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***Touching Stories: performances of
intimacy in the diary of Anaïs Nin.***

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

Preface.

My thesis re-situates the diarist and fiction writer Anaïs Nin within the fields of life-writing criticism, modernist studies, and intimacy studies by reading her diaries as performing, producing and inviting various intimate affects. This thesis focuses mainly on Nin's edited and unexpurgated published diaries and also draws on material gathered from the Anaïs Nin Special Collection at the Charles E. Young Library, based at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Chapter 1 argues that Nin figures the diary as a space for fantasies of intimacy. Using the Communion as an integral part of these fantasies, Nin imagines scenes of interembodiment and intersubjectivity with her father that rely as much on his absence as on his presence. Performing an intimate relationship with her father, Nin also uses the diary to write her subjectivity as 'in-relation.' Chapter 2 considers Nin's intimate relationships with other writers and artists in the 1930s, namely D.H. Lawrence. I argue that, by writing herself into an intimate relationship with Lawrence, Nin fashions and performs an artistic identity, working within and also resisting a modernist poetics of impersonality and objectivity. As such, this chapter calls for a revaluation of Nin as a modernist writer which attends to recent critical accounts of the importance of life-writing within modernism. Chapter 3 reads Nin's 'Father Story,' an account in the diary of a brief affair Nin had with her father in her early thirties. I use the figure of seduction to argue that Nin's story resists a close reading and to critique various critical readings of this story in the 1990s which are underpinned by critical anxiety about the 'right' way to read incest. For many critics, Nin's 'Father Story' is too literary, rendering both it, and her, as inauthentic. Chapter 4 explores the intersections between Nin's diary and psychoanalysis. This chapter argues that Nin confuses the languages of sexual and psychoanalytic intimacy in ways that lead us to question the distance between sex and analysis. Nin uses psychoanalysis as another tool for dramatizing her life through art and another stage on which to perform intimacy. Chapter 5 considers the publication of the edited diary in the late 1960s-1970s, which coincided with a growing interest in women's life-writing as a representation of authentic, collective experience. This chapter argues that Nin performed intimacy in public with her readers, whilst all the time holding her private self at a distance.

Acknowledgements.

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Pamela Thurschwell who has been incredibly helpful and supportive throughout the process of writing this thesis – providing encouragement, laughs and an office for the year. I would also like to thank Vicky Lebeau, who supervised the beginning of this project, and Sara Crangle, who was an oasis of calm at its end. Thanks also to the School of English at Sussex University for their support. The funding I received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council made the writing of this thesis, and a trip to the Anaïs Nin Special Collection in UCLA possible. I would also like to thank those at the archive, particularly Robert Montoya who was always on hand to help.

A conversation with Clair Morrow initiated this project. For that, and a million other acts of friendship, I am very grateful. I would also like to especially thank Karen Schaller for reading and commenting on large sections of this project with massive intelligence, insight and patience. My other thanks go to Lucy Robinson, Tatiana Kontou, Seda Ilter, Laura Hockenhull, Ian Coleman, Jana Funke, Liz Sage, Robyn Dillon, Kathy Sleigh, Tristine Rainer, Simon-Dwight Du Sabour d'Houbeic and Shamira Meghani for variously providing tea, sympathy and encouragement.

Two DPhils in one house was never going to be easy, but Nikolas Funke made it pleausurably possible – even when tested. For that and a myriad other things, all my thanks, appreciation and love go to him. Thanks also to my grandma, Despina Mudie, stepmother Hilary Charnock and the rest of my family.

The support, wisdom, and generosity of my parents, Laura Pavlou-Mudie and Mike Charnock has been immeasurable. As such, this thesis is for them.

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Introduction.

In her 1938 short story 'The Paper Womb,'¹ Anaïs Nin writes about writing:

I was eleven years old when I walked into the labyrinth of my diary which I carried in a little basket. I climbed the moldy steps of a Spanish garden and came upon boxed streets in neat order in a backyard of a house in New York. I walked protected by dark green shadows and followed a design I was sure to remember. I wanted to remember in order to be able to return. As I walked I walked with the desire to see all things so as to find my way back into them again [...] I did not count the turns, the chess moves, the meditated displacements, the obsessional repetitions [...] There was always an anguish about returning, and about seeing these things but once. There was a definite feeling that their meaning, their color, and their fleshiness of touch could only happen the second time.²

We know this story already. Its images are familiar and well-worn - the girl with her basket, the backyard, the labyrinth - that mixture of the domestic and the strange conjured by the fairytale. Probably the little girl will come across a wolf at some point, or a Minotaur, before she manages to find her way out of the labyrinth.

But we don't know this story. We are accustomed to reading the labyrinth as threatening, unknowable; representing what Ilana Shiloh calls 'the danger of inextricability, of eternal imprisonment.'³ Yet Nin follows 'a design [she is] sure to remember' not so as to escape from the labyrinth but so she can retrace her steps, so she can see things more than once. Nin is 'anguished,' not by the prospect that she will not escape from the diary-labyrinth, but that she won't be able to remember her journey through it. She wants 'to remember in order to be able to return.' The desire for the diary is born from Nin's feeling that there is something tactile and tangible about the act of writing. Writing allows her to feel her experiences because it allows her to return to them. It is the diary that makes these experiences material. Nin moves through the diary. She feels her way through it, touching and touched by its meaning.

'The Paper Womb' is a story about intimacy and an intimate story. Its concerns are those that intimacy holds near: protection, closeness, touching, skin, and interiority. Reading 'The Paper Womb,' whose very title tells us that there is something intimate about the act of writing for Nin, we are led towards the following questions. Can writing be intimate? Can writing feel, as well as making us feel? If one can get lost in writing,

¹ Later published as 'The Labyrinth.'

² Anaïs Nin, 'The Paper Womb,' proof copy, printed in *Booster* magazine, December-January, 1938, (Collection 2066: Box 19 F7).

³ Ilana Shiloh, *The Double, the Labyrinth and the Locked Room: Metaphors of Paradox in Crime Fiction and Film* (New York: Peter Lang Ltd., 2011), 92.

can one also be found there?

This thesis contends that Nin's diary performs intimacy.⁴ Such performances range from kinds of textual intimacy - the feeling of words on the page, the act of close reading, writing which seeks contact with other kinds of writing⁵ - to scenes of intimacy in the bedroom, the café, the analysis room, and the lecture theatre. In each scene, Nin performs intimacy to a different affect and effect.

My choice of the phrase 'performances of intimacy' which recurs throughout this thesis, speaks to the logic that intimacy is a construction, one which moves through certain gestures, types of language and situations.⁶ Nin's intimate performances reveal intimacy's constructions, with the attendant and often anxiety-inducing possibility that intimacy can be 'faked,' mimicked and used to manipulate others. Such anxiety is particularly on display in Chapter 5 of this thesis, where certain readers respond uneasily to Nin's intimate yet public performances.

Intimacy demands that 'we are who we say we are,' yet it is constantly on the brink of being undermined by our inherent alterity from each other and from our selves. Richard Sennett's thoughts on expression could as well be applied to intimacy: '[e]xpression is made contingent upon authentic feeling, but one is always plunged into the narcissistic problem of never being able to crystallize what is authentic about one's feelings.'⁷ To quote Sennett, as readers we are unable to 'crystallize what is authentic' about Nin's feelings or, most importantly for this project, the ways in which she expresses them. Nin's diary poses a series of challenges to intimacy's investment in authenticity.

This thesis is not primarily concerned with what is 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' about Nin's feelings. Rather, it is concerned with the readings of authenticity or inauthenticity that have been projected on to Nin's diary, and in using such readings to interrogate the ways that Nin's intimate performances disrupt and challenge the very

⁴ I turn to work by Nin outside of the diary on occasion, especially in chapters 2 and 5, but the diary is my primary source.

⁵ We see this in particular in Chapter Two, where Nin adopts and reworks the ideas and language of D.H. Lawrence.

⁶ Lauren Berlant has theorised intimacy in this way, both in *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* and in her introduction to *Intimacy* (see details below). For a compelling account of how emotions move between bodies, see Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁷ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), 267.

notion of authenticity.⁸ Often critical and readerly anxieties about the authenticity of the diary have clustered around Nin's writing style and method. In Chapter 3, we see how Nin's depiction of her incestuous relationship with her father rankled with reviewers of the unexpurgated diary in the 1990s, who read Nin's 'Father Story' as literary, embellished, and excessive on all fronts.⁹ They read both the story and Nin as inauthentic. In Chapter 5, we see how readers of the edited diary needed to be convinced that Nin had neither edited nor rewritten the diary for publication. To invest in Nin as a writer and public figure, readers in the 1970s had to believe that the diary was written privately, honestly, and without an audience in mind.

Much of the critical work produced on Nin in the last twenty years has concerned itself with 'rescuing' Nin's reputation from those who would besmirch it.¹⁰ The publication of the unexpurgated volumes, beginning in the mid-1980s, regenerated critical and popular interest in Nin's diary. However, as I argue in Chapter 3, reviewers of the unexpurgated diary often came to the conclusion that Nin was not to be taken seriously, either as a literary or a life-writer.¹¹ As such, Nin's critical reputation suffered during the 1990s. Suzanne Nalbantian, one of the most prolific and prominent critics of Nin's work, has argued that Nin's reputation was also negatively affected by the three (and only) Nin biographies published in the 1990s.¹² Nalbantian calls for a revaluation of the 'aesthetic dimension'¹³ of Nin's work, which would more appropriately recognise her contribution to literature. Yet, as Phillip K. Jason writes, 'for many who have considered her career, Nin the personage, the personality, is of greater consequence than

⁸ Authenticity is a notion which crosses the boundaries between feminism, intimacy studies and life-writing.

⁹ Reviews of the 'Father Story' often describe Nin as excessively sexual, and her writing as overly stylized, with the implication that one kind of excess impacts upon the other. See Chapter 3.

¹⁰ Helen Tookey also uses this notion of 'rescuing' Nin with regards to the critical resituation of Nin as a modernist writer. See Helen Tookey, *Anaïs Nin, Fictionality and Femininity: Playing a Thousand Roles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 2. Other critics who have invested in 'rescuing' Nin from various accusations of dishonesty, nymphomania and inauthenticity include Suzette Henke, Valerie Harms and Sharon Spencer, all of whom feature in Suzanne Nalbantian's edited essay collection *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1997).

¹¹ Suzette Henke's work on Nin, in particular, presents Nin as an incest victim, who used writing in the diary to overcome the trauma of these experiences. See Suzette Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Women's Life-Writing and Narrative Recovery* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), and 'Anaïs Nin's *Journal of Love: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire*,' in *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives*, 120-39.

¹² Deirdre Bair's *Anaïs Nin: A Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), Noël Riley Fitch's *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), and Linde Salber's *Tausendundeine Frau: die Geschichte der Anaïs Nin* (Wunderlich, 1995), which has not been translated into English.

¹³ Nalbantian, xiii.

Nin the artist.’¹⁴ Readers have been captured by the intimate details in the unexpurgated diary: the incest, the abortions, the affairs, the lies and intrigue. This thesis contends that we should read the intimate in Nin’s diary as that which is also artistic, and vice-versa. The intimate and the artistic are inextricable in Nin’s corpus.

Arguably, two books in the early 2000s marked a sea-change in Nin studies: Elizabeth Podnieks’ *Daily Modernism: the Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anaïs Nin*, and Helen Tookey’s *Anaïs Nin, Fictionality and Femininity: Playing A Thousand Roles*. Both are texts interested in what Tookey calls the ‘versioning’¹⁵ 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.’¹⁶ Podnieks situates Nin as a modernist diarist alongside Elizabeth Smart, Antonia White and Virginia Woolf, whilst attending to the combination of fiction and autobiography (or ‘autobiografiction,’ to use Max Saunders’ phrase¹⁷) in Nin’s diary, generating new points of contact and intimacy with other female modernist diarists.¹⁸ Helen Tookey reads the different fictions that made up Nin’s identity, the ‘thousand roles,’ that Nin played, underpinned by questions of ‘women’s subjectivity and identity.’¹⁹ Neither of these texts invests in value judgments about the authenticity or inauthenticity of Nin’s diary as an object. Rather, both Podnieks and Tookey interrogate the narratives that shape the diary and Nin’s identity.

Three critics in particular, have attended to the performative qualities of Nin’s work. Elizabeth Podnieks has likened Nin’s diary to Antonin Artaud’s ‘Theatre of Cruelty,’²⁰ comparing it to the ‘gestures’ of absurdist theatre.²¹ Nin creates a ‘drama of incest’²² with her father, where she ‘figures as both the performer and the spectator.’²³ Chapter 3 expands upon Podnieks’ insightful work, to think more closely about

¹⁴ Phillip K. Jason, Introduction to *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin*, ed. Philip K. Jason (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁵ Tookey, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Cf. Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2010).

¹⁸ Such combinations had been previously under-explored, as Tookey also argues.

¹⁹ Tookey, 2.

²⁰ Elizabeth Podnieks, *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth*

Smart, and Anaïs Nin (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 322-33.

²¹ Ibid, 325.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 326.

seduction as a performance which aims to keep intimacy at bay.²⁴ Elyse Lamm Pineau has also theorised what she refers to as Nin's 'autobiographical performances',²⁵ which 'remain largely untapped by either performance scholars or Nin enthusiasts,'²⁶ an oversight that this thesis aims to correct. Chapter 5 will consider these performances, drawing on Lauren Berlant's recent work on the intimate public to unpack and interrogate the narratives produced by these performances. More broadly, Helen Tookey has used Judith Butler's²⁷ theory of the performativity of gender to consider Nin's performances of femininity,²⁸ arguing that Nin 'sees identity [...] as a series of enactments and stylizations.'²⁹

Intimacy as an affect circulates differently within different narratives: psychoanalysis, feminism, literary criticism, life-writing theory, and cultural studies. All of these narratives underpin and shape this thesis. Coming into contact with Nin's work and critical responses to it, we also find new points of contact between these narratives. As Helen Tookey has written '[both] as a "real woman" and as a set of representations, Anaïs Nin moved (and moves) across various cultural, historical, and geographical contexts.'³⁰ I would add that Nin not only moves across these contexts but disrupts them. As a psychoanalytic subject, a feminist, a daughter, and a writer, to name just a few of Nin's roles, she resists conventional wisdom, bucks against rules, and breaks taboos.

This thesis represents both a continuation of and a departure from the existing critical readings of Nin and her diary. Although there have been some fascinating and insightful readings of Nin and her diary, critics have occasionally become preoccupied by 'claiming' Nin in one way or another - whether as an artist, a diarist, a feminist, a modernist, or a psychoanalytic subject. This thesis contends that, in order to read Nin anew, we need to attend to all of these roles, and the points of contact between them.

'To intimate' and 'to be intimate' are the two notions that circulate and touch

²⁴ Whilst Podnieks writes about Nin as a seductive figure with regards to the 'Father Story,' she does not attend to the story itself as a seductive text.

²⁵ Elyse Lamm Pineau, 'A Mirror of Her Own: Anaïs Nin's Autobiographical Performances,' in *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin*, ed. Philip K. Jason, 233.

²⁶ Pineau, 234.

²⁷ Tookey particularly draws on Butler's field-defining text *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

²⁸ Tookey, 179-81.

²⁹ Tookey, 208.

