Mirrors* (1996), on Nin are filled with confessions of women who found Nin inspiring. Suzette Henke, for instance, writes that, “At the outset of the women’s movement, Nin cast an aura around many of us hungry for independent role models” (*Recollections* 119).

Duxler then recounts the circumstances of meeting Nin and describes their acquaintance that formed over time. Finally, she relates the sense of betrayal and sorrow she experienced once the unedited diaries were published and she discovered the truth about Nin’s life. She writes, “As the books were published . . . I finished reading each one with increasing distress and confusion, distraught to discover that the idealized maternal figure I had wanted and needed Anaïs to be, and whom she presented herself to be, was not, in fact, who she was” (13). Duxler’s story is symptomatic of what other Nin readers, who initially trusted Nin and treated her as their representative, felt once the ‘truth’ about their heroine was revealed.34

Barbara Kraft, another Nin fan and friend, recounts a similar disenchantment. In her short memoir of Nin, she reports how upon meeting Nin, she “was captivated by Anaïs who inspired intense feelings in everyone she came in contact with” (141). A friendship developed. Kraft, then a wife of a prominent member of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, was persuaded by Nin to publish her own diary. Although herself in doubt, she decided to go ahead with the publication, a decision that cost her dearly. Kraft recalls:

> Had I known the consequences of my ‘truth,’ I would have had second thoughts about publishing my diary; one of them would have concerned the repercussions the book would have on my daughter and our subsequent relationship. The repercussions to my own life were harsh. . . . Overnight I became a pariah in the world where I had lived for sixteen years, someone who could not be trusted. (145-6).

Kraft then describes a great sense of disappointment and betrayal experienced once Nin’s unexpurgated diaries were published and it turned out that Nin, who encouraged her so strongly to release the diary in its original form (Kraft considered publishing

34 Most of the people I refer here were either acquainted with Nin or are her critics. In order to confirm this assumption a reader response based research would be recommended.
under a pseudonym or turning her diary into a work of fiction), herself concealed so many facts about her private life. So, the discovery that Nin lied in her diaries caused a great deal of distress for Nin’s enthusiasts, especially those who were acquainted with her. It seems that apart from a general disappointment caused by concealment of life details, two revelations were particularly upsetting for many of Nin’s readers: Nin’s sexual permissiveness and her dependence on men, and the fact that a poignantly described stillbirth in the first ever published *Diary* was really a late-term abortion, as the unedited diary, *Incest*, revealed. However, not all readers, as this section will show, felt betrayed by Nin. Some, like Erica Jong, still insist on treating Nin as a feminist heroine. This battle over whether Nin is relevant, and to what extent, to feminism demonstrates cracks and divisions in feminist thought.

Let us first consider the portrait of the erotic Nin and how it is contested by Nin’s critics. There are two sides of the debate: On the one side there are critics, such as Sharon Spencer or Erica Jong, who regard Nin’s expansive sexuality as an expression of freedom; on the other side there are critics, who, like Barbara Kraft, consider Nin’s sexuality as a chain to patriarchy. Sharon Spencer, a literary scholar, sees Nin as “a woman who dared to fulfill herself erotically, an aspiration that in a century of acclaimed “women’s liberation” has brought her more severe condemnation than praise – and by whom: other women!” (*Recollections* 82). Similarly, for Erica Jong, a novelist whose *Fear of Flying* (1973) triggered at least as much debate about female sexuality as did the revelations about Nin’s erotic life, Nin embodies psychological, sexual and artistic freedom. Jong believes that these who denigrate Nin are afraid of expressing their own sexuality (203). In contrast, for Barbara Kraft, Nin was far from liberated, either sexually or psychologically. Kraft maintains that, “Women who seek freedom through sexuality and define freedom as sexual promiscuity remain forever in shackles. If Anaïs’s life teaches us anything, it should teach us this” (150).

This argument over whether Nin should be considered a sexually liberated heroine or a nymphomaniac dupe of patriarchy reflects a bigger cultural debate about sexuality which has always been one of the most contested areas among feminists. While at the beginning of the women’s movement many women embraced sexual permissiveness as an expression of liberation from patriarchal rule, with time, critics began to regard it as a new means of oppressing women. Similar tendencies can be observed nowadays, when women are led to believe by various media (e.g. the television series *Sex and the City*) that promiscuity is a newly gained freedom, a
feminist achievement, whereas feminist critics, such as Angela McRobbie, warn against this post-feminist promotion of unbridled sexuality.

To some extent, this battle over the erotic Nin also echoes the pornography debate raging in the 1980s. As Tong demonstrates, the attitudes towards pornography well illustrate the difference of opinions on sexuality among various factions of feminism (see pages 112-123). To simplify, feminists were divided into Antipornographers, usually a group of Radical feminists who argued about harmful effect of pornography, and Anti-Antipornographers, a group of more liberally-orientated feminists who defended above all a freedom of expression, arguing that it is difficult to decide which representations of sexuality are detrimental for women and society.

Another incident that upset Nin’s readers was the late-term abortion described by Nin as a stillbirth in Diary I. At the end of Diary I, Nin offers a very moving story of a stillbirth. The revelation of Nin’s pregnancy emerges rather unexpectedly. At the end of one entry she announces simply that she saw a doctor who told her that she was too small to bear a child in a natural way and she would need a Caesarean section. The next entry opens with a statement, “several months later,” and information that she is pregnant (D I 348). Nin begins this passage, which will end with delivery of a still born baby girl, with an invocation to an unborn child. Recalling her own abandonment by her father, Nin says that “it would be better to die than to be abandoned, for you would spend your life haunting the world for this lost father” (349). At no point does Nin disclose who is the father of her child. Instead, she provides many rather negative thoughts on fatherhood. She believes that men are too irresponsible and too selfish to care for a child and again concludes that “there is no father on earth . . . . It would be better if you died inside of me, quietly, in the warmth and in the darkness’ (349-50).

She then moves on to the very dramatic and detailed description of delivery. She begins by saying that she had to be rushed to the clinic as the doctor did not hear the breathing of her six-month old foetus. Nin recounts hours of labour – cracking bones, swelled veins, heavy legs, ripping flesh, blood, pain, and never-ending pushing – interspersed with such touching comments as “A part of me lay passive, did not want to push out anyone, not even this dead fragment of myself, out in the cold, outside of me” (351). In this overall poignant depiction of birth, she does not, however, fail to mention that before she went into labour, “I combed my hair, I powdered and perfumed myself, painted my eyelashes” (351). She ends her account describing a dead baby and
concluding that she “was designed for other forms of creation. Nature connived to keep me a man’s woman, and not a mother; not a mother to children but to men” (356). Next day, weak but refreshed, after “Morning toilette. Perfume and powder,” Nin entertains her visitors (357).