³⁰ Tookey, 3.

within this thesis. The first, ‘to intimate’ means both ‘to make known formally, to notify, announce, state’ and ‘to make known or communicate by any means however indirect; hence, to signify, indicate; to imply, to suggest, hint at.’³¹ Intimating, then, one speaks with explicitness or implicitness. One announces or suggests. Both valences of ‘to intimate’ hinge upon the action of making something known, although the means by which this ‘something’ is made known differ, depending on what kind of intimating one is doing. The first definition of ‘to intimate’ delivers knowledge explicitly, the second, implicitly. This first kind of intimating, where one ‘makes known formally,’ speaks to intimation as a public act, one which might not seem to belong to the domain of intimacy.³² However, to intimate in this way – to notify, announce, or state – also suggests the work of confession, where one is called upon to speak plainly, honestly and intimately. ‘To intimate’ as an act of announcement, holds the possibility of public formality, but also relies on the notions of truth, authenticity and explicitness that stick to the idea of intimacy.³³

The second kind of intimating, where one makes something known however indirectly, more obviously speaks to an intimate speech act. If one is hinting, suggesting, and implying, one requires a listener with the sensitivity of ear to get the hint, to interpret the suggestion, and to understand the implication without being explicitly told. ‘Getting the hint’ is a form of sympathy with another, it says: “I understand you and what you are hinting, without you having to spell it out.” It is an affirmation of, if not a shared language, then the possibility of interpretation and translation. Yet this version of intimating also suggests a way for the speaker to keep the listener (or for the writer to keep the reader) at bay. By holding back from telling all, one keeps oneself apart and at a distance. One resists a full revelation, which brings with it the possibilities of greater closeness, honesty, and vulnerability to another: the possibilities of intimacy. Intimating in this way, where one suggests, hints or implies rather than explicitly tells, produces varying degrees of proximity between the listener and speaker. Either I intimate because I rely on the fact that you will get my explicit meaning without my having to explicate it, or I intimate because I do not want (for

³¹ Definitions taken from: www.oed.com. Last accessed 25 May, 2011.

³² However, there is a growing tendency to think about intimacy as something that takes place in public as well as in private, and as an act that could disrupt the boundaries between these spheres.

³³ For this notion of how ideas ‘stick’ to each other, I am indebted to Sara Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

whatever reason) to be explicit with you.

Whilst a ‘formal announcement’ suggests knowledge made public, the suggestion, implication and hint suggest knowledge for the privileged few – those who can read the intimation, those who get the hint. This second meaning of ‘to intimate’ connects most obviously with the intimate as a notion typically read as private, exclusive, and familiar. Yet the first meaning of ‘to intimate’ also leads us to the realm of the intimate, as the explicit intimation signifies the forthrightness and honesty connoted by one construction of intimacy. ‘To intimate,’ then, is both an inclusive and exclusive act. Intimacy as a state or way of being operates through a similar logic of inclusion and exclusion. For one to engage or enter intimately into a thing (whatever that thing may be) one has to first move from a position of extimacy in relation to it. To move inside, one has to originally be on the outside. That is, the intimate relies on the extimate.³⁴

That which is intimate is defined as that which is ‘inmost, most inward, deep-seated.’³⁵ A fundamentally structuring idea of intimacy is that objects have insides and depths, whether these objects are people, bodies, or texts (to name the objects at stake in this thesis), and that these insides and depths are both accessible and recognizable. The notion of the intimate as that which is ‘inmost, most inward, [most] deep-seated,’ depends then on ideas of interiority and exteriority, depth and surface. Intimacy often constructs and performs itself in language through spatial metaphors.³⁶ An intimate friend is one who is ‘close’ to us and us to them. When a relationship is failing to produce the desired level of intimacy, we feel ‘distant’ from the other, or we perceive that they act ‘distantly’ towards us. Intimacy works through narratives of proximity, although this proximity does not have to be figured through the physical closeness of one body to another. It is enough that proximity is imagined, as we see in Chapter 1 of this thesis, when Nin fantasises that her father is present, despite the reality of his absence.

Intimacy suggests contact, connection, and contiguity – bodies touching,

³⁴ It is not within the scope of this project to directly theorise extimacy, although, of course, one cannot think about intimacy without also thinking about extimacy. However, for more thorough theorisations of extimacy see Joan Copjec’s *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), and Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits. A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977).

³⁵ www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 20, 2011.

³⁶ In Chapter 4, I also consider how Nin’s performances of intimacy within the diary rely on hydraulics metaphors, images of flow, and over-flowing.

personal and public modes of attachment, associations made and bonds formed.³⁷ Being intimate with another, we allow them to touch us in all manner of ways. Touched by another, we also touch in return, suggesting that, following Merleau-Ponty, there is something ‘reversible’³⁸ about intimacy – that when one is intimate with us, we are, *de facto*, intimate with them. Recent work on intimacy has connected ideas about the skin, affect and touch to argue for an embodied and interembodied reading of subjectivity.³⁹ As Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey write in the introduction to their exemplary collection *Thinking Through the Skin*, “[thinking] through the skin” is a thinking that reflects [...] on inter-embodiment, on the mode of being-with and being for, where one touches and is touched by others.’⁴⁰ Thinking through the skin, one is inevitably thinking about intimacy and intimation. ‘To intimate’ has as its etymological roots ‘to put or bring into, drive or press into - making an impression, touching, contact, penetrability,’ all terms used to think about and through the skin.⁴¹ I draw particularly on these critical interests in boundaries, touching, and inter-embodiment in Chapter 1 of this thesis, where Nin imagines inter-embodiment with her father. The interpenetrative act of the communion becomes a site of fantasy for Nin, one which relies on her father’s distance and alterity. Thinking, or fantasising through the skin, Nin imagines herself making the kind of impression on her father that she is unable to make in reality.

Writing intimacy inevitably involves writing the body. In this thesis, Nin comes into contact with many different physical bodies, as well as with other kinds of bodies - professional, public and her own body of work. Critics have also been preoccupied with Nin’s body, its appearance, its gestures, its appeal.⁴² Nin’s body has been read as a justification for her cultural relevance, but also as a site of alterity and excess.⁴³ Each

³⁷ See Lauren Berlant’s work on the intimate public in *The Female Complaint* for one compelling account of how people become attached to each other in public.

³⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 142.

³⁹ I am thinking in particular of the essay collection *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), *The Book of Touch*, ed. Constance Classen (Oxford: Berg, 2005), Steven Connor’s *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), Renu Bora’s essay ‘Outing Texture’ in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s edited collection *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings In Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), Sedgwick’s own work in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), and of Santanu Das’ *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006).

⁴⁰ Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey eds., ‘Introduction: dermatographies,’ in *Thinking Through the Skin*, 3.

⁴¹ www.oed.com. Last accessed, May 20, 2011.

⁴² See, in particular, work by Oliver Evans, Evelyn Hinz, and Elyse Lamm Pineau, as well as various responses to Nin’s body rehearsed in Chapter 5.

⁴³ See Chapter 5.

chapter of this thesis engages with the kinds of embodiment that Nin imagines, all of which are intimate. Chapter 1 reads Nin's fantasies of communion with her father as safe fantasies of intimacy and contact. Chapter 2 considers how Nin uses D.H. Lawrence to produce her own body of work, but also to fashion a new sexual identity. In Chapter 3, Nin's body is a site of contention, difficult to read - it becomes that which seduces and repels, a body which resists intimate interpretation. In Chapter 4, Nin conceives of her body as flowing into and out of the diary. Nin's intimacy with her diary is such that it often lends the materiality to her experiences that she feels is lacking from them before she writes them down. In this way, we are reminded of the 'fleshiness of touch' that Nin conceives of in 'The Paper Womb.' The diary is the space where Nin gives body to her experience, where this experience becomes weighty, tactile and embodied.

Lauren Berlant's theorizing of intimacy is essential to this thesis. Berlant views the intimate realm as primarily the realm of women: '[w]omen,' writes Berlant, 'remain the default managers of the intimate.'⁴⁴ Berlant considers various narratives of intimacy, specifically in what she refers to as "'women's culture.'⁴⁵ Her theory of the 'intimate public' which 'operates when a market opens up to a bloc of consumers, claiming to circulate texts and things that express those people's particular core interests and desires'⁴⁶ will be mobilised in Chapter 5 to consider how, in 1970s America, Nin and her women readers collaborated on a narrative of shared personal experience. Berlant has insightfully captured the tensions between private and public that beset the intimate. To quote Berlant: '[t]o intimate is to communicate with the sparest of signs and gestures, and at its root intimacy has the quality of eloquence and brevity,'⁴⁷ a type of communication that, one assumes, relies on a certain amount of personal knowledge between the speaker and listener. Yet, intimacy:

[also] involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way. [...] The inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness. People consent to trust their desire for "a life" to institutions of intimacy; and it is hoped that the relations formed within those frames will turn out beautifully, lasting over the

⁴⁴ Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*

(Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), xi.

⁴⁵ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 5.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lauren Berlant, 'Intimacy: A Special Issue,' in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1.

long duration, perhaps across generations.⁴⁸

Whilst intimacy involves ‘an aspiration for a narrative about something shared,’ it also potentially involves an aspiration to share narrative. One of Nin’s most oft-repeated philosophies was that ‘the personal life deeply lived’ would inevitably produce universal meaning that others could draw on and identify with.⁴⁹ In this, we can see the bridge between Berlant’s theory of the public and private sides to intimacy: according to Nin, this story of oneself would eventually always find its corollary in the stories of others.

Nin’s interest in psychoanalysis and, specifically, Rankian⁵⁰ analysis, emerges at various points throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter 4. As Eve Illouz writes, psychoanalysis generated a new model of intimacy at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘a new way of thinking about the relationship of self to others and imagining its potentialities.’⁵¹ For Nin, psychoanalysis also provided a new way for imagining her own potentiality, especially as an artist. The language of psychoanalysis provided Nin with a different way to dramatise her conflicts, and new kinds of intimacy to perform.

As Illouz argues, psychoanalysis represented a new ‘cultural model of intimacy’⁵² in the twentieth century, a model constructed around notions of ‘equality, fairness, neutral procedures, emotional communication, sexuality, overcoming and expressing hidden emotions and [the] centrality of linguistic self-expression.’⁵³ Further to this, Adam Phillips has written that ‘psychoanalysis is about what two people can say to each other if they agree not to have sex.’⁵⁴ Becoming sexually intimate with her analysts, Nin disrupted the psychoanalytic contract which relied on their being only certain kinds of contact within the analytic space: namely, verbal, mental, and emotional, but not physical. Her performances of intimacy in the analysis room lead us to think about intimacy and psychoanalysis in new ways. What happens when transference, that theory of frustrated and thwarted intimacy, is realised in sexual contact? What happens when you sleep with your analysts?

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Anaïs Nin, *A Woman Speaks*, ed. Evelyn Hinz (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1975).

⁵⁰ The analytic theories and practices of Otto Rank. See Chapter 4 for an account of Rank’s work and its impact on Nin’s diary.

⁵¹ Eve Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 7.

⁵² Ibid, 29.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Adam Phillips, ‘Introduction,’ in *Wild Analysis*, Sigmund Freud (Penguin: London, 2002), xx.

If this is a thesis interested in intimacy, then it is also inevitably a thesis interested in life-writing. One cannot think one without the other, as the two have so many of the same concerns: the shaping of the subject, world-making, divisions, borders and points of contact between the private and the public. Texts interested in intimacy are often texts interested with life-writing, from Lauren Berlant's *The Female Complaint* to Sedgwick's mixture of personal account and critical close reading in *Touching Feeling*. Texts which explicitly identify themselves as critical studies of life-writing such as Nancy Miller's *Getting Personal: Feminist Occasions and Other Acts* have also had recourse to the intimate life-account, as a way to shape and perform new theories of life-writing.⁵⁵

This thesis draws on feminist life-writing theory, both to unpack Nin's performances of intimacy, and also to think about how critical responses to Nin's diary have run in tandem with developments in this theory.⁵⁶ As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have argued, feminist theories of life-writing have proliferated since the early 1980s.⁵⁷ This thesis particularly engages with critical work on life-writing from the 1990s onwards, which has frequently concerned itself with theorizing the ways in which life-writing constructs subjectivities, different realities, and performances of self.⁵⁸

However, as Leigh Gilmore has written, certain critical accounts of women's life-writing have tended towards essentialist readings of gender: '[f]or the most part, feminist critics of autobiography have agreed there is a lived reality that differs for men and women which accounts for much of the difference between men's and women's autobiography.'⁵⁹ This thesis does not invest in what Gilmore refers to as 'a kind of

⁵⁵ At times, critical and personal responses to Nin's work have been similarly inextricable. Critics including Elizabeth Podnieks and Elyse Lamm Pineau have framed their critical interest in Nin as at least partially motivated by their personal attachment to her. Several of the earliest critics of Nin's work: Evelyn Hinz, Sharon Spencer and Oliver Evans, all knew Nin personally in the 1970s. Evans' text *Anais Nin* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968) was especially influenced by Evans' relationship with Nin.

⁵⁶ For readings of how life-writing theory and critical responses to Nin's diary have run in tandem, see Chapters 3 and 5 in particular.

⁵⁷ Cf. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds., *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 4.

⁵⁸ In particular, I draw on work by feminist criticism by Laura Marcus, Leigh Gilmore, Elizabeth Podnieks, Rita Felski, and Helen Tookey. Max Saunders' recent work *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* has also been particularly useful for considering modernist life-writing.

⁵⁹ Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), x.

formalist gender logic,’⁶⁰ although it does interrogate the narratives of gendered writing that circulate around and shape Nin’s work.

Gilmore’s work recognizes the extent to which discourses within life-writing criticism shape ‘kinds’ of life:

A focus on identity, gender, and the politics of representation entails viewing the criticism of autobiography as much more than commentary, primarily because it is that criticism’s participation in mutually sustaining arguments about gender and genre which construe a self, a life worth telling about, and a history.⁶¹

Nin’s reputation has often suffered from the fact that the way in which she writes her life has jarred, at various points, with the kinds of life narratives that life-writing criticism has favoured.⁶² However, as Linda Anderson has written, there is much scope within feminist life-writing and within feminist life-writing criticism for ‘imagining multiple subjectivities.’⁶³ Nin is a figure who allows us to think subjectivity in this way.

My decision to describe Nin’s work as ‘life-writing’ rather than ‘autobiography’ owes much to Marlene Kadar’s conceptualisation of the former term. Kadar has asserted that ‘life-writing includes many kinds of texts, both fictional and non-fictional,’ and that ‘[t]he narratives within life-writing are linked by their common thematic concern with a life, or the self.’⁶⁴ However, as Kadar has argued, such narratives also share ‘a sincere, probing disregard for genre and its rules, which has the affecting of blending genres, [and] creating new genres.’⁶⁵ Nin’s diary shares this disregard for genre and its rules. Phillip K. Jason has responded to this disregard for genre by asking ‘[j]ust what *kind* of art is Nin creating and by what standards should it be assessed?’⁶⁶ This is a question which circulates uneasily within critical responses to Nin’s diary. Readers of Nin’s diary may be disorientated by its generic blurring, as Jason writes: ‘[a]re we finally reading retrospective autobiography, imaginative fictions spun out of a woman obsessed with self-creation, or a new kind of writing for which we have no name?’⁶⁷ Nin’s diary poses a challenge to the reader who needs to know what genre they are handling before they

⁶⁰ Ibid. Gilmore does not subscribe to this logic either. Tookey and Podnieks have both theorized the diary using feminist analyses of the diary as a ‘feminine’ form.

⁶¹ Ibid, xiii.

⁶² See Chapters 3 and 5.

⁶³ Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2001), 90.

⁶⁴ Marlene Kadar, ‘Whose Life Is It Anyway?’ in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 152.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jason, 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 3.

can get close to a text.

Critical considerations of the diary genre have tended to subsume it within the genre of autobiography.⁶⁸ Yet, as Podnieks argues, recently ‘feminist revision of literary history has produced a plethora of texts devoted to establishing, retracing, or resurrecting a female tradition of diary writing.’⁶⁹ The diary has been represented within many critical studies as a female form, or, at the very least, as a form which women have been drawn to. According to Podnieks, the diary has functioned as ‘a subversive literary space for women.’⁷⁰ Podnieks asserts that this was especially the case in the early twentieth century,⁷¹ when the literary marketplace ‘was restrictive in terms of accepting radical or taboo subject matter, especially that which was sexual.’⁷² Unable to find a market for their radically intimate writings, artists such as Nin turned to the diary as a space for these writings.⁷³

The diary is an intimate object; we carry it close to us, we hide it, it is meant ‘for our eyes only.’ All these are qualities that have been attributed, ‘affective expectations,’⁷⁴ to use Lauren Berlant’s term that readers may have of the diary. Yet, as Rachel Cottam has identified, the diary is also a ‘mixed bag’ of forms:

It may be an intimate confessional or a family album; a collection of historical events or an introspective attempt to capture mood; detached short notes or a narrative account of a particular life episode. It may or may not be dated. [...] It can be classified as art, or as document [...] On the one hand, the diary is “pre-art,” continuous with the lived life. On the other hand, it is *secondary* source material, used to explain a diarist’s other writing (or activities).⁷⁵

Nin’s diary encompasses all of these forms, in ways that speak to the impossibility of a one-size-fits-all approach to reading diaries. Although one might make generalisations about the diary as a form, such statements are inevitably undone by the sheer variety within this form, as Cottam points out. Just as there are many ways to write a diary,

⁶⁸ Podnieks, 4.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Podnieks references texts such as Harriet Blodgett’s *Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen’s Private Diaries* (Rutgers University Press, 1988), and Marlene Kadar’s edited collection *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1992). We could also add to this list Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff’s *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries*, and Phillipe Lejeune’s *On Diary*, ed. Jeremy Popkin and Julie Rak (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2009).

⁷⁰ Podnieks, 6.

⁷¹ Nin began writing her diary in 1911.

⁷² Podnieks, 6.

⁷³ Podnieks also mentions Jean Rhys, Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes.

⁷⁴ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, 4.

⁷⁵ Rachel Cottam, *Secret Scratching: The Diary and its Writing*, DPhil thesis (Sussex University: 1996), 1-2.

there are many ways to read it, as Mai Al-Nakib delineates :

A few of the ways diaries have been read within literary studies include: as not quite autobiography [...] as detailed expressions of the quotidian [...] as distinctly feminine in form [...] and as postmodern in their fragmentary conception of “self.”⁷⁶

The diary has at times been frustratingly subsumed within critical work on the autobiography;⁷⁷ a form with which, in the case of Nin’s diary, it has some similarities but not a genre through which the diary can entirely be defined.⁷⁸ Yet theorisations of the diary remain useful as abstractions to be challenged and read against in this thesis which is concerned with the particularity of Nin’s diary as an object as well as its position within a series of often interlocking contexts.

Although the diary has often been represented as a marginal form,⁷⁹ for Nin it formed the centre and bulk of her writing practice. As such, this thesis reads Nin’s diary as her primary work. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Nin depicted the diary as a habit she couldn’t break, an addiction with a central position in her life. She both lived her life in order to write about it in the diary and wrote the diary in order to live her life.

As Elizabeth Podnieks writes, Nin’s diary ‘has had a complicated and ongoing publishing history.’⁸⁰ The first, heavily-edited volume of Nin’s diary was published in 1966, covering the period 1931-34. The rest of the diaries (covering the period 1934-1974) were then published as *Volume Two*, *Volume Three*, and so on, all edited by Nin, up to *Volume Six* of the diary which ends in 1966. The *Early Diaries* (from *Linotte*, Nin’s childhood diary, which begins in 1911, to volume four of the *Early Diary*, which ends in 1931), were published mainly in the early 1980s. Then, between 1986 and 1996, the unexpurgated volumes of Nin’s diary were published, respectively, as *Henry and June* (published in 1986 and covering the period 1931-1932), *Incest* (published in 1992 and covering the period 1932-34), *Fire* (published in 1995 and covering the period 1934-37), and *Nearer the Moon* (published in 1996 and covering the period 1937-39). No further volumes of the unexpurgated diary have been published, nor is there any

⁷⁶ Mai Al-Nakib, ‘Anaïs Nin’s Rhizomatic Diary,’ in *Anaïs Nin’s Narratives*, ed. Anne T. Salvatore (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2001), 253.

⁷⁷ Rachel Cottam also makes this point when she writes that ‘[r]arely addressed as a genre in its own right, the diary is excluded from most discussions on genre theory.’ *Secret Scratching*, 6.

⁷⁸ Certainly, Nin’s retrospective editing of parts of the diary throws it in common with the autobiography, where the author has the benefit of hindsight in narrating his or her life.

⁷⁹ For example, Rachael Langford and Russell West eds., *Marginal Voices, Marginal Forms: Diaries in European Literature and History* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1999).

⁸⁰ Podnieks, 11.

suggestion that they will be.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, the edited diary was presented both by Nin and her editor Gunther Stuhlmann as largely unedited and true to the original text.⁸¹ However, the published edited diaries bear, at times, little resemblance to the originals, which are held in an archive. Chapter 5 considers how Nin excised the majority of her personal relationships from the edited diary, leaving readers to ask questions about the extent to which the diary was a revelatory and intimate work. The published unexpurgated diary features the sexually explicit material that Nin excised for the edited diary. However, despite the title ‘unexpurgated’ which implies ‘unedited,’ attached to this version of the diary, there are still several marked differences between the unexpurgated diary and the archived diary,⁸² which undermine the unexpurgated diary’s appellation.

The original volumes of the diary are held in the Anaïs Nin Special Collection at the University of California, Los Angeles. Visiting these archives, my view of the diary as a material object was inevitably altered. The archived diary is, unsurprisingly, handwritten, a factor which both created a sense of heightened intimacy with Nin and the diary (I could literally touch her writing) but also opened up an anxious distance in moments when I could not decipher Nin’s hand.

The original diaries also include a wealth of extratextual material not represented by the published version. In Chapter 4, I attend to some of this material. However, the various photographs, clippings, letters and drawings that make up much of the material of Nin’s archived diary, brushing up against her written entries, deserve a project of their own. As Cynthia Huff writes, the ‘inclusion of extratextual material [...] extend[s] the spatial boundaries of the diarist’s written account.’⁸³ Reading the archived diary, new kinds of space open up around Nin’s writing.

The decision to concentrate on Nin’s diary (although not to the exclusion of her other work) has several facets. The publication history of the diary has meant that readers at different points in time have had access to radically different diaries in the edited and unexpurgated published versions and few have had access to the archival

⁸¹ Stuhlmann also co-edited all of Nin’s edited diaries.

⁸² In Chapter 3, I discuss the differences between the archived version of the ‘Father Story’ and the published, unexpurgated version. Chapter 4 considers the differences in form between the archived diary and the unexpurgated diary, specifically during the period when Nin presented the diary as a sketchbook.

⁸³ Cynthia A. Huff, ‘Textual Boundaries: Space in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Manuscript Diaries,’ in *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries*, ed. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 124.

versions. Bringing the three different versions of the diary together in varied combinations throughout this thesis produces its own intimacy study: we become privy to the shaping of a life in different versions with different proximities between these versions. The same relationships shift and transform between different diaries; in the edited version Henry Miller is a close friend, in the unexpurgated a lover, in the archived diary he is both. As a reader, the affect of reading between these three versions of the diary is to repeatedly underline the impossibility of being intimate with ‘the diary’ as a definitive object.

In this thesis, intimacy is a story about being close to others, and the ways in which we experience and express this closeness. It is a story about moments of contact, about how ideas and people become attached, and how they imagine this attachment, a story about identification, self-fashioning through others, and about the way we order and distinguish between kinds of relationship. But mostly, this thesis is interested in the way that Anaïs Nin’s diary produces but also disrupts stories about intimacy. These stories, which are stories about feminism, emotion, writing and psychoanalysis, deserve our consideration. They are as pressing now as they were when Nin was writing them.

Each chapter of this thesis will address a different performance of intimacy. Chapter 1 starts at the beginning with Nin’s childhood diary, published as *Linotte*, and the various narratives of origin that surround it. It will consider how Nin shaped the diary as a space for fantasies of intimacy with her father. Using the repeated figure in *Linotte*⁸⁴ of the Communion scene, this chapter will argue that Nin uses the intimacy signified by the Communion to both identify with and incorporate her absent father. Alongside the widely-held critical narrative that the early diary began as a series of unsent letters intended for Nin’s father, these fantasies of communion speak to one of the foundational arguments of this thesis: that intimacy plays out as a desire to reach across a space felt as an absence.

Chapter 2 thinks through the intimate relationships, both real and imagined, that Nin formed in the 1930s. This chapter will consider Nin’s place within modernist narratives of feeling, of personality and impersonality. I read Nin’s *Unprofessional Study* of D.H Lawrence to think through her relationship to Lawrence, figured by Nin as highly intimate, in tension with high modernist narratives of impersonality.

⁸⁴ The edited published diary which covers Nin’s adolescence.

Chapter 3 engages with critical responses to Nin's diary, reading the reactions to Nin's account of her incestuous relationship with her father. What is it about Nin's 'Father Story' that has produced such extreme critical reactions? How does this story challenge conventional readings of the incest narrative? These questions will be asked against a backdrop of Freud's seduction theory, and his renunciation of it, Jean Baudrillard's *Seduction*, and debates over incest narratives in the 1990s.

Chapter 4 takes hold of the psychoanalytic strand from Chapter 3 to interrogate the intimate performances that take place in the analysis room. Reading these relationships allows us to ask questions about Nin's relationship with truth both in the diary and in the analysis room, whilst also interrogating notions of intimacy within psychoanalysis. This chapter will also make use of understudied archival material during the period when Nin promised to give up her diary to Rank to explore the theme of graphomania and addiction that besets the diary.

Chapter 5 shifts to a wider sphere, that of readers' responses to the first published versions of the diary in the early 1970s. Using Lauren Berlant's theory of the intimate public, this chapter reads the version of Nin as an everywoman speaking to every woman perpetuated through interviews and lectures during this period. This chapter is particularly interested in the underpinnings of Nin's intimate public: the lies, fabrications and performances that made the diary a success.

In 'The Paper Womb,' Nin uses writing as a way of coming into contact with her experiences, to flesh them out. Writing allows Nin to bring her experiences closer, to return to them, to find her way back into them. The title of the story depicts the writing of the diary as an act of self-birth, a birth which is predicated on Nin being always able to return to the scene of her experiences. Without this return, 'everything would be lost.'⁸⁵ In Chapter 1, as we will now see, Nin's desire for intimacy with her father moves through fleshy fantasies of eating, kissing, and touching. Performing intimacy for the first time, Nin brings her father closer.

⁸⁵ 'The Paper Womb.'

Kissing distance: writing the communion in *Linotte*.

Introduction.

*We converse with the absent by letters, and with ourselves by diaries.*¹

*[The diary is] a form of communication which is not to be communicated.*²

*Every relation, most especially the self-relation is a response to the call of the other – the other who always exceeds me, the other who withdraws me from myself.*³

In 1970, the first flush of her fame, Anaïs Nin took part in a televised interview for Los Angeles' Channel 28. Among other questions, journalist Keith Berwick asked how the diary had started. Musing on this, he comments '[o]ne of the things that occurs to me here is that the diary began out of a deeply felt, psychic, emotional, human need. It was an intensely private kind of activity.'⁴ Nin replies:

Originally, though, it was intended for my father. That puts a slightly different slant on it. I began at eleven, and I meant it to be a journal of the journey to America, a strange country that he feared because he didn't know English. I was going to make such a description of it as to entice him to come back to our family.⁵

Berwick models the diary as a necessity, an emotional outlet for Nin that springs from deep feelings. These feelings and the imperative that she write them down set Nin apart from others, the diary was an 'intensely private' and hence, solo, activity. Yet Nin presents the origins of the diary differently. She positions the diary as a text that was motivated by a relationship, not so much an intensely private activity, as a travel guide-cum-seductive tool to entice her father to America. Whilst Berwick portrays Nin as reaching down into herself to produce the diary, Nin counters by reaching out. Throughout her life, when called upon to speak about the diary, she maintained this narrative alongside describing the diary as a text with universal human appeal.⁶

¹ Isaac D'Israeli, 'Diaries Moral, Historical and Critical,' *Curiosities of Literature: Vol 2* (London: Warne, 1881), 206.

² Rachel Cottam, *Secret Scratching*, iii.

³ Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 3.

⁴ Keith Berwick, 'A Conversation with Anaïs Nin,' in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, ed. Wendy M. DuBow (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1984), (broadcast on Channel 28, 1970), 58-9.

⁵ Ibid, 58. Nin's father, Joaquin Nin (not to be confused with her brother, Joaquin Nin-Culmell) left the family when Nin was 11. As a result, they moved from Barcelona to New York. Nin would not see her father again until her late twenties.

⁶ See Chapter 5.

Nin's account of the diary as written originally with the purpose of enticement, positions it as a text with a target - a notion opposed to Berwick's vision of the 'intensely private activity' which suggests writing for oneself only. In this way, Nin disrupted the 'myth that the diary is a private genre, strictly written for oneself,'⁷ as José van Djick puts it. According to biographer Deirdre Bair, those closest to Nin, 'with the exception of Rupert Pole,'⁸ contradicted her story of origins. In his Preface, Nin's brother Joaquin Nin-Culmell writes that although Nin 'thought of this early diary as a means of communication with her absent father [...] above all it stemmed from her overwhelming vocation to observe, comment and set down.'⁹ By presenting the diary as stemming from an 'overwhelming vocation,' Joaquin Nin-Culmell removed it from his father's influence and instead placed it under the Father's influence. Anaïs Nin felt the call 'to observe, comment and set down' but this was a purely self-serving vocation. Nin-Culmell positioned the diary as divinely ordained, thereby imbuing it with both a mystical and inviolable quality, an inviolability that he also lent to Nin as a subject.

In common with Berwick's narrative, Nin-Culmell's story of origins presents the diary as springing from a deep well of personal need, exclusive of any need for others. According to Carolyn Steedman, this need explains why people write about themselves: 'there is an urge to tell the self [...] it comes from within, and [...] the impulsion to do so, in spoken or written language, is part of the very process of self construction.'¹⁰ Although this chapter concurs with this notion that the self is, in part, constructed through language, it questions whether Nin's diary springs from a simple 'urge to tell the self' that 'comes from within.' Instead, I will argue that Nin was compelled, in beginning her diary, to construct a self-in-relation. Her urge to tell the self was also an urge to tell this self to another.

At stake in these conversations about who, or what, caused Nin to begin her diary, is an issue of intimacy: who got close to Nin, influenced her, shaped the diary? Who got under her skin (and skin will become increasingly important throughout this chapter), analysed her, changed her? And equally, who did she move towards and away

⁷ José van Dijck, 'Writing the Self: Of Diaries and Weblogs,' in *Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of New Media*, eds. Sonja Neef, José van Dijck and Eric Ketelaar (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 121.

⁸ Bair, 529. Bair does not explain why Pole supported Nin in this version of origins.

⁹ Joaquin Nin-Culmell, 'Preface' to *Linotte* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), vii.

¹⁰ Carolyn Steedman, 'Enforced narratives: Stories of another self,' in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, 25.

from? In examining these questions, this chapter challenges the notion of the diary as a private or inviolable space and of intimacy as a private state, theorizing the diary as an inter-embodied narrative.

The father's influence supersedes the Father's in *Linotte*. Nin performs but also acknowledges her father's absence through her fantasies, letters sent and unsent and the strictures of other relatives. We know Nin's father is not there, not in New York with the rest of the Nin family and yet, in *Linotte*, he is everywhere. This chapter contends that *Linotte* is a product of the intersubjectivity and interembodiment Nin imagines at work between herself and her father. It holds with recent work on life-writing that theorises it as a narrative of the self-in-relation:

Intersubjectivity [...] implies that the narration of a life or a self can never be confined to a single, isolated subjecthood. Others are an integral part of consciousness, and the production of a narrative. Or, put more abstractly, the narration of a self cannot be understood in isolation from an other it acknowledges, implicitly or explicitly, and with which it is in a constitutive relationship.¹¹

Interembodiment has been described in similar terms to intersubjectivity. For example, Gail Weiss writes that 'to describe embodiment as inter-corporeality is to emphasise that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair.'¹² Interembodiment, like intersubjectivity, constructs a narrative of the self-in-relation, be that corporeally or subjectively. Both interembodiment and intersubjectivity are forms of identification, ways of constituting identity through the other. As Diana Fuss has written, '[i]dentification inhabits, organizes, instantiates identity. It operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other.'¹³ Identifying with her father, Nin also forms her identity, with the diary providing the space for this identity to be shaped and performed.