In 1992, the second volume of the unexpurgated series, *Incest*, was published. *Incest*, which continues the story began in *Henry and June*, made public other sexual affairs of the writer and disclosed probably the most controversial details of Nin’s life: the incestuous relationship with her father that she engaged in as an adult, and the fact that what she presented in the first volume of the expurgated diary as a stillbirth was really a late-term abortion. The account of the delivery published in *Incest*, apart from a few sentences, is the same as in *Diary I*. What therefore shocked Nin’s readers was not the description itself but the fact that it was a late-term abortion and not, as Nin claimed in *Diary I*, a stillbirth. *Incest* revealed that upon finding out that she was pregnant, Nin was determined to get rid of the child and she first arranged a visit to a “sage-femme” who was supposed to help Nin abort the baby. Only when she was six months into her pregnancy did a doctor discover that the abortion attempts had failed. This fact did not change her mind and she persisted in her decision to terminate her pregnancy. With this revelation, critics focused not on the moving parts of Nin’s accounts, but began to highlight Nin’s selfishness. They began, for instance, to quote the fragment where Nin says that she applied make up before going into labour.

Particularly critical of this revelation were, to no surprise, feminist critics. For Katha Pollitt, this disclosure demonstrated clearly that Nin never was “the bold truth-teller of women’s secret experiences that she claimed to be” (“Rev. of *Incest*” BR3). Additionally, Pollitt saw Nin’s failure to declare her abortion back in the 1960s (although Nin did sign *Ms.*’s petition “I had an abortion”) as a wasted opportunity on Nin’s part to contribute to a fight for a legalization of abortion. Pollitt therefore did not criticise Nin so much for the abortion or the actual description of it but for the fact that she concealed it as a stillbirth.

Another critic shocked by Nin’s treatment of abortion was Claudia Roth Pierpont, a contributor to *The New Yorker*. Pierpont wrote a number of profiles of famous women writers which were then brought together in a book entitled *Passionate Minds: Women Rewriting the World* (2000). Pierpont disagrees with Pollitt that a divulgence of the abortion back in the 1960s would have helped the feminist cause. According to her, this “horrifying scene” would have done more damage than good
Aghast, she asks rhetorically, “Is it imaginable that so brutal and frivolously self-serving an account could have contributed to the argument for abortion rights?” (78). For Pierpont the answer is clear and she concludes that, “In this instance, rewriting her story was probably Nin’s best deed for the feminist cause” (78).

Deirdre Bair, Nin’s biographer, was also deeply appalled by Nin’s description of the abortion. Bair, who tries to maintain an objective distance towards her subject throughout the biography, becomes one of Nin’s harshest judges when it comes to dealing with this particular event. After giving details of Nin’s pregnancy and her attempts to end it, Bair declares: “The account of the birth in the diary almost defies interpretation. It is a portrait of monstrous egotism and selfishness, horrifying in its callous indifference” (200).

The publication of *Incest* alienated many of Nin’s readers and Nin’s image acquired a monstrous dimension. The fact that it was an abortion, rather than her affair with her father, that was responsible for most controversy seems to back up what Linda Wagner-Martin claims about biographies of women. According to Wagner-Martin women are often judged in terms of what kind of mothers (or wives, or daughters) they were (25). She demonstrates this assertion with the example of Sylvia Plath who was harshly criticised for abandoning her children when she committed suicide (26). Nin, too, is condemned for her failed motherhood, described as an act of ultimate selfishness.

It seems that the only way to excuse Nin’s deed is to treat her as a psychological case study. Suzette Henke’s critical framework, scrutinised in the next section, allows her to look sympathetically on Nin’s account of abortion. She believes that loss of the father made Nin dread maternity. She explains, “Anaïs has identified so completely with the father who abandoned her that she herself must reject the potential daughter/son in order to avoid betrayal by an egotistical lover” (*Shattered Subjects* 72). According to Henke, Nin was afraid that she would experience a similar fate to that of her mother who was abandoned and left on her own with three children to care for.

This tendency to psychoanalyse Nin, or even to pathologise her, emerges particularly clearly when we focus on Nin’s relationship with her father and how it has been dealt with by Nin critics.

**Nin as a Trauma Survivor**
Apart from revealing the truth about Nin’s abortion, *Incest* also exposed her affair with her father. The release of *Incest* reflects a cultural phenomenon which most likely made the publication of the book possible. The phenomenon referred to here is, following Roger Luckhurst’s term, “the Memory War,” which characterised the decade of the 1990s (86). The Memory War, as the name itself suggests, is a debate about the nature of memory. It began at the end of the 1980s with the incest recovery movement. Critics usually attribute the beginnings of this movement to the publication of The *Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* in 1988 (see Luckhurst, Loftus & Ketcham). The authors of this self-help book, Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, maintain that many people who were abused in their childhood do not have conscious memories of the abuse (Loftus & Ketcham 21). *The Courage to Heal* was soon followed by similar publications, such as *Adult Children of Abusive Parents* (1989) by Steven Farmer, *Secret Survivors: Uncovering Incest and its Aftereffects on Women* (1990) by E. Sue Blume, and *Reclaiming Our Lives: Hope for Adult Survivors of Incest* (1990) by Carol Poston and Karen Lison.

What these books have in common, as Loftus and Ketcham explain, is a specific vision of memory as a storage box or a video-recorder, and a belief in repression – the power of the mind to remove disturbing experiences from conscious awareness. Moreover, repression supporters “claim that even while the traumatic memories are safely buried, the emotions entombed with them seep into our conscious lives, poisoning our relationships and undermining our sense of self” (Loftus & Ketcham 7). For this reason, the supporters of recovered memory theory are prone to attribute depression, panic attacks, eating disorders and relationship difficulties to childhood sexual abuse (Loftus & Ketcham140). So, those supporting the claim that the traumatic experiences may leave the sufferer without any conscious memories but that these be recovered during therapy, constituted one camp of the Memory War.

The opponent camp consisted of people who were suspicious about the idea that one is able to completely suppress memories from one’s consciousness. Shortly after the search for repressed memories began, it met with the backlash. A counter-argument was proposed, namely that recovered memories were in fact false memories, frequently planted in patients’ heads by eager therapists. An alternative model of memory was proposed: memory as a space of reconstruction where facts mingle with fiction (Loftus & Ketcham 5). In 1992, The False Memory Syndrome Foundation was established which aim was to find reasons for the spread of False Memory Syndrome (FMS), to
help those who were affected by it, and to find ways to prevent it (the official website). In a counter-attack, the advocates of the FMS were accused by the supporters of repressed memories of being “antiwoman, antichild, antivictim, right-wings reactionaries in serious denial” and of destroying the gains of the feminist movement (Loftus & Ketcham 205-6).

The Memory War, as Luckhurst illustrates, found its reflection in literature. On the one hand, books such as Margaret Drabble’s *The Radiant Way* or Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* featured the model of recovered memory; on the other hand, Nicci French’s *The Memory Game* explored the possibility of implanting false memories (Luckhurst). Nin’s *Incest* with the revelation of Nin’s affair with her father appeared when the Memory War was at its peak. Although its theme is not the memory itself, it can nonetheless be considered as a product of its time, the product, as Luckhurst explains, “of a shift in awareness about the prevalence of sexual abuse and admission of its primary location: inside the family” (85). *Incest* was soon followed by critical assessments of Nin’s relationship with her father. Nin scholarship in the 1990s was characterised by the growing use of psychoanalytic and psychological theories and by treating Nin as a victim of childhood abuse. It seems that the only way to come to terms with Nin’s conscious involvement in a sexual relationship with her father in her adulthood, or with “the ultimate transgression,” as the back cover of *Incest* labelled it, is to regard her as a troubled and wounded individual.

Fitch is one of the first of Nin’s critics to concentrate on her relationship with her father. In the introduction and the first chapter of the biography, *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin*, Fitch insists that Nin’s life was determined by her absent father. As early as the second paragraph of the introduction, she confronts readers with the scandalous piece of information regarding Nin – her incestuous relationship with her father. She further implies that Nin was seduced and abused by her father as a child and that this resulted in her affair with him in her adult life. Although Fitch admits that “this fact is impossible to prove conclusively” (3), she builds the whole account of Nin’s life around this assumption, maintaining that “the pattern of seduction seems evident from her life and art, even without her verbal clues” (4).

In order to support her hypothesis, Fitch uses a variety of methods. Firstly, she quotes critics influenced by Freud as well as Freud himself. For example, maintaining that “Abused children often idealize their abusers,” she refers readers to the work of a Freudian critic, Alice Miller (15). Secondly, she reads Nin’s fiction as an expression of
painful events that allegedly took place in her formative years, as in the following fragment, “Much later, in her creation of Djuna, her strongest fictional alter ego, she presents a child with ‘enormous fairy-tale’ eyes who is sexually violated by the watchman at the orphanage where she lives” (16). Fitch therefore implies that Nin expressed in her fiction what she was not able to confess in her diary. Finally, she picks out quotes from Nin’s friends as prove her theory. She notes, for instance, “As Henry Miller will observe years later, she never spoke of her childhood experiences or friends, it was like a ‘lack or a gap’” (16-17).

Commenting on biography in an article “Shaping the Truth,” Miranda Seymour writes, “Life in the raw is often shapeless: the biographer must create their persuasive narrative by inserting a connecting thread. Subjectivity inevitably comes into play in this manufactured coherence” (264). It is hard to avoid an impression that Fitch is determined to make her puzzles fit a pattern. Her focus on discovering Nin’s psychological problems is her way of creating a coherent narrative of Nin’s life. In her preface alone, Fitch mentions nymphomania, neurosis and childhood trauma as possible psychological disorders plaguing Nin. This confirms Hermione Lee’s claim that “Women writers whose lives involved abuse, mental illness, self-harm, suicide, [we could add incest to this list] have often been treated, biographically, as victims or psychological case-histories first and as professional writers second” (128-9).

In identifying Nin’s psychological problems, Fitch frequently refers to Freud and other critics influenced by his writings. In Biography: A Very Short Introduction (2009), Hermione Lee describes the enormous significance of Freud to modern biography. She states that in the post-Freudian era even biographers sceptical about psychoanalysis were obliged to write about their subject’s infancy, sexuality, illnesses and dreams, otherwise their accounts were regarded as incomplete. Lee also demonstrates that, despite the fact that psycho-biography is not practiced in its full form any more, many contemporary biographers are influenced by psychoanalytical lingo. And so is Fitch. Her application of Freudian theory and terminology allows her to concentrate on Nin’s childhood as a source of her future problems, since for Freud childhood was a crucial stage of personal development and his analysis, aiming to unearth repressed memories, was focused on this period. Moreover, as Malcolm Bowie explains, “it was in the force-field of the family as experienced by the young child that the explanation for neurotic misery was to be discovered” (179), a stance that allows Fitch to highlight family dynamics in her biography.
Bowie explains perfectly why the recourse to childhood and psychoanalysis is so alluring and useful for biographers. I quote him at length:

An adult life is such a tangled affair, with so many disparate strands running through it, that almost any simplifying mechanism will be welcome. . . . Through the thicket of the adult subject’s professional and personal lives, through the jungle of affective, economic, and socio-political forces in which his [sic] individuality is forged and modified, the Freud-inspired biographer can travel with a reliable navigational aid. The early configurations of the individual’s libido as contained or discharged within the family group hold the key to his later erotic career. . . . If we add to these intellectual benefits the spectacle of the young child as the hero of the Oedipal drama and therefore as a creature of intense and conflicting passions, the charm of psychoanalysis as a biographical aid will begin to seem irresistible. It will be both a scientific procedure and a dramaturgical device. It will allow us to construct hypotheses and theorems that are intellectually convincing but at the same time dark, fearful, and incest-fringed. (179-180).

Providing a psychoanalytical interpretation of the subject’s life is especially tempting in the case of Nin because of her life-long involvement in psychoanalysis and her own great confidence in it. For Nin too psychoanalysis was a narrative tool with the help of which she attempted to understand and explain herself. Podnieks, for instance, thus summarises Freud’s influence on Nin’s sense of self: “His division of the mind into the conscious and the unconscious and later into the ego, superego, and id, would be reflected in her own sense of self as fractured and in her Freudian drive to recover by means of analysis full self-knowledge” (312).

Fitch’s role in her biography of Nin can be likened to that of an analyst during a psychoanalytic session. She assumes that Nin lost memories of her childhood and, just like a therapist, Fitch offers an interpretation of Nin’s allegedly buried memories of her childhood experiences. Fitch’s biography therefore reflects the search for repressed memories characteristic of the last decade of the twentieth century. She states, for instance, that Nin “does not have a childhood, in part because of a loss of memory and in part because of her isolated dreaming” (16). On another occasion, when she tries to find reasons why Nin engaged in an incestuous relationship with her father, she points to “unacknowledged childhood sexual memory against which she [Nin] is powerless” (149). And describing Nin’s sessions with Allendy, Fitch concludes that “A psychoanalyst today with the same information – a description of a violent, patriarchal
father, a lifetime of seductive behaviour, and dreams of prostitution in a patient who is nonorgasmic, passive, masochistic yet fearful of pain, and sickened by her own sexual aggressiveness – would look for childhood sexual experiences in the patient. But . . . [Allendy] does not” (127-8).

Fitch is probably right: Had Nin found herself in the therapist office in the 1990s, she most probably would be encouraged to uncover her ‘buried’ memories. Writing about modern psychotherapy, Loftus and Ketcham note that a central question “Who am I?” was reduced to “How did I get this way” (7). They explain: “To understand who we are and why we are the way we are, many therapists encourage us to go back to our childhoods and find out what happened to us there. If we are in pain, we are told there must be a cause; if we cannot locate the cause, we have not looked deep enough” (7). Fitch’s biography reflects this phenomenon – she reconstructs Nin’s traumatic childhood to understand Nin’s adult behaviour, especially some of her actions, like an affair with her father, which seem to escape any understanding.