This chapter will argue that *Linotte* plays out fantasies of intersubjectivity and

¹¹Tess Coslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield eds, 'Introduction,' in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, 4. Arguably, such work on intersubjectivity within life-writing criticism builds on Susan Stanford Friedman's 1988 essay 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice.' In this essay, Stanford Friedman challenges the 'individualistic concept of the autobiographical self' represented within early studies of autobiography, such as Georges Gusdorf's 1956 essay 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography.' Stanford Friedman argues that this individualistic model of the autobiographic self 'leads to the (mis)reading and marginalization of autobiographical texts by women,' as 'individualistic paradigms of the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process of women.' 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice,' in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 34.

¹² Gail Weiss, *Body images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

¹³ Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers*, 2.

interembodiment, as Nin imagines both corporeal acts of interpenetration with her father, and, in a more abstract sense, writes herself in relation to him. Theirs is a relationship that speaks to the spaces within intimacy: the reaching, longing and missing as well as to moments of touching, absorbing, and enfolding. This chapter will unpack these fantasies of interembodiment and intersubjectivity, performances of intimacy that are produced through the figure of the Communion. In order to theorise this intimacy, this chapter will draw on religious and feminist readings of the Communion, as well as psychoanalytic readings of the kiss.

Excisions and inclusions are important here. The authors of the Preface and Editor's Note to *Linotte* are heavily invested in presenting 'their Nin' to using a series of exclusionary devices to do so. In the case of Joaquin Nin-Culmell's Preface, Nin's father is felt as a threat who must be excluded from accounts of Nin's identity. In John Ferrone's Editor's Note it is Nin's religious 'outbursts' that are excised for the reader's sake. Yet neither Nin-Culmell nor Ferrone succeed in containing Nin's identity within *Linotte*. Identifying with her father, she reaches out to him, playing with the boundaries between them through fantasies of touch, interembodiment and presence.

Shaping *Linotte*: the Preface and Editor's Note.

*The most respectable motive behind the amputation of a diary is the desire to make it readable.*¹⁴

Linotte was published in 1978, following the earlier success of Nin's other edited diaries.¹⁵ As we will consider further in Chapter 5, the 1970s represented a period of increased critical interest in forms of life-writing. According to Jennifer Sinor, the diary had been critically ignored before this period:

[u]ntil 1974 the diary basically occupies no space within the purview of academic scholarship. When it does enter, it enters under "literary" auspices. The goal: to show how the diary is a literary text, meaning a text that is *consciously shaped for aesthetic reception* and, therefore, marked by stylistic conventions and matter lofty enough to have historically qualified as "all that is great in what is thought or said" (with all the white Western male privilege Matthew Arnold's comment accords).¹⁶

The Preface and Editor's Note to *Linotte* were written, respectively, three and four years

¹⁴ Robert Fothergill, *Private Chronicles: a Study of English Diaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 5.

¹⁵ The first edited diary was published in 1966, and covered the years 1931-34.

¹⁶ Jennifer Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002) 32.

after Sinor's originary year of 1974.¹⁷ However, Joaquin Nin-Culmell and John Ferrone are both ambivalent about positioning *Linotte* as a literary text. Nin-Culmell is anxious about the possibility that the text has been shaped for a specific audience - namely, his father. Ferrone describes *Linotte* as 'the first volume of Anaïs Nin's diary to be published essentially in the form in which it was written' then depicts the diary as unsuitable for public consumption before his edits.¹⁸

Nin-Culmell's Preface certainly arrogates this 'loftiness' to the diary that Sinor ascribes to the literary text. Nin-Culmell claims that *Linotte* stemmed from Nin's 'overwhelming vocation to observe, comment and set down' imbuing the diary with both divine and dramatic qualities.¹⁹ Yet his Preface combines these divinely imbued qualities with depictions of Nin family life. In this guise, the Preface to *Linotte* functions as the protective arms of a younger brother around his older sister. Through this familial relationship, it also performs a privileged reading of Anaïs Nin's character. Privileged, because by 1978 when *Linotte* was published, Nin-Culmell was Anaïs Nin's closest remaining family member alive and also the only blood relative who ever commented publicly on her work.²⁰

Nin-Culmell also steers Anaïs Nin, the diary, and the reader away from her father's influence whilst emphasising the unity of the Nin family without him. From the stance of a reader in 2011, aware of the narratives of child abuse and adult incest that circulate around Nin's relationship with her father, one might speculate that Joaquin Nin-Culmell's efforts to downplay his father's influence represented an attempt to extricate Anaïs Nin from association with these narratives. Readers in 1978 would not have had access to these narratives which were made public with the publication of the unexpurgated diaries in the early 1990s.²¹ We must be careful not to impute too much from Nin-Culmell's exclusion of his father from *Linotte's* extra-textual narrative. Although Nin-Culmell's Preface represents a desire to play down his father's role in inspiring the diary or in influencing Nin's character, one can only speculate about the

¹⁷ Jennifer Sinor earmarks this year as crucial to diary studies because '[w]hile a few books that compiled diary excerpts had been published in the earlier part of the twentieth century, 1974 marked the publication of the first full-length diary studies, studies that began to theorize the diurnal form.' Sinor, 30.

¹⁸ Editor's Note, *Linotte*, ix.

¹⁹ Preface, *Linotte*, vii.

²⁰ Nin's other brother Thorvald was alive at this point, although he was not known to have been particularly close to Anaïs Nin. For a detailed account of their relationship, see Deirdre Bair, *Anaïs Nin: A Biography*.

²¹ See Chapter 3.

events that shaped this desire.

By depicting Nin as a unified, coherent and inviolable subject, Nin-Culmell adheres to the traditional tropes of autobiographical narrative. The diary was entirely Nin's creation, the work of 'an extraordinary individual who refused to be subdivided, taken apart or fragmented.'²² Nin-Culmell writes Anaïs Nin as an autobiographical subject within a humanist poetics. Of these poetics, Shirley Neuman comments:

The concept of the self as an indivisible entity, ontologically and textually self-identical while at the same time individual and distinct from others, underpinned the earliest work on autobiography and still forms the basis of the 'contract' through which all but theoretically sophisticated readers approach the genre.²³

Nin-Culmell positions himself as an authority on Anaïs Nin's ontology. But his reading differs dramatically from Nin's textual self-fashioning. In *Linotte*, Nin craves similarity with others, expresses internal divisions and creates fantasies which perform intimacy. Furthermore, Nin gestures towards the possibility of her ontological and textual identities diverging. Of an encounter with a gentleman named Emile Villemin, Nin writes: 'he said something I still remember, that if one knows two languages, one is two people. If one knows three, one is three people. So then, what am I?'²⁴ Nin's question, which is one of ontological and linguistic uncertainty,²⁵ resounds throughout *Linotte*, contradicting Nin-Culmell's narrative of ontological and textual unity in the diary.²⁶

Nin-Culmell's emphasis on his sister's extraordinariness is also a way of justifying *Linotte's* value to readers. As Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet writes, '[a] reader's interest in autobiography usually lies in the promise of unique revelations about a particular individual.'²⁷ Nin-Culmell flags Anaïs Nin's 'extraordinariness' as proof that *this* diary is worth reading, thus distinguishing it from the 'ordinary' diary, which connotes unexceptionality and banality. According to Sinor:

²² Preface, vii.

²³ Shirley Neuman, 'Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Differences,' in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Marlene Kadar (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 213.

²⁴ *Linotte*, 41.

²⁵ At this point, Nin was writing her diary in French, learning English and could also speak Spanish. Her father demanded that she wrote to him in French, as he did not speak English.

²⁶ That said, Nin-Culmell does not suggest that the reader can fully 'know' Nin. He writes that '[a]s mysterious as Anaïs will always be, when you read the early diary you will know as much about her as anybody ever has.' He ascribes ontological, textual and epistemological unity to the diary, whilst also suggesting that reading the diary is the closest we will or can get to Nin, vii.

²⁷ Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, 'Textualisation of the self and gender identity in the life-story,' in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods*, ed. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield, 61.

[T]he kinds of diaries that receive critical or aesthetic attention [...] tend toward the literary – exhibiting plot, action, suspense, length, allusion, metaphor, linearity, sparkle, self-reflection, extraordinary events, deep in introspection, and/or some kind of authorial presence (usually a strong and witty one).²⁸

Nin-Culmell ascribes several of these literary criteria to *Linotte* in his Preface, but it is his account of Nin's introspective depths that speaks the most to his attempts to shape our reading of *Linotte* and Nin.²⁹ Of the diary, he writes: '[Nin's] laughter, her tears, her sadness, her enthusiasm, come to the surface like bubbles of oxygen from the deep waters of her introspection.'³⁰ Writing Nin within this 'surface/depth model of subjectivity,' (to use Ahmed and Stacey's phrase), allows Nin-Culmell to do two things.³¹ Firstly, Nin's 'depth' is used as a presumed enticement for the reader – 'presumed,' because Nin-Culmell assumes that the reader would want to fathom these depths by reading *Linotte*. Secondly, Nin-Culmell's reading of Nin's affects – 'her laughter, her tears, her sadness, her enthusiasm' – coming to the surface of her diary 'like bubbles of oxygen' emphasises the emotional authenticity of the diary, an authenticity which relies on this surface/depth model of subjectivity. By this logic, emotions are 'deep' and the 'deepest' emotions are the most 'authentic.' Although the diary itself is a series of surfaces in the form of words and pages, in Nin-Culmell's depiction it is the 'indispensable lifeline' for Nin's 'deep-sea diver,' lending significance to the diary that goes beyond the literary and its status as material object.³² Nin-Culmell presents the diary as an emotional life-saver, pulling Nin out of the depths of emotion but also providing a space for her emotions to 'come to the surface.'³³

In his subject model of surfaces and depths, Joaquin Nin-Culmell produces what Leigh Gilmore has referred to as 'an inside/out view of the body in which "traits" are seen as expressions of deep characteristics that make their way to the surface, either in signs read easily on the body [...] or in acts.'³⁴ Importantly for Nin-Culmell, this surface is not *broken* by Nin's emotions. Nin-Culmell invests in a version of Nin's subjectivity

²⁸ Sinor, 12.

²⁹ Nin-Culmell quotes Anaïs Nin as describing the diary as 'an adventure and a tale [...] the story of a life' compounding this presentation of the diary in literary terms. Keeping to this literary framework, Nin-Culmell describes Nin in a further moment of characterisation as his 'steel hummingbird.' See *Linotte*, vii-viii.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey eds., 'Introduction: dermatographies' in *Thinking Through the Skin*, (London: Routledge: 2001), 6.

³² *Linotte*, vii.

³³ This rhetoric plays out in reader responses to Nin's diary in the 1970s. See Chapter 5.

³⁴ Gilmore, 132.

that is deep but inviolable: she can go down into her emotions, but they do not break the boundaries of her subjectivity. That is to say, the outside remains outside, the inside in, and between inside and outside the diary stands as an uncrossable boundary: a sign of Nin's impermeability and inviolability.

In fetishising the boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, and in stressing that Nin's diary is about vocation not communication, Nin-Culmell guards his sister and her diary against the possibility of deconstruction through association with the 'otherness' of her father.³⁵ As such we can situate Nin-Culmell's Preface within a wider context of contemporaneous critical attitudes towards the autobiographical narrative and subject which sought to ward off deconstruction. As Laura Marcus attests, writing about theorist James Olney,³⁶ the '(conservative) autobiographical ideal' in the 1970s consisted of 'the turning inside-out (the showing forth of the inner self) without the shattering or transgression of the inner and outer as categories.'³⁷ Nin-Culmell assures the reader that when reading *Linotte* '[you] will know as much about [Nin] as anybody ever has,' yet this assurance comes with the caveat that the reader will always be outside of Nin, the inviolable subject.³⁸ Marcus argues that Olney's concern with 'the securing of the self is to guard it against deconstructive critics, who, he believed, attempted to dissolve the self and consequently autobiographical criticism, as soon as it came into being.'³⁹ One could argue that Nin-Culmell's Preface shares this concern. Yet, whereas Nin-Culmell is interested in putting up boundaries, Nin is interested in taking them down, or at the very least, imagining what it would feel like to cross them. As such, although Nin-Culmell likens the words in his Preface to the 'background music' he used to play to accompany Nin's 'narrated stories,' his phrases are out of tune with his sister's stories.⁴⁰

John Ferrone, *Linotte*'s chief editor, is less concerned with Anaïs Nin's character, disposition or relationships and more with the kinds of textual 'errors' she produced in

³⁵ Here, I paraphrase Ahmed and Stacey who write of the 'fetishising of skin as [a] boundary-object that allows the contours of the body to appear as a given.' 'Introduction: dermatographies,' in *Thinking Through the Skin*, 3.

³⁶ Autobiographical critic who has authored key texts in the field such as *Metaphors of self: the Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton University Press, 1972).

³⁷ Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 189.

³⁸ Preface, vii.

³⁹ Marcus, 189.

⁴⁰ Preface, viii.

the diary. His work serves as a different kind of corrective to Nin-Culmell's: one concerned with cleaning up spelling mistakes, eradicating repetition and dampening down outbursts. As such, Ferrone handles the textuality of *Linotte* in a way that Nin-Culmell doesn't. Ferrone writes of *Linotte* that it is the 'first volume of Anaïs Nin's diary to be published essentially in the form in which it was written:'

[It] is thus unlike the six volumes already in print, which the author consciously shaped using "a craft like that of the fiction writer," and moving through a loosely connected time sequence to some peak moment of her life.⁴¹

Here, Ferrone enters the same conversation regarding the literariness of the diary that plays out in Nin-Culmell's Preface.⁴² Whilst Nin-Culmell did not want to countenance the possibility that the diary was written for an audience, Ferrone's concern is to downplay his editorial role in making *Linotte*. Ferrone is primarily interested in demonstrating that 'editorial intrusions have been kept to a minimum.'⁴³ Ironically, for his purposes, he does so by writing about these editorial intrusions. The result is that his Editor's Note reads like a catalogue of the diary's textual errors and idiosyncrasies. In counterpoint to Nin-Culmell's version of Nin as an individual 'who refused to be subdivided, taken apart or fragmented,' Ferrone portrays Nin, if not as a flawed character, then at the least a flawed writer, contradicting his previous statement of editorial unobtrusiveness.⁴⁴ Whilst he positions *Linotte* as less 'crafted' than the previously published volumes of the diary, Ferrone also writes that 'Anaïs's editing of the other volumes of her diary has been the model here.'⁴⁵ Yet this model was, in part, a literary one. Ferrone is caught then, between wanting to present *Linotte* as true to Nin's previous form and wanting to distance the editing process from literary associations.

Ferrone stressed that any editing of Nin's childhood diary was done for the sake of the reader: '[d]eleations have been made solely for the sake of producing a book of publishable length and sustained interest.'⁴⁶ In doing so, he implies that Nin did not originally write for an audience – or, that, if she did, then she did so ineffectively. Ferrone writes that one of his actions was to cut passages where Nin 'greet[s] and take[s] leave of her diary,' a feature which frames the diary as a form of communication

⁴¹ Editor's Note, ix.

⁴² See Chapter 5 for a different account of the literariness of the edited diary.

⁴³ Ibid, ix.

⁴⁴ Preface, vii.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

with an other, although Ferrone does not go as far as Nin-Culmell in suggesting who this other might be.⁴⁷

Sinor argues that one of the features which distinguishes the ordinary diary from the literary diary is repetition.⁴⁸ To reinforce this point, Sinor draws on the work of Mary Jane Moffat, who wrote of the diary that ‘the form, with its repetitions and – in some hands – relentless concentration on the minimal, can be boring, an excellent sedative.’⁴⁹ Moffat goes on to ‘hastily assure her readers,’ as Sinor puts it, that such ‘boring’ repetitions had been removed in the diaries that featured in her edited collection.⁵⁰ Ferrone provides similar reassurance:

Several poems have been omitted, and so have occasional routine entries and a few outbursts of religious or patriotic fervor, common in the earlier section of the diary, which tended to be repetitive.⁵¹

Ferrone’s list of omissions tells us about what readers wanted from diaries in the 1970s, or at least what Ferrone thought that readers wanted. The cutting of ‘occasional routine entries’ points to Sinor’s theorization of ‘ordinary writing,’ with Ferrone presuming that the content of these ‘routine entries’ would be of no interest to the reader.