Two critical studies of Nin’s writings – Diane Richard-Allerdyce’s *Anaïs Nin and the Remaking of Self: Gender, Modernism and Narrative Identity* (1998) and a chapter devoted to Nin in Suzette A. Henke’s *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life-Writing* (2000) – also reflect the Memory War phenomenon. Both critics regard Nin’s early childhood as the scene of traumatic events (the loss of the father and the alleged (sexual) abuse). Both employ the concept of “narrative recovery” to understand Nin’s works and both claim that writing served Nin as a means of ordering the chaotic events of her life and thus giving her mastery over them. Henke argues that autobiography, which she defines broadly and includes diaries, journals, confessions, has the potential to be a form of scriptotherapy – “the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment” (xii) – which can help victims of trauma to recover. She claims that autobiography can serve a similar purpose to that of psychoanalysis. She says, “Autobiography could so effectively mimic the scene of psychoanalysis that life-writing might provide a therapeutic alternative for victims of severe anxiety and, more seriously, of post-traumatic stress disorder” (xii-xiii). According to Henke, Nin’s fragmented persona revealed in the unexpurgated diaries is re-created and perfected in the edited version. While Henke concentrates on Nin’s diaries, Richard-Allerdyce gives prominence to Nin’s fiction and she considers it an effective means for “mourning the past” (8).
What is more, both Henke’s and Richard-Allerdyce’s studies fit into the paradigm of sexual abuse. Although neither of them overtly pronounces Nin a victim of sexual abuse, it is implied in some of their utterances. Richard-Allerdyce explains that “Nin herself believed . . . that her non-diary writings would provide the distance she needed to deal with some of the psychological damage she suffered during childhood – whether as a result of her father’s abandonment of his family when Anaïs was a child, or (as Fitch has argued and Nin later believed . . .) as the result of early sexual violation” (8). The possibility of sexual abuse lurks especially in Henke’s phrases and sentences, such as this one: “Anaïs’s girlish self-image is constructed in the paedophilic gaze of the artist-father who admires her slender, nubile body” (59). Henke refers here to photos taken by Joaquin Nin of his toddler daughter, which she regards as “pornographic photo sessions” (59). Linde Salber, German biographer of Nin, offers a different perspective on these photographic endeavours. She explains that at the beginning of the twentieth century, photography was a popular pastime of middle-classes and she does not see anything deviant about Nin’s father’s photographic interests (15). A similar explanation was given during a conference on Nin in 1994 by Nin’s brother, Joaquin Nin-Cullmel (23), who protested against interpreting the father-daughter photo sessions as an abnormal activity, as Henke acknowledges in a footnote. This does not, however, stop Henke from insinuating that an interest of the father went beyond the norms of decent conduct.

In both Richard-Allerdyce’s and Henke’s studies, there are also overtones of a discourse of repressed memories. Richard-Allerdyce, for example, quotes Alice Miller saying that, “the works of writers, poets, and painters tell the encoded story of childhood traumas no longer consciously remembered in adulthood” and she adds that “Nin’s work resonates with her unsayable response to early paternal abuse (whether sexual or otherwise psychological and physical) and the “earth-shattering” effects of that violation on her life” (7). Throughout her book, she interprets Nin’s writing employing such concepts as suppressed memory, lapse of memory, denial, and repression. Similarly, Henke at some point of her analysis notes that, “A sixteen-year-old Anaïs seems thoroughly to have repressed negative memories of her father and can only nod weakly in assent to her mother’s promptings” (57). She refers here to a conversation Nin had with her mother in 1919 regarding the circumstances of her father’s abandonment. Her mother ‘reminded’ her that her father had always been very brutal, and that it was he who deserted them and not the other way round. For Henke,
this is a case of repressed memories. However, an alternative interpretation can be provided: The participation of Nin’s mother in a recovery process may be regarded as a case of planting memories in Nin. Perhaps Nin, who revered her father, as her early diary suggests, did not discover the ‘true’ face of her father, but re-created him according to her mother’s stories.

Another psychological analysis of Nin is offered by Margot Beth Duxler in her *Seduction: A Portrait of Anaïs Nin* (2002). Duxler, Nin’s friend and a professional psychologist, offers an intimate portrait of Nin and a psychological interpretation of her personality. As Nin was for Fitch, Richard-Allerdyce and Henke, for Duxler too she is a traumatised child. Duxler explains metaphorically, “Like a tree that has survived a blight and grown around an infestation in its roots, so did Anaïs survive, with the scars of her childhood invisible but powerfully affecting her development” (104). Nin once again becomes a psychological case study. Duxler assumes that because of the early trauma, Nin developed “a false self”, a seductive self, and lived most of her life under its guise; only the diary was a haven where Nin felt safe enough to expose her real self.

Such an approach to Nin’s life helps Duxler to deal with her own disappointment after discovering after Nin’s death that, “in many ways she[Nin] was not who she seemed to be” ([emphasis added] back cover), and ultimately to reclaim Nin. Although the ‘unedited’ diaries created a sense of betrayal among Nin readers and Nin was condemned for lying about her life, they simultaneously gave Nin’s readers a new means to defend her – her outrageous behaviour recorded in the diaries became treated by many as a serious psychological disturbance. Nin therefore could be exonerated but only if enough evidence is brought to demonstrate that she was a particularly disturbed individual. The psychological approach to Nin’s behaviour allows Duxler to resist, for example, one of the most common accusations against Nin – Nin as a narcissist. She explains, “If Anaïs appears to be self-obsessed, narcissistic, or indulgent, as some critics have claimed, it is because the development of her spontaneous and authentic self was damaged and inhibited by the nature of the early trauma she endured” (119).

However, this portrayal of Nin as a victim is double-edged. For instance, Duxler discounts and reinterprets many of Nin’s statements. She states that, “Anaïs often remarked that she needed numerous partners because she could not be all of herself with any one individual, but the compulsive quality of her multiple relationships indicates more of a pathological symptom than an expression of free will” (129). Nin’s sexual
behaviour is therefore explicable only if dealt with as a psychological abnormality. It seems that little has changed in the treatment of sexually liberated women since the nineteenth century, when, as Elaine Showalter explains, “uncontrolled sexuality seemed the major, almost defining symptom of insanity in women” (*Female Malady* 74). We can hear in Duxler’s statement echoes of Victorian doctors’ pronouncements: She too implies, although in more politically correct wording, that Nin’s compulsive sexuality is a symptom of mental disturbance. Nin therefore can be saved but only if she is locked in a metaphoric lunatic asylum; the only way to deal with her is to treat her as a seriously troubled and wounded person, a victim of childhood abuse.

**Nin the Liar**

Katha Pollitt, reviewing *Incest* for the *New York Times*, was among the critics who questioned the reliability of the unexpurgated volumes, because, as she said, while the first series of the diaries was being published, people were led to believe that they too included honest confessions. She states that, “For the real Anais Nin, and the real story told in the diary, we’ll have to wait for her biography” (“Rev. of *Incest*” BR3). Pollitt’s comment on biography as an honest record of person’s life confirms what Wagner-Martin writes about this form of narrative. Wagner-Martin thus describes the common preconception about biography: “despite today’s greater cultural awareness of how complicated the shaping of identity is, biography is still thought to be an art dependent on fact. The premise is that if enough letters and manuscript materials are available, if enough photos are scrutinised, if enough people are interviewed, somehow the objective truth about the subject will surface” (9).