The repetition of Nin’s ‘outbursts of religious or patriotic fervor’ threatened to disrupt the literary shape of the diary. Ferrone’s depiction of these ‘outbursts’ speaks to a different version of Nin’s subjectivity to that modelled by Nin-Culmell. For Ferrone, Nin’s emotions do not ‘come to the surface like bubbles of oxygen’ as they do for Nin-Culmell. These moments of ‘fervor,’ rather than the contained emotional ‘bubbles’ of Nin-Culmell’s depiction, burst through the surface or bounds of Nin’s subjectivity. Ferrone does not view Nin as an inviolable subject, although he would have such ‘outbursts’ removed to lend a smooth surface to *Linotte*, keeping Nin’s emotions under control.⁵² Both Ferrone and Nin-Culmell present Nin’s emotions as a threat to their narrative of her identity. As with the Preface then, there is a desire in the Editor’s Note to constitute *Linotte* (if not Nin, in Ferrone’s case) as an inviolable text – contained and containable.

In the archived typescript of the diary that would become *Linotte*, Ferrone and

⁴⁷ Editor’s Note, ix.

⁴⁸ Sinor, 31.

⁴⁹ Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter, *Revelations: Diaries of Women* (Vintage Books, 1975), 31.

⁵⁰ Sinor, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Editor’s Note, ix.

⁵² Ferrone’s choice of the phrase ‘outbursts’ suggests that Nin is a tantrum-ing child who needs to be disciplined.

Nin-Culmell have a conversation in the margins. Nin-Culmell responds particularly to the following lines which Ferrone suggests should be excised: ‘My diary, it is Anaïs speaking and not someone who thinks what everyone should think. My diary, pity me, but listen to me.’⁵³ In the margins next to these sentences, Nin-Culmell writes:

John – I think these two lines are a MUST – they are quoted in vol. 1 of the adult diary, and Anaïs often referred to them as one of the early expressions of her sense of her own uniqueness and the role of the diary. Rupert [Pole] agrees
-⁵⁴

This moment of editorial discord speaks to the difference between Ferrone and Nin-Culmell’s editing strategies in *Linotte*. Whilst Ferrone intends to excise these lines, which could be read as one of Nin’s ‘outbursts,’ Nin-Culmell wants to keep them as an example of the uniqueness that he is so keen to emphasise in his Preface.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Nin-Culmell calls on his brother-in-law Rupert Pole as a familial trump-card to pull on Ferrone. Doing so, as in his Preface, Nin-Culmell uses his intimate blood tie with Nin as a mark of interpretative authority.

To some extent, Nin-Culmell and Ferrone’s depictions of Nin and the diary are at odds. Whilst Nin-Culmell is anxious to prove that Nin wrote the diary without an audience in mind, thereby denying the possible literariness of the text, Ferrone emphasises the aesthetic and literary value of the text brought out through his editing choices. However, it would be facile to say that Nin-Culmell doesn’t care about the reader and Ferrone does. Rather, Nin-Culmell is anxious to establish that the original reader of the diary was not Nin’s father whilst giving other readers an insider’s guide to his sister’s character. Nin-Culmell’s kind of care is domestic and intimate in counterpoint to Ferrone’s attention to the aesthetic and structural aspects that make up the published diary.⁵⁶ Both, in their own ways are concerned with the literary value of the text.

Ferrone and Nin-Culmell attempt to contain Nin in a way that she does not contain herself. Sinor attests that ‘[o]ften, a diary is written in an attempt to master

⁵³ *Childhood Diary of Anaïs Nin – Typescript – trans. French into English – Volume 1 (1914-1920)*, (Collection 2066: Box 18).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the lines surrounding the ones above so have no way to judge their context.

⁵⁶ Although these aesthetic concerns are often of an intimate nature, such as the editing of Nin’s ‘outbursts.’

experience, and to contain the self as a closed book.’⁵⁷ But in *Linotte* it is those writers on the margins of the diary who desire this mastery. Ferrone and Nin-Culmell position themselves, to paraphrase Sinor, as ‘ones who can bear the story’⁵⁸ of *Linotte* in the place of Nin, implying that she could not bear it herself. Nin’s death during the preparation of *Linotte* for publication provides us with one undeniable reason as to why she could not introduce her own published text. But those diaries published before her death were always introduced by an editor, suggesting that it was not Nin’s physical death that necessitated another introducing her work. Instead, the Preface, and to a lesser extent the Editor’s Note, are conventions of a form that is uncertain about its readability without, as Sinor puts it ‘a translator.’⁵⁹ One might see some irony that a diary motivated by a desire for communication might be viewed as needing a translator. In *Linotte*, different genres of communication slip and slide into each other: letters, diary entries, conversations, prayers and fantasies. Nin shuttles between these languages, fashioning her identity in relationship to them. In this way, she *is* a translator – forever conveying information, people and emotions from one setting to another. Through the figure of the communion, Nin makes her absent father present, using fantasy to create intimacy.

Coming to Communion.

*Are not two loves essentially individual, hence incommensurable, and thus don't they condemn the partners to meet only at a point infinitely remote? Unless they commune through a third party: ideal, god, hallowed group...*⁶⁰

Linotte hangs on a kiss. Or rather it hangs on the promise of a kiss, a kiss that never comes. Nin longs to be reunited with her father, with this longing attaching itself to communion scenes. Alongside writing to her father - both in the form of the diary and through letters which she then copies into the diary - Nin imagines a series of reunions sealed with a kiss.⁶¹ In fashioning her model of kissing-as-communion through Hollywood cinema,⁶² and her Catholic practice, Nin fashions identities for herself as a

⁵⁷ Sinor, 2.

⁵⁸ Sinor, 15.

⁵⁹ Sinor, 15.

⁶⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 3.

⁶¹ Nin also copies her father’s (infrequent) responses to these letters, meaning that the diary is also, in part, a collection of letters.

⁶² Pre-Hay’s Code.

romantic heroine, religious devotee and ideal daughter. These fantasies test the boundaries of her subjectivity, allowing her to imagine scenes of inter-subjectivity and inter-embodiment, and perform a series of intimacies that rely on her father's distance as much as the desire for his closeness. In this way, *contra* Nin-Culmell, Nin's father is essential as an audience to her performances of self.⁶³

Unlike elsewhere, these readings of Nin's communion fantasies will not *assume* an incestuous motivation or backdrop to Nin's relationship with her father.⁶⁴ This is not to shy away from such interpretations which can and have been drawn from *Linotte* and Nin's childhood relationship with her father but, rather, to generate different readings of these fantasies that speak to intimacy's potential to move across a series of spaces: religious, sexual, familial, textual and geographical.⁶⁵ This section argues that language fails to differentiate between different kinds of intimacy. What happens in the moments of contact between Father and father, Communion and communion, kissing, eating and consuming?

According to the *Catholic Dictionary*, in the taking of Communion:

[t]he sacrament of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ is really, truly, and substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine [...] The bread and wine are changed by transubstantiation [...] The Holy Eucharist is the primary act of worship of the Catholic Church in which Christ perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross; the Church, in turn, offers herself with Jesus to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁶

By receiving the Holy Communion⁶⁷ the faithful renews their faith in Christ. In religious terms, 'communion' also refers to '[a] body of people united by common religious faith and rites; a church or denomination; an organized body professing one faith.'⁶⁸ In a broader sense, one associates the term 'communion' with union, mutuality and sharing and, of course, communication – all associations that will be mobilised here. In the physical act of Communion, the member of the congregation takes in the body and blood of Christ, in the form of the bread and wine placed on their tongue by

⁶³ This remains the case for the rest of her life to some extent. See Chapter 3's discussion of 'The Father Story' for a reading of the ways in which Nin and her father shaped their respective self-presentations around the other.

⁶⁴ See Henke and Ellen G. Friedman, especially Friedman's 'Sex with Father: The Incest Metaphor in Anaïs Nin,' in *Anaïs Nin's Narratives*, ed. Anne T. Salvatore, 79-89.

⁶⁵ See Deirdre Bair, Suzette Henke and Noël Riley Fitch. Chapter 3 will address some of these incest narratives both in Nin's work and in various approaches towards it.

⁶⁶ Peter M. J. Stravinskias, *Catholic Dictionary* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002), 302.

⁶⁷ Also known as the 'Eucharist.'

⁶⁸ www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 22, 2011.

the priest. Swallowing the Eucharist, the devotee believes that they are taking the body as well as the spirit of Christ into their body and spirit, so that they can ‘commune’ but also merge with Him. In Nin’s communion fantasies, she imagines kinds of contact that stop short of this interpenetration but, arguably, evoke it.

When she is taking Communion, Nin imagines that it is her father’s body rather than Christ’s that she is receiving and that is present. The kiss allows Nin to maintain an idealised version of her father as a separate entity, in a way that the interpenetrative ramifications of the Catholic Communion do not. Simultaneously, to quote Julia Kristeva on the relationship between the lover and their other, Nin is able to ‘imagine [herself] similar, merging with him, and even indistinguishable from him.’⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that Nin never thinks beyond the point of the kiss. Doing so, Nin adheres to one cinematic model of the kiss as a romantic end-point.

From her first depiction of Communion in *Linotte*, Nin’s thoughts turn to her father:

This morning at Communion I saw a father and mother with a little girl of about six, all three taking Communion. Why can I not have my father with me as well? Why can I not have the joy of Communion together with Papa and Maman? Alas, how long it has been since I had a papa to kiss! That idea makes me weep many times. Today I thought about it even more deeply and my Communion was just for Papa.⁷⁰

Nin’s initial fantasy is of her family reunited although she does not include her two brothers in this vision. But this desire for a reunion quickly becomes a reunion for two – ‘how long it has been since I had a papa to kiss!’ It is her father’s kiss that Nin misses and the same kiss that will prove his presence. A subsequent passage delineates more explicitly the associations Nin makes between kissing and communion:

At the moment of Communion, it seems more as though I am kissing and hugging Papa, rather than receiving the body of Christ. The moment is sweet. [...] I am jealous of other little girls with their papas. I think that I might also be with my Papa, but I console myself by saying: Soon I shall be with him again.⁷¹

The Communion’s promise to produce ‘the real and substantial presence of Jesus Christ’ instead produces Nin’s father. Although Nin recognises the difference between the fantasy of her father’s presence produced ‘at the moment of Communion’ and the reality of her father’s absence, the Communion functions as a kind of consolation that ‘[s]oon I

⁶⁹ *Tales of Love*, 33.

⁷⁰ *Linotte*, 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 27.

shall be with him again.’⁷²

Apart from Suzette Henke’s essay ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire*,’ there have been few readings of the Communion-father narrative in *Linotte*. Henke uses a Freudian framework to argue that Nin’s absent father stands in for her superego: ‘Nin constantly had to confront and attempt to propitiate a stern superego symbolic of the law and word of the absent Father/God.’⁷³ This association has been well-forged and serves Henke’s purpose - to argue that Nin’s absent father dominated her life and work. In summary, Henke argues that Nin unconsciously blamed herself for her father leaving the family and that this guilt manifested in turning her father into a God-like figure. ‘Nin,’ writes Henke,

unconsciously [...] accused herself of an original sin of filial desire, a primordial transgression that drove Daddy away. She virtually apotheosized the figure of the absent parent, transforming him into an imaginary God of judgment and devotion.⁷⁴

In *Linotte*, Nin gives no indication that she believes her ‘filial desire’ for her father has driven him away. Henke bestows upon herself the ability to read Nin’s unconscious, finding there the Biblical site of original sin which she also reads as the Freudian primal scene. However, Henke’s reading does demonstrate the potential for Nin’s Communion narrative to invite a Freudian reading. But here, Freud will not be used to speculate about Nin’s unconscious life or to read her father as an introjected super-ego. Furthermore, as Nin had certainly not read Freud at the point that she was producing her Communion fantasies, I am not suggesting that they are informed by her knowledge of Freud. Instead, I want to use Freud’s theories of the Communion as a starting point for thinking about the work that the Communion does in *Linotte* with the recognition that, as a post-Freudian reader, to deny the ideological drift from Father to father would be to protest too much.

Freud published *Totem and Taboo*, in which he addresses this slippage between Father/father, the year before Nin began writing her diary.⁷⁵ In it, he discusses the processes of the ‘religio-social institution’ of totemism which ‘has been long abandoned

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Suzette Henke, ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire*’ in *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Nalbantian, 120.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 122.

⁷⁵ In 1913.

as an actuality and replaced by newer forms.’⁷⁶ Left behind by the practices of totemism are the ‘slightest traces [...] in the religions, manners and customs of the civilized people of to-day.’⁷⁷ One such trace can be found in the rituals of the Catholic Communion. Freud forges a connection between God, the Father, and the ‘father.’

The psychoanalysis of individual human beings [...] teaches us with quite special insistence that the god of each of them is formed in the likeness of his father, that his personal relation to God depends on his relation to his father in the flesh and oscillates and changes along with that relation, and that at bottom God is nothing other than an exalted father.⁷⁸

By this logic, Nin wouldn’t have to take Communion to associate the Father with her father. In Freud’s theory, everyone has their own personal father-shaped god - an intimate view of religion that removes it from the public institution of the church. The father interposes between God and the faithful subject, much as he does for Nin in her Communion fantasies. If anything, in Freud’s model the subject’s relationship with God is a secondary product of their relationship with their father. Freud’s reading also emphasises the ‘fleshiness’ of the father, in common with Nin’s communion fantasies, where her father’s flesh works as proof of his presence. Nin cannot think of God without thinking of her father ‘in the flesh’ and her own contact with this flesh through a kiss or embrace. The corporeal father for both Freud and Nin is *more real* than God, the Father.

In his discussion of the Catholic Communion, Freud draws on existing readings by William Robertson Smith. As Ivan Strenski identifies, Freud shares a view of the Communion with Robertson Smith that has its roots in totemic acts of sacrifice:

Along with Robertson Smith, Freud believed that totemism – worship of a totem animal, at least provisionally – was the earliest form of religion. This worship took the form of a communal rite in which the totem was sacrificed, then shared and eaten by the entire community. It was by means of this common totemic, sacrificial banquet that the community achieved and enjoyed union with their deity.⁷⁹

In *Totem and Taboo*, however, Freud is less interested in the eating of this sacrifice as a form of Communion, and more in what the sacrifice says about religion and the relationship between fathers and sons in the first place. As Daniel Burston puts it,

⁷⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913) in *The Origins of Religion: Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 50.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Totem*, 209.

⁷⁹ Ivan Strenski, *Thinking about religion: an historical introduction to theories of religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 249.

Christianity for Freud ‘was the last and most ambitious attempt in a series of mystery-cult religions that try to resolve the hateful, affectionate, and guilty impulses transmitted from one generation to the next.’⁸⁰ The totemic sacrifice, which Freud comes to read as a precursor to the Eucharist, enacts the killing and consuming of the father by the son as both a form of vengeance and homage to the father.⁸¹ ‘The Christian communion,’ writes Freud, ‘is essentially a fresh elimination of the father, a repetition of the guilty deed’ - that being the killing of the father by the son.⁸² According to Daniel Burston, ‘Christ’s paradoxical identification with the father, ostensibly a guarantee of redemption, really means that the father has been slain and eaten once more.’⁸³

One could pick many faults with Freud’s reading of the relationship between the totemic sacrifice and the Communion. Such bones have been picked elsewhere.⁸⁴ I am more interested in the idea of the Communion as a self-perpetuating process, one which relies on a swing between absence and presence. In *Linotte*, the Communion represents a series of moments where Nin renews her faith in the possibility of a reunion with her father. This renewal relies on a prior moment of crisis where Nin loses hope in this possibility, then subsequently regains it through taking Communion, only to lose it again when the Communion has ended:

This morning at Communion, I wept, my heart was full of happiness, a nameless joy [...] The moment when I close my eyes and speak to Papa and kiss him makes an impression that lasts all day long, for it seems to me I hear Papa’s voice, I see him, and when I open my eyes that vision that I love disappears and I weep. [...] I wake up, I understand the foolishness of those thoughts, those visions.⁸⁵

There is a flickering between presence and absence here that speaks to the Communion as an activity that relies as much on moving apart as coming together, on disappearance as much as appearance. Nin’s first actual fantasy of the kiss-as-Communion follows a dream of communication:

Each time I take Communion the thought of Papa becomes sadder and I don’t know why. Last night I dreamed that I received a letter from Papa in which he said: I am coming. Oh, if it were true! [...] I write to Papa and always ask him to

⁸⁰ Daniel Burston, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 42.