Pollitt’s article generated two responses in the *New York Times*. First, Rupert Pole, literary executor of the Nin estate denied any major interference with the material. Second, Sally Duros, presumably a Nin fan, attacked Pollitt for suggesting that a future biography would be more a trustworthy source of information than Nin’s own records. Duros argues that Nin wrote the diaries for herself alone and that therefore they can be trusted (BR12) – a comment which repeats one of many myths circulating about Nin’s diaries: Duros believes that since Nin kept her diaries locked in vaults (which Nin described in her diaries and as some of her published photographs

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35 The letters exchanged between Pole and Ferrone (discussed earlier) and Bair’s biography proved otherwise.
further confirmed), they must have been secret and private. It is a good illustration of how Nin’s readers, who possess different levels of knowledge about Nin, create their own Nin. This exchange of letters also reflects a wider debate about the nature of autobiographical writings. Which genre is most trustworthy? Is it a diary, an autobiography or biography? It seems that for many readers it is still biography, as Nin’s own accounts of her life were invalidated once two biographies of her were published. In reviews of both Fitch’s *The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* (1993) and Bair’s *Anaïs Nin: A Biography* Nin was established as a liar.

Many of the reviews of biographies took an opportunity to evaluate Nin, rather than the authors of her life narratives. They focused on detailing and judging Nin’s life. As many of their titles and sub-titles suggest, reviews concentrated on the sensational and they pronounced Nin a liar. Reviewing Fitch’s biography for the *New York Times*, Miranda Seymour stated: “Truth Wasn’t Sexy Enough: Anaïs Nin’s Diaries Were a Fraud and Even Her Marriages Were Lies” (BR18); the *Chicago Tribune* declared: “Anaïs Nin: Many Words, Many Lovers and a Host of Lies” (Anshaw 3); the *St. Petersburg Times* announced “Unfolding an Erotic Life” (Jones 4D). In the cases when the title of the review did not refer to Nin’s lies, the opening lines usually did, such as in the *Palm Beach Post* which began thus: “Forget what you’ve read in the diaries… they were doctored before publication. . . . Nin lied all the time” (“Biography Explores” 6J). Some reviews of Bair’s biography echoed the response. *Maclean’s* announcing the review entitled “Lies and Whispers” declared Nin a “tormented author . . . addicted to sex and deceit” (Bemrose 85). The *Chicago Tribune* opened their review with the following depiction of Nin: “A compulsive liar, a legendary beauty, the author of diaries fascinating in their erotic candor and monotonous in their narcissism” (Mesic 5). *The Philadelphia Inquirer* began theirs in a similar way: “Anaïs Nin lied and fornicated the way the rest of us breathe” (Romano M01).

Although it was the appearance of unexpurgated diaries that revealed the fact that Nin concealed a lot of details regarding her life, the reviews of them did not proclaim Nin a liar the way the reviews of biographies did. This can be at least partly explained by the fact that the unexpurgated diaries were advertised as a revelation of the truth about Nin’s life and such negative words as liar were nowhere to be found, while the biographies were spiced up with many negatively tinged epithets, one of which was

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36 I hope that I disproved in Chapter Two the myth that Nin’s diaries were secret.
a liar. In her sensational introduction to her biography, Fitch asks, “Why does a writer who kept a diary all her life need a biographer?” and she answers immediately: “Because her diary is itself a work of fiction, an act of self-invention. Untrue confessions” ([original emphasis] 4). “Literary biographies,” Moran declares “often sell themselves through the promise of ‘revelations’ about their subject” ([emphasis added] 63). Sell is a key word here. Biographies of such figures as Nin thrive on scandal and controversy.

Bair too highlights Nin’s lies. Despite being more cautious and subtle than Fitch when it comes to introducing Nin, Bair does mention the fact that Nin’s diary is regarded by many as a “liary.” Although she is not the one who passes the judgment (she lets others speak instead), simply mentioning this label, Bair contributes to making it more and more attached to Nin’s name. (It is worth noting that constituting Nin as a liar gave both biographers a chance to establish themselves as necessary to the process of exposing the truth about Nin’s life.) Reviewers of biographies picked up Fitch’s and Bair’s attitudes towards their subject and reflected them in the evaluation of the biographies. Fitch and Bair, and those who reviewed their biographies, contributed therefore to establishing another posthumous portrait of Nin – Nin as a compulsive liar.

From a Famous Writer to a Major Minor One

The eroticisation and pathologization of Nin, made evident above, deflected attention from Nin the writer. *Diary VII* was the last volume which followed the pattern set up by Nin during her lifetime and which gave prominence to her as a writer, despite the fact that it was published posthumously in 1980. I mentioned earlier in this chapter that *Diary VII* portrayed Nin as a women’s representative. However, the portrait that dominates *Diary VII* is that of Nin the famous writer.

In the seventh instalment, Nin recounts her success and comments on her new status – that of the celebrated person. At the beginning of her success Nin reacts very positively to it. She is glad to be finally appreciated. She notes, for example, “I face the love, tributes I receive with pleasure. I am like a new woman, born with the publication of the Diary” (D VII 35). Nin is depicted as an extremely busy public person. She reports on her eventful schedule, sometimes going as far as enumerating the places where she has lectured. She provides accounts of her interviews, book-signing tours, and her appearances on TV shows. She mentions good reviews and
colleges where her books are taught. She emphasises her lack of time in a few letters to her friends, which are included in *Diary VII*. In one of them, Nin apologises for not replying and she explains, “As a writer you sing your ballad, and suddenly when the world answers, it overwhelms you! I lecture and the students treat me like the Beatles! I am swamped in correspondence” (71). Commenting on her trip to Germany, she relates a very positive experience of being treated like a celebrity. She enjoys her popularity immensely and describes how in Germany she has been dealt with like a star: “How they treat their writers! Like movie stars. My hand has been kissed to shreds. Flowers in the room” (118). Nin feels like a celebrity.

This initial enthusiasm, however, quickly wears off, and Nin becomes tired of public life. It is the opposite of everything she believes in: “The lectures are frustrating. . . . They are the opposite of personal and intimate friendship” (126). Eventually, she describes her popularity as a snare. She writes in a letter to a friend, “Recognition has come this year with a tidal wave of letters, lectures, work. I work from seven a.m. to midnight! A new kind of trap –fame!” (167). She becomes troubled by her popularity. Fame, and the new duties it brings, overwhelms her. At the same time, Nin wants to be recognised not only by ordinary readers. She craves for a more prestigious form of acknowledgment. In a letter to Harry Moore, she notes, “It seems to me I have done enough work [as a writer], yet I have nothing to show for it. At sixty-seven should I not be considered by the National Institute of Arts?” (159).