⁸¹ In *Totem*, Freud reads this vengeance as arising from the father’s possessiveness over the women in the community.

⁸² *Totem*, 217.

⁸³ Burston, *ibid.*

⁸⁴ See, for example Kelley A. Raab’s, *When Women Become Priests: the Catholic Women’s Ordination Debate* (Columbia University Press, 2000), 88-92.

⁸⁵ *Linotte*, 48.

come. I keep hoping and perhaps he will come.⁸⁶

What does it mean to ‘come’ or to be ‘coming’? To come is a kind of promise that need not be fulfilled, it is its *possibility* that matters. The possibility that Nin’s father is coming could feasibly continue indefinitely (one could always be ‘coming’ and never ‘arrive’). According to Jacques Derrida, ‘to come’ belongs, fittingly, for our discussion here, to what Derrida calls the ‘messianic future’:

The messianic future is an absolute future, the very structure of the to-come that cannot in principle come about, the very open-endedness of the future that makes it impossible for the present to draw itself into a circle, to close in and gather around itself.⁸⁷

According to Caputo, discussing Derrida, the promise of the second coming of the Messiah is a very particular kind of time (hence ‘messianic future’) which reveals the open-endedness of the idea ‘to come.’ This messianic future relies, in fact, on the Messiah *never* appearing physically:

The essential indeterminacy of the messianic future, of the figure of the Messiah, is of the essence of its non-essence. The non-presence of the Messiah is the very stuff of his promise. For it is in virtue of the messianic that we can always, must always, have no alternative but to say “come.” We can and we must pray, plead, desire the coming of the Messiah.⁸⁸

The imaginary letter from Joaquin Nin which says that he is ‘coming’ signifies this kind of non-present presence that Caputo theorises. Nin’s desire for her father relies on the dream that he is coming, on him sending letters that he is coming, and on there being no end to this coming. The desire produced by this ‘coming’ is not contingent on Nin’s father making a promise. Nin’s desire needs something to reach for, a distance to move across - both emotional and geographical. Nin needs her father *to refuse to say he is coming*, for her to dream that he is. Equally, the Communion fantasy (a fantasy of ‘coming’ in and of itself) constitutes itself both through Christ’s absence and a belief in the possibility, the promise of his presence. As Caputo asserts: ‘[t]he Messiah is a very special promise, namely, a promise that would be broken were it kept, whose possibility is sustained by its impossibility.’⁸⁹

Other critics have considered this relationship between distance and proximity in

⁸⁶ Ibid, 27.

⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation With Jacques Derrida* (USA: Fordham University Press, 2004), 162.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 162.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 163.

the Catholic Communion. Leigh Gilmore, writing of medieval women mystics' relationship with Christ, argues that the Communion signifies a desire for interpenetration: '[f]or many of the women mystics, what distance there is from the body of Christ they seek to span, and what embeddedness there is in 'my body' they seek to challenge.'⁹⁰ The key phrase here is 'seeks to' which functions like 'coming,' in that it signals the *promise* of spanning and the challenge to corporeal embeddedness rather than the fulfillment of this desire. This distance from Christ generates desire, just as the distance between Nin and her father makes her want him. Gilmore's reading of the Communion also allows us to think about Nin's desire for inter-embodiment. As we have seen, Joaquin Nin-Culmell's Preface presented Nin as a subject-in-isolation rather than a subject-in-relation, rendering Nin without desire for another. Yet *Linotte* is overflowing with this desire, moments where Nin reaches outside of herself, where she craves, needs, wants and extends herself towards her father. The very fact of desire suggests that the self *is not enough*. Kristeva writes of the expectancy generated by love that '[e]xpectancy makes me painfully sensitive to my incompleteness, of which I was not aware *before*.'⁹¹ So it is that Nin's desire for her father in *Linotte* makes the reader aware that she is not an inviolable subject, as Nin-Culmell would have it. Others get under (or at least onto) Nin's skin and she imagines inhabiting other skins. She is looking for something she feels is lost, she *misses* and hence, in a way, is missing. What is missing is the kissing.

The kiss is a moment where self and other can merge but also be apart, where an impression is made and then removed, an idea of reciprocity that is also a kind of *fort-da* game: now we are here, now we are not. Nin's wishes for kisses allow her to maintain an ideal vision of her father as at-a-distance whilst also crossing this distance, playing out the different kinds of contact that Kristeva identifies in love '[it] is essential for the lover to maintain the existence of that ideal other and to be able to imagine himself similar, merging with him, and even indistinguishable from him.'⁹² When I depict Nin as a 'lover' here, it is not with the intention of casting her desire for her father as definitively sexual. The language of the kiss and the Communion, the idea of bodies crossing over and into each other, even the figure of desire all belong to a well-

⁹⁰ Gilmore, 133.

⁹¹ Kristeva, 5.

⁹² Kristeva 33.

rehearsed sexual poetics. This chapter does not seek to add to this rehearsal. Rather, the following discussion on the kiss thinks through the different ways that Nin casts her subjectivity through the ways that she kisses and is kissed in *Linotte*.

Nin imagines kisses with her father both away from and as a part of her Communion fantasies. Following her desire that her father ‘come,’ Nin writes ‘[a]t the moment of Communion, it seems more as though I am kissing and hugging Papa, rather than receiving the body of Christ. The moment is sweet.’⁹³ The Communion, as Gilmore has argued, signifies the ‘capacity for interpenetration’ between Christ’s and the faithful’s body.⁹⁴ But Nin imagines a different kind of contact. She does not imagine admitting her father’s body *into* her own or being admitted into his but, instead, imagines hugging him. The hug is a kind of enfoldment but not interpenetrative in the way that Gilmore theorises the Communion.⁹⁵ The hug need not necessarily be a reciprocal act. The possibility of this hug allows Nin to imagine making an impression on her father, touching him, holding him, in such a way that their bodies remain *outside* of each other. In this sense, the hug is more of a sustainable act of intimacy than the taking of Communion. Once one has swallowed the Communal wafer then one has to prolong the act of contact with Christ by imagination alone. Hugging a person is a way to feel their body for as long as one chooses (presuming that the other does not escape one’s grasp). Nin can prolong her father’s presence through the hug in a way that she does not imagine through the Communion.

The kiss is different. Whilst the hug, once entered into, could be an almost static pose, the kiss relies on movement. The OED defines the kiss as ‘[t]o press or touch with the lips (at the same time compressing and then separating them).’⁹⁶ Would a kiss still be a kiss if the participants merely held their lips together? According to Adam Phillips, a kiss is the closest thing to eating without actually eating. In ‘Plotting for Kisses,’ Phillips provides a psychoanalytic reading of the kiss which theorises its relationship with eating, annihilation and auto-eroticism. Kissing, according to Phillips, enacts a kind of restraint towards the other, it is ‘the sign of taming, of controlling the potential – at least in fantasy – to bite up and destroy the other person.’⁹⁷ As we saw with Freud’s

⁹³ *Linotte*, 27.

⁹⁴ Gilmore, 133.

⁹⁵ Gilmore writes of how the female mystics ‘were enfolded by and enfolded the body of Christ.’ 133-4.

⁹⁶ www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 22, 2011.

⁹⁷ Adam Phillips, ‘Plotting for Kisses,’ in *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* (London: Faber and Faber

theory of the Communion, eating the father's body signified both an annihilation of this body as well as an homage to it. The faithful annihilated the Father in order to renew him. This is consuming in order to renew.

Here, Freud's notion of 'identification' is also useful. Freud describes the 'ambivalent'⁹⁸ nature of identification which springs from it being a 'type of love which is consistent with abolishing the object's separate existence.'⁹⁹ Yet identification, as Fuss has asserted, relies on the self constituting its identity through the otherness of the other, whilst simultaneously seeking to bring this other 'into the domain of the knowable.'¹⁰⁰ This, writes Fuss, is the 'central problematic' at the heart of identification and psychoanalytic readings of it: 'how can the other be brought into the domain of the knowable without annihilating the other *as other* – as precisely that which cannot be known?'¹⁰¹

The kiss is that which performs the precariousness of identification. Holding the other at the boundaries of the self, we feel their otherness. Yet this otherness is always on the brink of annihilation. The blurring of the Communion into the kiss in *Linotte* suggests that Nin is caught between wanting, if not literally to annihilate her father, then to annihilate the distance between them. Simultaneously, Nin desires this oscillation between proximity and distance that the activity of the kiss allows. The kiss allows Nin to close up the distance from her father, to become indistinguishable from him, only to pull back again in order to enjoy the distance of his unattainability.¹⁰² Kissing is also a reciprocal activity according to Phillips, who writes that '[k]issing on the mouth can have a mutuality that blurs the distinction between giving and taking.'¹⁰³ As such it is 'potentially egalitarian,' according to Williams.¹⁰⁴ For Nin, then, kissing her father is also a way to imagine the parity of their desire. In reality, Nin's father never writes to her as much as she would like him too, never promises to come to New York, rarely tells her that he misses her. The kiss works as a resolution of all this discrepancy of

Ltd, 1994), 103.

⁹⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia,' in *On Metapsychology* (1915) (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 136.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Fuss, 4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Linda Williams writes of the 'screen kiss': '[k]isses [...] are both public visual displays and acts of mutual touch and taste grounded in a proximity that, at the limit, precludes visibility both to the kissers themselves and to the audience' in *Screening Sex* (Chesham: Duke University Press, 2008), 33.

¹⁰³ Phillips, 103.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, 49.

desire between them.

What shapes Nin's kisses? Nin watches a lot of films in *Linotte*, and it is almost certain that the screen kisses she saw informed her kiss fantasies. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have argued, '[i]n telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available.'¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, according to Adam Phillips 'it is really only from films that we can learn what the contemporary conventions might be for kissing itself.'¹⁰⁶ The screen kiss is key in shaping Nin's fantasies of communion with her father. Dreaming of kissing her father, she had never actually been kissed.

In *Screening Sex*, Linda Williams writes extensively of the screen kiss' visceral affect on the viewer:

To a barely kissed girl, the extreme close-ups, swelling music, and mysterious fade-outs offered compelling promises of a grand communion to come. If I could not exactly touch, taste and smell as the kissers themselves could do, I could sense, through sights and sounds that seemed to creep across my skin, penetrate my entire body, and generate my sympathetic puckers, how it might feel to kiss and be kissed.¹⁰⁷

Williams' theory of haptic visuality delineates the impact of the screen kiss on the viewer.¹⁰⁸ Watching screen kisses, we imagine how they would feel. We read Nin's responses to screen kisses indirectly in the kinds of framing devices she uses to stage kisses with her father:

One day at my window, where I had so often wept and where so many bitter tears had fallen, I saw the one I love, the one I adore, suddenly appear. Full of love, I rushed into the arms that were stretched out toward me. Oh, what joy! [...] The sweetness of a father's kiss.¹⁰⁹

The kisses that Nin would have seen on-screen at this point would have been pre-Hays Code kisses, but would still have been relatively chaste by today's standards.¹¹⁰ Yet they still had to perform a lot of suggestive work in a film. As Williams writes, this was 'the paradox of an era in which supposedly innocent kisses must constitute the be-all and end-all of sexual pleasure. In pre-Code era kisses this means that adults must sometimes

¹⁰⁵ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Getting a life: everyday uses of autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), 9.

¹⁰⁶ Phillips, 102.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, 26.

¹⁰⁸ See also *Thinking Through the Skin*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ *Linotte*, 23.

¹¹⁰ The Hays Code (also known as the Motion Picture Code) ran from 1930 to 1968 and governed against the showing of what it deemed 'excessive or lustful kissing, lustful embraces, suggestive postures and gestures.' Furthermore, the Hays Code dictated that 'passion should be so treated that these scenes do not stimulate the lower and base element.' See: <http://www.artsreformation.com/a001/hays-code.html>.

behave as if they were orally fixated.’¹¹¹

Williams and Mary Ann Doane both write about the kiss as the end-point in romantic scenes from this period. For Doane, ‘closure is effected by the embrace or the kiss,’¹¹² whereas, for Williams, the kiss is often followed by an ellipsis¹¹³ - a kind of break meant to signify sexual acts that could not be shown either before or during the Hays era. For Nin, the kiss functions as a similar moment of closure. Her kiss fantasies never go beyond the kiss: the scene stops there. The kiss is both enough and not enough for Nin. She returns to her own screen kisses repeatedly, staging them in slightly different ways but always with the same end point, the kiss itself. According to Steven Connor, certain acts of skin contact allow the self shape:

Some of the masochistic pleasure in being spanked, whipped, and even tickled into a condition of helplessness may sometimes, as is often suggested, come from the sensation of shapedness, boundedness and entirety that it may give to a person with an insecure sense of their own body image and boundaries.¹¹⁴

To this list of pleasures, we might add ‘kissing’ which, for Nin allows her to manipulate the boundaries between self and other, near and far, here and gone. The kiss allows her to bring her father, variously, closer and further away from her as she wishes. As such, her fantasies stand in real counterpoint to her reality - where she has no control over her father’s movements or his desire. *Linotte* performs intimacy at a distance, intimacy which allows Nin to take control of her feelings for her father and to manage his feelings for her. In her fantasies of communion, she fashions an identity in relation - one which relies on identification with her father as other. Dreaming of kissing her father, Nin controls the distance between them - touching, then not touching, then touching as she desires.

The next chapter will consider how Nin figured herself as intimate with other writers in the 1930s, particularly with D.H. Lawrence. Upon reading *Women In Love*, Nin increasingly felt that she was emotionally, intellectually and ideologically close to Lawrence. Writing a book about Lawrence was a way to perform this intimacy in public. I will argue that Nin’s written declaration of this intimacy in the form of her first published text, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, intervenes in critical accounts

¹¹¹ Williams, 47.

¹¹² Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 196.

¹¹³ ‘Usually accomplished by single cuts from shot to shot’ according to Williams, 40.

¹¹⁴ Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 35.

of modernist attitudes towards personality and emotion, leading us to consider these attitudes anew.

Feeling modernist.

Introduction.

*My modernism, so sincerely arrived at.*¹

In the last chapter, we read Nin's first diary through fantasised moments of communion with her father. These were private moments which became part of a public story, with the publication of *Linotte*. This chapter will consider more instantly public love letters in the form of Nin's first published book, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*, which performs Nin's feelings of intimacy with Lawrence through a series of highly subjective sketched responses to his oeuvre. Going public with these feelings, Nin begins her career as a (life) writer in earnest and fashions herself as modernist writer. This chapter will argue that Nin intervenes in modernist narratives of impersonality, objectivity and creativity, offering up new ways for us to think about these narratives.

Lawrence died without Nin having met him. Yet, soon after reading *Women in Love* for the first time, Nin wrote in her diary that she was a part of Lawrence's 'world'² and that she knew Lawrence intimately. Reading Lawrence,³ Nin found a language for experience that made it literary and a way to read subjectivity such that it returned as objectivity. For Nin during this period, intimacy becomes an artistic statement; from the way Nin has sex, or writes about having it, through the sympathy she feels with Lawrence, made manifest in the writing of *An Unprofessional Study*. Yet an early account reads as a moment of failed intimacy:

Sunday night D.H. Lawrence died – the deeply appreciated, the well-loved mind. I am stunned and intolerably hurt. He is dead, and my letter to him, with a review of his books, lies in my drawer. Aldous Huxley was there when he died. I went to bed early, worn out from dancing, and did not *feel* him die. His books are there, but *he* is dead, and I cannot understand this immortality they speak of. I feel the world emptier, and I know I can shout in vain my appreciation of him. He will never know.⁴

Nin has failed to reach out to Lawrence, her letter and review unsent in a drawer. Yet such is Nin's sense of intimacy with Lawrence that she is surprised she did not 'feel him

¹ *The Early Diary of Anaïs Nin, Volume Four: 1927-1931* (London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen Publishers, 1994), 464.

² *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 342.

³ Nin rarely distinguishes between the man and his work.

⁴ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 285-6.

die.’ Nin felt herself to be sympathetic to Lawrence, in the sense that ‘sympathy’ means ‘the quality or state of being affected by the condition of another with a feeling similar or corresponding to that of the other.’⁵ Yet both Nin’s unsent letters to Lawrence and the fact that she does not feel him die register as failed correspondences, moments where sympathy and appreciation do not transmit the desired feeling.

In his 1908 essay ‘Art and the Individual,’ D.H. Lawrence writes that the ‘mission’ of art is ‘to bring us into sympathy with as many men, as many objects, as many phenomena as possible.’⁶ Art connects people, it forms correspondences. By casting herself as in sympathy with Lawrence, Nin finds a way to frame her everyday experiences as literary moments. In acting out her feeling for Lawrence through writing and conversation, Nin forms new associations between art and experience, associations that come to form the bedrock of her philosophy of the ‘personal life, deeply lived.’⁷ In café conversations, at dances and in first-time encounters, Nin writes her contact with Lawrence as a kind of golden ticket into a new world, a world which Nin calls ‘modernist.’ The last section of this chapter will consider some choice moments of modernist contact after Lawrence.

In this chapter, I will argue that Nin’s fantasized relationship with D.H. Lawrence might be used to interrogate received modernist narratives of objectivity and subjectivity. I will start by briefly considering T.S. Eliot’s theory of impersonal art, a theory with intimacy issues which sought to create distance between the artist’s personal emotions and the work of art. Eliot’s theory would seem to stand in opposition to Nin’s own philosophy which championed a personal response to art and personal feelings displayed within it. However, I will argue that Nin’s theory of art and personality draws, at points, on Eliot’s theory of impersonality – with a twist. In *The Novel of the Future*, Nin writes that ‘the truest objectivity of all is to see what others see, to feel what others feel.’⁸ Nin theorises that the truest objectivity comes from subjectivity, a notion we will explore here and again in Chapter 5. This philosophy, rehearsed throughout *An Unprofessional Study* and in her diary writings on D.H. Lawrence, makes contact with

⁵ www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 22, 2011.

⁶ D.H. Lawrence, ‘Art and the Individual,’ in *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge: CUP), 2002.

⁷ Anaïs Nin, *Volume Four: 1944-7*, ed and with preface by Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: HBJ, 1971), 1.

⁸ Anaïs Nin, *The Novel of the Future* (Peter Owen, 1969), 56.

Eliot's theory of impersonality whilst radically subverting its meaning.

To a large extent, contemporaneous critical responses to D.H. Lawrence's work often read the writer himself as having an excess of personality as well as writing too much about (his own) feelings. To an extent, critics have responded to Nin in the same way, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 5. Both Nin and Lawrence have been tarnished with accusations of excessive emotionality, not to mention excessive autobiographies.⁹ Yet following Lawrence's death, several critical texts attempted to bring him back to life through autobiographical readings of the books he left behind, texts which not only read Lawrence's autobiography but also displayed deeply personal responses to his work.¹⁰

Nin should be very much counted as a writer who wrote about Lawrence because of personal reasons. I will argue that Nin wrote *An Unprofessional Study* with the feeling that she knew Lawrence better than he knew himself coupled with a missionary zeal to show uninitiated readers around Lawrence's 'world.' The resulting text is often difficult, if not impossible, to read as a work of criticism. Where does Lawrence start and Nin stop? Whose words are we reading? The little distance that there is between Nin and Lawrence is produced through moments where she corrects him because he is not yet quite in control of his ideas.¹¹ Although it presents itself as a work of uncritical sympathy from one writer to another, Lawrence and Nin often speak with one voice in *An Unprofessional Study*.

In terms of critical accounts of modernism, Nin has been largely absent from anthologies, surveys, and feminist reclamation projects of female modernist writers. One might think that Nin would have been an obvious candidate for inclusion within these projects, bearing in mind her literary connections (Antonin Artaud, Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell and D.H. Lawrence, by dint of her work on him), large body of fictional and non-fictional work and colourful biography. Whilst Nin does make an appearance in Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*¹² she does not feature in arguably the most major effort (to date) to rediscover and prioritise the

⁹ See introduction.

¹⁰ We can liken the personal tone of certain critical responses to Lawrence with critical responses to Nin. See introduction and Chapter 5 for an account of how critics have responded personally to Nin.

¹¹ But even these moments read as familiar nudges in the 'right' direction, such as a teacher might give to a student.

¹² Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

work of modernist women writers: Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism*.¹³ I will not be arguing here that Nin should have featured more heavily in previous accounts of female-authored modernism, but rather, will be making the case for a re-reading of Nin and modernism which pays closer attention to the ways in which she combined a theory of life-writing with seemingly incompatible, typically high modernist ideas about the place and purpose of art. By making this case, I take my cue from Max Saunders who has argued convincingly for a new account of modernism and modernist writers which recognises the influence of autobiography, even on Eliot's theory of impersonality.¹⁴

Tookey has argued that Nin's name carries with it associations that potentially distance her from her literary contemporaries:

While [Internet] searches for 'H.D.' or 'Djuna Barnes' turn up sites produced by and for academics, a search for 'Anaïs Nin' reveals sites with fanzine-style material, such as 'letters' and adulatory tributes to Nin from her fans, mixed in with scholarly information.¹⁵

If 'H.D.' and 'Djuna Barnes' (two writers often grouped with Nin) are names which circulate mainly in academic and critical discourses, Nin's name also circulates within popular culture - perhaps more easily than it does in academia.¹⁶ One could speculate that this is, in part, down to a critical legacy that Nin herself had a hand in making. Her diaries were marketed in the 1970s as accessible texts that spoke to the average woman - if this average woman was white, middle-class, well-educated and a certain kind of feminist.¹⁷ Although Nin strove for recognition of her work within academia,¹⁸ she marshalled critical responses to her work in this period by a variety of means,¹⁹ ensuring that the majority of critical responses to her work from the 1970s display varying degrees of hagiography. The diaries were republished in unexpurgated form in the 1990s, when many feminist critics were interested in rediscovering and reclaiming

¹³ Bonnie Kime Scott, ed., *The Gender of Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

¹⁴ See Max Saunders, *Self-Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Literature*, 2.

¹⁵ Tookey, 3.

¹⁶ However, Nin has more of an Internet presence than either H.D. or Djuna Barnes. A search for 'H.D.' turns up page after page on 'High Definition' technology before the writer is mentioned (although search for 'Hilda Doolittle,' unsurprisingly, fares better). To date, 'Djuna Barnes' throws up 199,000 results in Google, 'Hilda Doolittle' 1,020,000 and 'Anaïs Nin' 1,560,000.

¹⁷ See Chapter 5.

¹⁸ The majority of Nin's public appearances in the 1970s took place in universities.

¹⁹ Such as denying permission for her work to be reproduced and by forming close relationships with academics who wanted to write about her work (such as Sharon Spencer and Oliver Evans) in part, to influence them.

modernist women writers. We could speculate that the publicity generated by the publication of the unexpurgated diaries disqualified Nin from being rediscovered by feminist academics, as her name had hardly fallen out of circulation. But the critical responses to Nin's work, which were mixed at best, almost certainly prevented a reconsideration of her work as a modernist. The release of Nin's unexpurgated diaries in the 1990s (following certain revelations that had gestured towards the ficticity of the diaries in the early 1980s) resulted in Nin being branded, variously, as a victim of sexual abuse, as a nymphomaniac, as a liar and as mentally ill.²⁰ This moment in Nin's critical history intersects with the point at which Bonnie Kime Scott was putting together her narratives of lost women modernists, ensuring that Nin was neither destined to be considered as a lost female modernist nor, often, a modernist at all. Critical attention was much more focused on the scandal and salacious details of Nin's life, than on her place within a modernist nexus.²¹ As such, Nin has not traditionally been a writer valued for her contributions to modernism, nor a writer that has been particularly associated with modernism.

Recent critical accounts of Nin in modernism have placed an emphasis on the importance of life-writing within modernism. Podnieks argues that because of the dominant critical figuring of the diary as 'non-literary,' Nin has been considered a 'minor' writer.²² *Daily Modernism* represents a revaluation of the diary as literary, with Podnieks arguing that 'diaries deserve a place on the literary map,'²³ and that they should be read as 'classic modernist texts.'²⁴ Modernism's 'practitioners and critics' were 'especially preoccupied with the self and how it was rendered in literary works,'²⁵ according to Podnieks, who writes that 'the diarist, as much as any other artistic figure, was central and not marginal to modernist expressions and enterprises.'²⁶ Podnieks concludes that 'the distinction between canonical male texts and devalued 'feminine' diaries breaks down as it becomes apparent that both were directed by the thematic and

²⁰ See Chapter 3.

²¹ See introduction for a reading of Suzanne Nalbantian attempted to move attention towards Nin's art and away from her personal life in the 1990s, and the problems with this strategy.

²² Podnieks, *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anaïs Nin*, 9. Podnieks is responding to Deirdre Bair's statement that Nin is a 'major minor writer' here. See Deirdre Bair, xviii.

²³ Ibid, 10.

²⁴ Podnieks, 71.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Podnieks, 81. In this aspect of Podnieks' argument we can see commonalities with the arguments that Max Saunders makes for the place of life-writing in modernism in *Self Impression*.

stylistic concerns of literary modernism.’²⁷ *Daily Modernism* also argues²⁸ that women writers ‘lived modernism as much as they wrote it.’²⁹ Nin affirms Podnieks’ theory that modernism was a lived experience. However, this chapter will also argue that a crucial part of Nin’s ‘living modernism’ *was* the writing of it. That is to say, Nin came to what she would eventually call ‘my modernism’³⁰ through writing and reading and, especially, through writing about reading.

In “‘Dismaying the Balance:’ Anaïs Nin’s Narrative Modernity,’³¹ Philippa Christmass argues that ‘Nin’s early fiction in particular is deserving of greater recognition as part of the modernist oeuvre.’³² Christmass identifies Nin’s ‘refusal to write to a formula’³³ as symptomatic of a brand of literary radicalism that puts her into contact with writers such as Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, Jean Rhys, Kay Boyle and Virginia Woolf.³⁴ In common with these writers, Nin’s texts ‘display a resistance’ to those themes which concerned the ‘high modernist avant-garde’³⁵

Themes of dehumanization, alienation, and violence are replaced with subtle evocations of personal exchange, relationship, and shifting emotional states. Nin’s texts embody the corporeal, intimate, and introspective qualities that critics of modernist narrative, as well as some of the high modernists themselves, dismissed as self-indulgent, narcissistic and “feminine.”³⁶

One cannot disagree with the attributes that Christmass applies to Nin’s texts. Yet Christmass’ reading of Nin’s work as ‘resistant’ to high modernism will be challenged by this chapter which will argue that, while Nin engaged with the personal, the emotional and the corporeal in her work, she still drew on the rhetoric that Christmass attributes to the high modernist avant-garde, in making it her own.³⁷

Shari Benstock reads Nin’s prose-poem *House of Incest* as representing ‘an

²⁷ Ibid, 80.

²⁸ With reference to Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers in *Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940* (London: The Women’s Press, 1987).

²⁹ Podnieks, 9.

³⁰ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 464.

³¹ Philippa Christmass, “‘Dismaying the Balance:’ Anaïs Nin’s Narrative Modernity,’ in *Anaïs Nin’s Narratives*, ed. Anne T. Salvatore (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 189-212.

³² Ibid, 189.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 190.

³⁵ Ibid, 196.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Although I do not have the space to develop a critique of Christmass’ essay here, this allocation of certain themes to the high modernist avant-garde and others to female modernists’ writers strikes me as deeply problematic - in as much as it erases the alterity of the texts produced within both camps.

apocalyptic vision shared by all of Europe in the thirties.’³⁸ Benstock argues that, in writing *House of Incest*, Nin’s ‘experimental narrative methods derived from her early interest in Surrealism and psychoanalysis.’³⁹ Although Benstock presents *House of Incest* as in tune with the mood of the time, she argues that ‘Nin’s work was clearly at odds with the predominant literary mood of the thirties and was misunderstood by the publishers and literary agents who examined it,’ an interpretation that bears out in reviews of *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*.⁴⁰ Benstock also depicts Nin as a figure who ‘chose to live apart from the larger culture,’⁴¹ a decision which she shared in common with H.D.⁴² Benstock attributes lack of commercial success in the 1930s to this eschewal of ‘public activism.’⁴³ Along with Djuna Barnes and Jean Rhys, Nin ‘experienced difficulties in finding a reading public because [her fiction] seemed to exploit an entirely private, even secret, female experience’ out of tune with ‘a political climate that demanded social relevance in literature.’⁴⁴

Tookey, Podnieks, Benstock and Christmass have in common a tendency to put Nin in contact with more well-known female modernists.⁴⁵ Tookey reads Nin alongside H.D., Podnieks reads her diary alongside the diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White and Elizabeth Smart, and Christmass compares Nin’s use of language to that of Gertrude Stein.⁴⁶ This is comparison as a form of legitimization that forms an uncanny echo with the kind of relationship Nin has to Lawrence in the 1930s, but also suggests the way in which we understand writers through their sympathy with other writers. Tookey and Podnieks, in particular, claim that Nin should be read as a modernist writer in her own right whilst putting her into constellations with more critically respected writers. It is who Nin can be seen as relating to that often initiates her inclusion into that nebulous category of modernism, when she is included at all. These combinations are undoubtedly valuable in shedding new light on Nin’s oeuvre. There is an attempt in Nin criticism from the 1990s onwards, to wrest Nin’s name away from the ‘bad’ associations it earned in the early 1990s by putting it in new combinations with ‘cleaner’ names,

³⁸ Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940*, 432.

³⁹ Ibid, 430.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 435.

⁴² Ibid, 31.

⁴³ Ibid. Nin would also be dogged by accusation of political apathy in the 1970s, as we see in Chapter 5.

⁴⁴ Benstock, 424.

⁴⁵ Such as Helen Tookey’s alignment of Nin with H.D.

⁴⁶ Christmass, 205.

cleaning Nin up by proxy.

Accounts of Nin as a modernist speak to an anxiety about what we ‘do’ with Nin as a writer and cultural figure. As Tookey has argued, Nin moves across cultures, contexts, and genres, meaning that she is difficult to place in any one era, including modernism.⁴⁷ However, I will be arguing here that, whilst we should appreciate the ways in which Nin’s work travels across time, contexts and genres, her contributions to modernist ways of thinking and feeling have been under-theorised.