The photographs that accompany *Diary VII* do not however portray these doubts and frustrations and they show Nin in the swing of fame: always well-dressed, well-groomed, smiling, looking dignified and youthful. In some pictures Nin is caught in the middle of giving a speech. Some of these occasions are formal, others look more like small, private gatherings. There are three pictures that depict Nin on stage, addressing the audience, although the audience is either not visible at all, or hardly discernible, as in the picture of a talk in St. Clement’s Church in New York. In this particular picture Nin speaks from the altar. The inside of the church is plunged into darkness and only Nin is in the spotlight. She wears a long, light-coloured dress and looks more like an actress or a singer in the middle of a performance, than a person giving a talk. There are also two pictures that depict a more relaxed and informal Nin: one is captioned “With students, at home in Los Angeles, 1973,” another “At an Esalen Institute seminar, 1972.” In both photographs Nin sits on the floor surrounded by her listeners. In the former she wears a long, hippie-style dress, and smiling, she looks directly into
the camera. In the latter, she is shown engaging with her audience. Her gestures and her facial expression suggest that she is in the middle of explaining something. Nin is caught in the middle of her performance.

Photographs from her lecturing tours are not the only ones that portray the famous Nin. There is also a picture of Nin wearing an academic gown, taken during the ceremony of granting her a honorary degree in Dartmouth College in 1974. There are also three photos taken, as their captions suggest, during a session for German television. One shows Nin with Jeannie Moreau, a star of the French cinema, another with Michel Simon, a Swiss actor. Nin’s celebrity therefore crosses national and professional borders, as she not only mingles with fellow writers but also with film stars. What is more, in these pictures, she wears her long, dark cape that became her signature garment. The cape is also featured in another photograph included in *Diary VII*. Taken by Jill Krementz, this picture of Nin walking in New York wearing a cape was reproduced by some newspapers. These portraits of Nin in the cape strengthen her self-portrayal as a unique individual and unconventional artist (see fig. 4.14).

![Fig. 4.14 Nin wearing a cape](image)

*Diary VII* was the last publication coming from the Nin estate that focused on Nin the writer rather than on her private life. The seventh volume continued the portrait of Nin that she highlighted during her lifetime and portrayed her mainly as a writer, a
writer who after long years of obscurity became renowned. With the publication of the unexpurgated series (between the years 1986-1996), this focus shifted towards Nin’s personal life. This, in turn, made Nin into a controversial figure. For instance, both of Nin’s biographers describe the extreme reactions the mention of Nin provoked among people interviewed during their research. Fitch writes that, “Much like her first liberator, D. H. Lawrence, she inspires extremes of attack and adoration. . . . For every acquaintance who called her calculating, dishonest and narcissistic, there are two who testify to her charm, wit and unselfishness” (5). In a similar vein, Bair observes, “I tried to talk to the many persons who figured throughout her life, and I was astonished at the range of their responses, especially how, in so many cases, the mere mention of her name provoked vehemence and outrage” (xv).

Moreover, Bair mentions that during the writing process many of the people she encountered expressed the opinion that Nin did not deserve a biography. Giving reasons why she found Nin worthwhile, she writes:

The twentieth century will be remembered for many concepts that brought sweeping societal change, and Anaïs Nin was among the pioneers who explored three of the most important: sex, the self, and psychoanalysis. When future generations seek to understand how these evolved in our time, Anaïs Nin will be the major minor writer whose work they must consult. (xviii)

So, within a decade, Nin turned from a successful writer of *Diary VII* into a “major minor writer,” whose works are worthwhile only as a reflection of their times. This view is later reiterated by Podnieks who comparing Nin to Woolf regards these authors as the opposite ends of the spectrum: while “Woolf is one of the most respected writers, and probably the most well respected female writer, of the twentieth-century English literature. . . . Nin is a minor one” (9).

As a result, some critics taking on Nin’s output as a subject of their analyses distance themselves from Nin. This can be seen in a statement made by Wendy DuBow in a collection of memoirs, *Anaïs Nin: A Book of Mirrors* (1996). Wendy DuBow, who wrote a doctoral dissertation on Nin and edited a collection of interviews with her, makes sure that she is not mistaken for a Nin-lover. She writes: “For me, working on Nin wasn’t a question of love, or even like, after the first month; it was about intellectual challenge. I’m fascinated by the thoughts her writing prompts for me. But mostly she embarrasses me. I feel for her at times like I do for bad comedians: they
seem like nice enough people but I cringe watching them bomb onstage” (“Ninny or Not” 191). Commenting on DuBow’s account, Nancy Gobatto rightly observes, “DuBow’s stance on Nin reveals the current academic bias against studying Anaïs Nin and her work, . . . If an academic feminist who has dedicated a significant amount of her career studying Nin still feels she must qualify this decision, one can imagine what the non-Nin scholars have to say about Nin as the focus of academic inquiry” (53). It indeed seems that critics are worried about their own reputation when dealing with Nin.

**Conclusion**

Three interesting conclusions emerge from this chapter. First, in Nin’s afterlife, her portraits proliferated. While the seven original volumes of the *Diary* developed a set of very controlled images of Nin, which are reflected in her formal photographs, over the whole series of *Diaries* her images start to ‘spill out’, giving rise to a multiplicity of ‘Nins.’ The series of four unexpurgated *Diaries* introduced a set of new Nins, such as Nin the wife or Nin the lover. Later, published biographies further expanded images of Nin, adding for example Nin the trauma survivor, Nin the liar or Nin the bigamist. The reviews of biographies alone reveal the multiplicity of images of Nin circulating in our culture. Depending on which Nin a reviewer decided to highlight in his or her review, there is Nin: “a compulsive liar, a legendary beauty, the author of the diaries” (Mesic, *Chicago Tribune* 5); Nin a “courtesan” and “eccentric Donna Juana” (Romano, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* M01); Nin “the former feminist icon” (“Bair, Deirdre,” *Kirkus Reviews* n.pag.); Nin “a poignantly bewitching female” (Arana-Ward, *The Washington Post* X03); Nin “the Samuel Pepys of the 20th century” (Jones, *St. Petersburg Times* 4D); Nin “Modern’s letters’ most famous diarist . . . a monster of self-absorption, power seduction, larcenous deception both petty and grand” (Anshaw, *Chicago Tribune* 3); Nin “the famous femme fatale”, “a writer of erotica”, “the ultimate 20th-century diarist” (Katz, *The Boston Herald* 60).

Second, after Nin’s death, her self-presentation was to a large extent overridden by a set of new portraits. Certain aspects of Nin’s life and writings (for obvious reasons they are very intermingled) were taken up more readily than others, thus fixing her in a certain type of femininity, and consequently casting her as a minor writer. Two portraits of Nin in particular have been very powerful in Nin’s afterlife: the erotic Nin and Nin the trauma survivor. Both demonstrate that Nin’s afterlife becomes
increasingly dependent on the revelation of the sensational material regarding her private life. Both also show that Nin became a polysemic figure, capable of producing multiple meanings, and signifying different things for different people.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated the interplay between the individual and her culture. The section on Anaïs Nin as a trauma survivor has provided a particularly effective illustration of a cultural convergence. It has shown that the phenomenon of the Memory War played a significant part in the construction of Anaïs Nin as a victim of child abuse. The formation of the Nin public persona reflects therefore the changing culture of American society.
CONCLUSION: ANAÏS NIN – INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The theoretical framework employed in this study – the convergence of autobiography and celebrity culture studies – has demonstrated that these two disciplines have much to offer to each other in terms of an efficient examination of the public personae. Whereas autobiography theory provides insights into the creation of the self by the person concerned, theories of celebrity culture highlight the importance of the media to the construction of the public personality. And while autobiography studies facilitate an in-depth examination of autobiographical narratives (such as diaries), a cultural approach encourages the analysis of texts which literary studies, for instance, consider as auxiliary and secondary (such as biographies, reviews, films). This theoretical framework has proved useful and is especially applicable to the analysis of the public persona of writers and artists, but also of any individual who is involved in any form of autobiographical self-expression (read self-construction).

This thesis has demonstrated how Nin’s public persona has been created in the United States since 1966, and it has indicated how this creation has affected the reception of Nin’s writings. Nin became an object of an intensified media attention during two periods – in the 1960s/1970s and later in the 1990s. As the analysis of the first six volumes of the Diary has shown, and the examination of Nin’s interaction with her audience in the 1960s/1970s confirmed, Nin presented herself mainly as an artist and her idea of what it meant to be an artist was deeply nourished by the romantic notions of the artist as a special individual. She also gradually developed her status as a representative of women. So, at the naissance of the women’s movement, Nin entered the public sphere as a writer and the role model for women. And, as her obituaries suggest, she died as one, too.\textsuperscript{37}

A backlash against Nin occurred in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, especially in feminist circles, when the unexpurgated diaries were published and it became obvious that Nin had considerably embellished her life. The disclosure of a third-trimester abortion, which Nin earlier depicted as a stillbirth, seemed to be particularly controversial and difficult to forgive. This disillusionment with Nin has exposed the importance of trust, or of, in Philippe Lejeune’s words, the “autobiographical contract”\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{37} The \textit{New York Times} entitled their obituary “Anaïs Nin, Author whose Diaries Depicted Intellectual Life, Dead;” The \textit{Los Angeles Times} entitled theirs “Anaïs Nin Dies: Noted as Writer and Feminist;” and the \textit{Washington Times} announced in a similar way, “Author, Diarist, Dies at 73”
between the writer and her readers and the dire consequences when this trust is betrayed, thus teaching us something about the way we read life narratives and the roles we assign to cultural icons. The emotional investment of Nin’s readers in her persona and her *Diary* has illustrated that her *Diary* was read not as a story but as the true story, and Nin was regarded not as a persona but as a person, and not infrequently, as a friend. The changes in readers’ attitudes to Nin during her afterlife have provided an instructive example of the falling out of celebrity. While celebrity culture studies deal mainly with either the rising celebrity or the established one, this study has is in a way exemplified the fall of a cultural icon.

Nin’s largely self-created persona underwent dramatic changes after her death. Despite the great variety of Nin’s posthumous portraits, two stand out in particular: the erotic Nin and Nin as a trauma survivor. The erotic Nin has been developed systematically since 1977 and the Nin Estate was particularly influential in creating this image by sharply focusing the ‘unexpurgated’ diaries on the sexual. Nin as a trauma survivor is a relatively recent construction, created in the 1990s when trauma testimonies flourished and debates about the nature of memory were on the cultural agenda. The focus (and cashing in) on the scandalous aspects of Nin’s life made her into either a curiosity or a psychological case study and as a result Nin the writer became of secondary importance.

Whereas the end of the twentieth century witnessed a revival of interest in Anaïs Nin, triggered by the publication of ‘unexpurgated’ diaries, and manifested in biographies of Nin, the film *Henry and June*, and new critical studies of Nin’s works, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw a waning in the popularity of Nin. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there was not a single event that would have the significance and/or scale of, for example, Kaufman’s film or Bair’s biography. The publication of Nin’s diaries also came to a halt: the fourth volume of the unexpurgated series, *Nearer the Moon*, released in 1996, was the last one to appear to date. However, Nin did not disappear completely from public consciousness or academic debates.

As far as Nin’s presence in popular culture is concerned, she continues to inspire various projects, but in the twenty-first century she has not yet made it to the headlines. The ventures inspired by Nin are rather small-scale and one has to look for Nin in order to find her. For instance, a feminist artist and Nin’s acquaintance, Judy Chicago, famous for her installation *The Dinner Party*, released in 2004 *Fragments from the Delta of Venus*, a collection of her sensuous watercolours that are matched with quotes
from Nin’s erotic stories. The product description on the Amazon website presents Nin as Chicago’s mentor, an “iconic erotic writer,” and “a feminist of the first wave” (advertisement of *Fragments* n.pag.). Listopad, a vintage clothing boutique that opened in 2009 in Washington, placed some photographs of Anaïs Nin on their website, dubbing her “a style icon” (“Style Icon” n.pag.). In 2010, songwriter Pam Shaffer released her debut album *As We Are* containing lyrics inspired by Nin’s *Diary*. Theatre seemed to be especially willing to appropriate Nin, as several plays about her were staged throughout America in the ‘noughties.’

In the summer of 2006, Wendy Beckett’s *Anaïs Nin: One of Her Lives* ran in New York. As Kaufman did in *Henry and June*, Beckett concentrated on Nin’s life in Paris in the early 1930s and on the love triangle between Anais, Henry and June Miller. In 2008, *Anaïs Nin Goes to Hell*, a comedy written by David Stallings, was performed to great acclaim at the New York Fringe Festival. The play, despite what the title might suggest, is not about Nin scorching in hell repenting her felonies but about her trip to inferno in the role of an advisor on men to other well-known women. The official slogan advertising the play announces: “Imagine an island in hell where Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, and Queen Victoria... wait for their men. What happens when women's lib icon Anaïs Nin arrives to turn their afterlife upside down?” (advertisement of *Anaïs Nin Goes to Hell* n.pag.). In a 2009 theatrical production entitled *The Mistress Cycle*, Nin was one of five “notorious mistresses” along with “Tess Walker, a contemporary Manhattan photographer . . . Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of King Henri II of 16th century France; Lulu White, a turn-of-the-century New Orleans bordello Madame; and Ching, a 14-year-old concubine in 12th century China” (“The Mistress Cycle” n.pag.). And finally, in 2010, Sherry Theatre in Los Angeles staged Michael Phillips’s *Anaïs: An Erotic Evening with Anaïs Nin*, “a fictional imagining of what might have happened one summer weekend in 1954, which Nin apparently does not document in her *Diary*** (Burghauser 138). The play exploits Nin’s relationship with the Millers, but in a quite innovative way. Phillips envisions that Nin spent the weekend in question with June Miller in a mental asylum, where the real-life June indeed stayed after an attempted suicide.

So nowadays Nin appears under a variety of guises in popular culture – as a feminist, a writer of erotica, an expert on men, a mistress, a fashion icon, and the Millers’ friend. However, two of her portraits seem to be reiterated especially frequently: the erotic Nin and Nin in a relationship with the Millers. The dyad Anaïs
Nin-Henry Miller has joined the list of iconic partners, such as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, or Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.\footnote{The Nin-Miller dyad is highlighted in two recent publications: Creative Collaboration (2006) by Vera John-Steiner, and Between the Sheets: The Famous Literary Liaisons of Nine 20th-century Women Writers (2010) by Leslie McDowell.}

**Future Projects**

There are a number of ways in which this study can be expanded. First of all, some parts of this thesis regarding Nin herself merit further development. For example, I have only signalled Nin’s self-promotion through promoting other writers in reviews and articles. A more detailed examination of strategies Nin used to craft her persona by endorsing other artists may produce interesting results. Or, what I attempted on a very small scale in Chapter Two, namely the comparison of Nin’s original diary to the published version, could be developed into a full-length project. Undoubtedly, Nin scholars would benefit from a critical edition of Nin’s diaries (even if limited to the years 1931-1934), similar to the critical edition of Anne Frank’s diaries, which contains three versions of her diary: Anne’s original entries, a version she edited herself and the most well-known version edited by her father. An equivalent edition of Nin’s diaries would enable new research, as currently if one wants to undertake the comparison of Nin’s manuscripts to the published diaries, one has to visit the Nin archive in Los Angeles. The existence of a critical edition would allow scholars outside the United States to engage in a debate on Anaïs Nin more actively. (Although I am aware that the desire for such a collection also reflects the search for the ‘real’ Anais Nin.)

Another possible line of inquiry is the examination of the intercultural Nin. Nin has been popular in France, arguably because she was a French-born writer who spent a considerable part of her life in the country, and there has been a particularly strong interest in Nin in Japan as Nin’s fiction corresponds with Japanese sensibilities and literary traditions. It would be therefore worthwhile to follow Nin’s reception in these countries in order to see how it compares to her status in the United States. A reader response-based projects also might be beneficial. For instance, a survey of who teaches Nin in the United States and which of her works are part of the curriculum would bring Nin’s academic status up to date and would allow us to see whether and to what extent Nin is popular nowadays. Or, it would be interesting to interview Nin’s ‘ordinary’
readers to find out who reads Nin nowadays, how she is encountered, which of her works are most popular and what she is valued and liked for, because although there is a plethora of memoirs of Nin, they have been authored by people who either knew Nin personally or dealt with her professionally, or both.

Finally, as new developments in autobiography studies emerge, such as the inclusion of research from the fields of neurobiology or developmental psychology, Nin’s writings will warrant re-examination. Suzanne Nalbantian’s study *Memory in Literature: From Rousseau to Neuroscience* (2003), part of which is devoted to the analysis of Nin’s novelette *Seduction of the Minotaur*, is a good example of possible future directions in Nin criticism and in autobiography studies. In her book, Nalbantian explores the intersection between literature and new research on memory informed by neuroscience. Such new interdisciplinary combinations, which go beyond the well-established junctions of cross-disciplinary research, such as literature and psychology or literature and philosophy, and incorporate findings from such disciplines as medicine or science, together with further developments in autobiography theories, should encourage critics to reach for Nin’s writings as their examination will certainly promote a better understanding of ourselves and cultures we live in.

In addition to possible future projects on Nin herself, the issues this thesis raises regarding women writers and celebrity authorship also merit further study. This case study, like those of the writers and artists discussed by Brenda Silver, Andrea Noble, and Charlotte Templin, confirms the many ways in which specific women artists have acted as screens upon which variety of cultural anxieties are played out. In Nin’s case, questions of female sexuality, its relationship to femininity and to feminism, and questions of authenticity and integrity (as an artist and as a person) seem especially important. Nin raises some difficult questions, such as: how we should view a woman (writer) who actively intervenes in her public persona; who edits and reframes her life; and who both offers personal information for public consumption and reframes it to remain appealing for her audience. The position of women writers in celebrity culture and the role of fame in their lives and literary careers also deserves further attention, as only a handful of studies on the subject exists.³⁹ Such research projects seem particularly thought-provoking because celebrity is played out in the public arena, while

³⁹ Apart from books mentioned in this thesis, there are a few very recent publications, such as: *Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture between the Wars* (2007) by Faye Hammill; *Gertrude Stein and the Making of an American Celebrity* (2009) by Karen Leick; and * Literary Celebrity. Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914* (2011) by Alexis Easley.
women (writers) have been traditionally confined to and associated with the private sphere. Celebrity authorship raises other interesting questions, applicable to both men and women writers alike, namely the questions of privacy and property. How much is the author of the life narrative obliged to expose and how much can s/he keep secret? – is one of those questions. There is also a pertinent issue regarding the posthumous privacy of the writers and ownership of their works. We need to consider how we should handle the output of the writers after their death and how much intervention in editing their works is ethical.
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APPENDIX A: ANAÏS NIN CHRONOLOGY

1903 Anaïs Nin is born on 21 February in Neuilly, France, to Joaquin Nin y Castellanos (Cuban (mother) – Spanish (father) origin) and Rosa Culmell y Vaurigaud (Danish (father) French – Cuban (mother) origin).

1913 Her father deserts the family.

1914 Nin with her mother and two brothers moves to New York. She starts her diary on the ship.

1923 Marries Hugh Parker Guiler.

1924 Nin and her husband arrive to Paris.

1931 Nin meets Henry Miller and his wife, June.


1933 Changes her psychoanalyst to Dr Otto Rank. Nin begins a sexual relationship with her father.

1934 Writes preface to Miller’s Tropic of Cancer. Gets an abortion. Follows Rank to New York and works there as a psychoanalyst.

1935 Returns to Paris.

1936 Self-publishes House of Incest through Siana Editions.


1944 Prints Under a Glass Bell.

1946 Ladders to Fire (vol. I of her continuous novel Cities of the Interior) and the pamphlet Realism and Reality published.


1949 Her father dies in Cuba.

1950 The Four-Chambered House (vol. III of Cities of Interior) published.


1955 She marries Rupert Pole, thus committing bigamy.

1964 Collages published.


1968 The Novel of the Future published. First book-length critical work on Nin’s fiction appears (by Oliver Evans)


1970 Richard Centing starts newsletter Under the Sign of Pisces: Anais Nin and her Circle


1979 The second volume of the erotica, Little Birds, published.


1985 Volume IV of the Early Diaries published

1986 Henry and June – the first out of four unexpurgated diaries known as the series Journal of Love – published.


1990 Philip Kaufman’s film Henry and June based on Nin’s diary released.
1993  Noel Fitch’s biography *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* is published.
1995  Deirdre Bair’s biography released.