Nin critics have argued that the connection between life and art in Nin’s oeuvre, particularly in her diary, should be revalued as exemplary of a non-canonical modernism interested in the subjective, the corporeal, the autobiographical and the personal, as opposed to a modernist poetics of impersonality. In truth, modernist feelings are much more mixed up.⁴⁸ As Saunders has recently argued, narratives of impersonality and personality were often in dialogue in ways that the majority of modernist scholarship, to date, has not imagined. Even the narrative of modernist impersonality which required ‘a rejection or abjuring of biography’⁴⁹ should be read as part of a wider conversation about modernist life-writing, according to Saunders:

Where those modernists who inveighed against auto/biography did so in response to its prevalence and pervasiveness, so their interventions can be redescribed as contributions to the modernist discourse of auto/biography and auto/biografiction. Reading such interventions in this way makes clear the extent to which modernism is often not negating auto/biography but making it new. Thus to synthesize modernism and life-writing is to redefine modernism.⁵⁰

In the early 1930s, Nin’s developing theory of the personal and the objective draws both on a language of impersonality, and a language of vitality, which is arguably also a language of life-writing, heavily influenced by Nin’s reading of D.H. Lawrence. Whilst the latter author undoubtedly is the stronger influence, Nin’s awareness of objectivity as an artistic ideal is drawn from Eliot, even though her version of objectivity radically differs from his. As Eliot’s theory of impersonality is one of the most familiar of modernist narratives, I will allude to it briefly here as part of a backdrop to my main argument: that Nin’s relationship with Lawrence facilitates Nin’s own version of life-

⁴⁷ Tookey, 2-3.

⁴⁸ See Justus Nieland, *Feeling modern: the eccentricities of public life* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

⁴⁹ Saunders, 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 13.

writing.⁵¹

Eliot's 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' argues that the 'progress of an artist' takes place through 'a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.'⁵² The ideal for the artist is to keep his personal emotions away from his art, as 'the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind who creates.'⁵³ Poetry is not 'the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.'⁵⁴ According to Peter Nicholls:

The literary values of this type of modernism are founded [...] on an attempt to dissociate desire from any form of identification, and on the appeal to the visual and objective which affirms distance and difference.⁵⁵

As such, Eliot's theory is a form of defence against the possibility of the slippage of life into art, what Nicholls calls 'an *ascetic* refusal to collapse art into life.'⁵⁶ That Nicholls reads this as an 'ascetic refusal' gestures towards the underlying anxiety in Eliot's work regarding the potential for this collapse. There was a need for strict discipline to maintain these boundaries, lest they crumble.

If Eliot was engaged in an attempt to hold back 'the "chaos" of subjectivity',⁵⁷ from impinging upon the art object, then D.H. Lawrence ushered this chaos in. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, Lawrence writes that 'men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision. [...] Then it is unfolded into life and art.'⁵⁸ This passage is characteristic of Lawrence's thinking – that man's personally developed philosophy *unfolds* into his life and art.⁵⁹ This idea of the unfolding of personal vision into art speaks to an expansion of the personal into the artistic that is radically removed from Eliot's call for boundaries, distances and processes to stand in between the personal and the artistic. Indeed, as Saunders writes 'a certain kind of exclusionary critic' might view Lawrence as 'not impersonal enough to count as [a] modernist' at all, a view that could also be applied to Nin whose emphasis on

⁵¹ See Maud Ellman's *The Poetics of Impersonality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), for a full account of Eliot's theory of impersonality and its effects within modernism.

⁵² T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 17. Eliot's choice of pronoun.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁵ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), 197.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵⁸ D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (Secker, 1930), 10.

⁵⁹ For the sake of clarity here and faithfulness to Lawrence's meaning, I use his choice of pronouns.

subjectivity is at odds with one critical narrative of modernism.⁶⁰ Paul Eggert has argued that Lawrence himself inspired divisive critical responses in the 1920s and early 1930s:

Lawrence was either the mother-dominated and then sex-crucified man whose confused intellectual writhings only intermittently permitted his unquestioned sensitivity to natural beauty and spirit of place to find expression (Murry).⁶¹ Or he was the late-Romantic genius who wrote from his daimon; the life-affirming hero who struggled against an unpropitious upbringing and a sickly body to articulate the spiritual sickness of modern society [...] and who offered a vision of rebirth by means of a new openness to impulse and feeling.⁶²

To some extent, it is these caricatures that Nin viewed herself as rescuing Lawrence from when she came to write *An Unprofessional Study*, a project which forms interesting parallels with the ways in which critics such as Nalbantian attempted to resituate Nin in the 1990s.⁶³ Like Nin, Lawrence ‘engenders strong feeling,’ feeling displayed in critical responses to his work and in dramatic caricatures of his personality such as those sketched out by Eggert above.⁶⁴

Nin was not the only person who wanted to explain Lawrence shortly after he died. In his 1931 account of Lawrence’s life and work *Son of Woman*, Middleton Murry reads Lawrence’s fiction as a key to his personal meaning. Murry writes that ‘[i]n the work [of Lawrence] I found the key to the man – the inmost reality of the man, that had eluded [...] me when we were friends, or enemies together.’⁶⁵ For Murry, Lawrence’s texts provide the reader with access to his ‘inmost reality.’ One can see a commonality here with Nin’s desire to penetrate Lawrence’s world. Both Murry and Nin’s works on Lawrence were published shortly after his death, pointing towards a desire to bring Lawrence back by close reading but also offering the ultimate opportunity to explain Lawrence to himself now that he could no longer answer back. Although Nin had not discovered psychoanalysis at this point, this moment speaks to a desire to delve into Lawrence’s unconscious.

Linda Ruth Williams has written of much Lawrence criticism that it ‘has often dictated that passionate personal response is the most vigorous way of reading him’

⁶⁰ Saunders, 12. Saunders goes on to restate his insightful claim that ‘the autobiographical is central to modernist narrative.’

⁶¹ Writer and friend of Lawrence, Middleton Murry.

⁶² Paul Eggert, ‘The biographical issue: lives of Lawrence,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to D.H. Lawrence*, ed. Anne Fernihough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 157.

⁶³ See Introduction.

⁶⁴ Jan Pilditch ed., *The Critical Response to D.H. Lawrence* (Greenwood Press, 2001), xv.

⁶⁵ Middleton Murry, *Son of Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931), 4.

largely due to a prevalent perception that Lawrence himself ‘wrote personally, with the power of individual history implicit in every fictional scenario.’⁶⁶ Lawrence induces autobiographical urges in critics: ‘writers on Lawrence seem to need to tell *their own* stories in writing about Lawrence through *his* stories.’⁶⁷ Indeed, writing in his 1925 essay ‘Accumulated Mail’ Lawrence himself muses: ‘I always find that my critics, pretending to criticize me, are analysing themselves.’⁶⁸ Anaïs Nin’s *Unprofessional Study* performs this tendency for life-writing through Lawrence’s writing that Williams identifies. The next section of this chapter argues that Nin stages her encounter with Lawrence so as to foreground a shared set of sympathies, fashioning herself as an artist by association with Lawrence.

Reading Lawrence.

*The world of art is only the truth about the real world.*⁶⁹

Volume Four of Nin’s published diary opens with the following lines:

Something or other has been developing the worst in me. I must have been a false ascetic before, because now my spirituality is leaving me, I live with my body, I am led by many sensations I never felt before, and I am full of warmth and leapings and languors [...] It is as if in this complete and deep blossoming of myself which is taking place, the physical is trying to regain its place. I am harder emotionally. I am wide awake, strong, intensely alive but less idealistic.⁷⁰

Nin had not read Lawrence at this point, yet this passage nevertheless anticipates the vocabulary of his work by privileging the body as the site of pleasurable experience.⁷¹ Nin’s language of ‘leapings and languors’ can be likened to what Linda Ruth Williams calls Lawrence’s philosophy of ‘vivid life,’⁷² a philosophy which champions unconscious sex,⁷³ sensual experience and what Williams refers to as ‘expressed liveliness.’⁷⁴

However, Nin was no Lady Chatterley awaiting her Mellors. She read the awakening of her body as an awakening of her agency, writing that she had become

⁶⁶ Linda Ruth Williams, *D.H. Lawrence* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ D.H. Lawrence, ‘Accumulated Mail’ in *Selected Essays* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1950), 294.

⁶⁹ D.H. Lawrence, *Women In Love* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 1992), 521

⁷⁰ *Volume Four*, 1.

⁷¹ See *Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

⁷² Williams, *D.H. Lawrence*, 18.

⁷³ As opposed to Lawrence’s notion of ‘sex in the head.’ See Linda Ruth Williams, *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D.H. Lawrence* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

⁷⁴ Williams, *D.H. Lawrence*, 21.

‘cruel’ because she was ‘no longer submissive.’⁷⁵ Whilst there is not the room to fully delineate Lawrence’s theory of femininity here which, in and of itself, is fraught with contradictions, in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence writes Connie Chatterley’s coming into her body as directly related to her moving out of her mind:

Her tormented modern-woman’s brain still had no rest. Was it real? And she knew, if she gave herself to the man, it was real. But if she kept herself for herself, it was nothing [...] And at last, she could bear the burden of herself no more. She was to be had for the taking.⁷⁶

Connie must let go of herself before she can enjoy sexual experience with Mellors. Yet, for Nin the new physical life, this ‘complete and deep blossoming’ of herself, is coupled with a new *intellectual* life, a ‘freedom’ which she describes as both distressing and intoxicating.⁷⁷

In the two years that passed between Nin’s account of her new physical sensations and her reading *Women in Love*, she had a brief career as a Spanish dancer, read Proust, found an English literature teacher,⁷⁸ and fell in love with American writer and academic John Erskine, with whom she had a series of tortuous, unconsummated encounters. In the same entry that Nin writes fully about Lawrence for the first time, she expresses guilt for having been unfaithful to her husband, Hugh Guiler and writes a ‘real love letter’⁷⁹ to him, filled with feelings:

making wild promises, feeling hot with shame, icy with fears of myself and desiring death because I live with a saint whom I can’t love enough, nor wholly enough, nor divinely enough.⁸⁰

This passage is important because it demonstrates how Nin had begun to dramatise her feelings in literary terms, a tendency which would develop through her reading of Lawrence’s textual poetics of emotion. This entry continues:

I read a strange and wonderful book (*Women in Love* by D.H. Lawrence), concerned only with the description of feelings, sensations, conscious and unconscious, with ideas, and with the physical only as a transcription of spirit - though recognized as having a life in itself, as in Gerald. To do it, Lawrence had to torment and transform ordinary language; words are twisted and mishandled, sometimes beyond recognition. And he is also given to loathing and loathsomeness, which is an individual feeling that is rarely mixed with love in such an absurd way, except in people who are emotionally dissolved so it all flows together. Apart from that, he has an occult power over human life and sees

⁷⁵ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 1.

⁷⁶ D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* (London: Penguin, 2010), 165.

⁷⁷ *Volume 4*, 2.

⁷⁸ Hélène Boussinescq or ‘Boussie.’

⁷⁹ *Volume 4: 1927-1931*, 266.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

deeper than almost anyone I know. He never comes off the plane – lives permanently, naturally, and thoroughly *within*, and if it is sometimes airless, again it is, as with Huxley, a matter of being overtruthful, as sick people are who don't care so much for life.⁸¹

This 'airless' quality that Nin identifies in *Women in Love* should be read as part of a wider contemporary cultural association of introspective writing with illness. Considering the 1935 essay 'The Paradox of Literary Introspection,' Laura Marcus writes that author P. Mansell Jones 'argues both that the introspective process is allied to neurotic illness and morbidity.'⁸² Nin compares Lawrence's location on the introspective 'plane' with those 'sick people [...] who don't care so very much for life.' Here, the plane of introspection and that of life are in opposition, one cannot live permanently in both.

It is Lawrence's use of language⁸³ that most appeals to and disconcerts Nin in the passage above. Nin reads the language of *Women in Love* as producing a new textuality of sensation: words are 'twisted and mishandled,' 'torment[ed] and transform[ed]' to get feelings across.⁸⁴ By making language new, Lawrence defamiliarises language in the mode of a modernist writer, whilst still producing language (in Nin's reading of it, at least), that is deeply personal and affectively charged. Nin suggests here that Lawrence had to deform 'ordinary language' in order to access this realm of feelings and sensations. Although Nin admires Lawrence for his handling of language, this new language of feeling *for* feeling, she also reads it as a kind of sickness. Nin seems both impressed by Lawrence's lack of reverence for 'ordinary' language (and his ability to make it un-ordinary) and potentially critical of his technique: Lawrence *mishandles*. This critique is extended when Nin compares Lawrence to Aldous Huxley. Unlike Lawrence, Huxley 'has extended language, though

⁸¹ Ibid, 267.

⁸² Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, 73. Nin repeats this notion of the relationship between illness and introversion in *An Unprofessional Study* writing that 'every thinker has been in one sense morbid. Work or creation of any intensity has always produced a state of excessive sensibility.' *An Unprofessional Study*, 87.

⁸³ Diane Richard-Allerdyce writes that Nin's interest in the texture of Lawrence's language augurs this turn in her own writing. See *Anaïs Nin and the Remaking of Self: Gender, Modernism and Narrative Identity* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 22.

⁸⁴ Nin repeats this reading of Lawrence's textuality somewhat more favorably in *An Unprofessional Study*:

Lawrence often probes so intensely the significance of persons or events that they are sometimes deformed out of their normal shapes and become abstractions. But this habit of deformation of the normal is merely poetic means to an end, an end which is understanding. Through the intensity of his emotion for the smaller he divines the meaning of the greater. (20).

correctly, like a tightly drawn elastic until it wears thin.’⁸⁵ Where Huxley stretches, Lawrence deforms. Expanding upon this, Nin continues: ‘Lawrence is dangerous to the mind [...] because he flounders. He knows and he doesn’t know. At least, he doesn’t know what to do with what he knows.’⁸⁶ Lawrence’s floundering aligns with his mishandling of language, a kind of linguistic and ideological ineptitude that Nin interprets as ‘dangerous,’ possibly because it makes Lawrence unreliable as a touchstone for Nin’s own self-fashioning as an artist, in relation to Lawrence. This is compounded in the rather slippery reading of Lawrence’s knowledge he knows and he doesn’t know, and he doesn’t know what to do with what he knows.

In Lawrence’s floundering, Nin finds a space for the articulation of her own knowledge. She knows when Lawrence doesn’t (and knows when he does too). In moving Lawrence in and out of his own knowledge, Nin imagines knowing Lawrence better than he knows himself, not to mention knowing his knowledge more than he knows it. As we shall see, *An Unprofessional Study* arises from this complex dynamic that Nin imagines between herself and Lawrence. The question remains, however: what it is that Nin thinks Lawrence knows and doesn’t? She does not say here - purposefully, I would argue - as it allows her to assert a kind of intellectual superiority over Lawrence without articulating her own position. Nin can state her own claim to knowledge both with and against Lawrence without having to state what this knowledge is.

Nin’s feeling that Lawrence was ‘dangerous to the mind’ didn’t prevent her from increasingly using the writer and his work as a model for experience. Especially in her conversations with her cousin Eduardo Sanchez, ‘Lawrence’ functions as a code-word for the possibility of new encounters, more satisfying sex and relationships, and new kinds of feeling. Nin’s reading of Lawrence chimes with Murry’s depiction of him as a prophet:

“He lived through [...] experience for us.” Our business is to learn from it, to absorb his heroic experience into our own, and to go forward – to make some advance into that world of the future of which Lawrence, more keenly than any other man of his time, felt the necessity, and of which, like the prophet he was, he revealed to us the living quality.⁸⁷

This is Lawrence as visionary *extraordinaire*, an exemplar. Nin and Sanchez had many debates about what it meant to live in Lawrence’s world, a world which, arguably, was

⁸⁵ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 267.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Murry, 12. There is a larger issue at stake here regarding ways in which modernist writers were used as exemplars that I cannot address here.

their own creation, made from their interpretations of his novels and philosophy. Nin's identification with D.H. Lawrence often took the form of living as if she were a character in one of his novels. With her cousin Eduardo she pretended to be a 'Lawrence woman' to his 'Lawrence man.'⁸⁸ This characterisation through literature speaks to an 'imperative' felt by several artists in the 1930s 'to make their own lives into works of art,' as Robert Scholes asserts, arguing that writers such as Nin, Henry Miller and Dorothy Richardson were driven to produce 'monstrous chronicles of an artist-writer's daily life' as a way to fuse art with lived experience.⁸⁹ If these chronicles were not proving literary enough, they would make them so:

[i]f their lives were insufficiently artistic, they would improve them in the telling. If the work lacked shape and structure, it would compel by its monstrosity or its scandalous revelations [...] They would be resolutely modern [...] [close] to the modern ways of Proust and D.H. Lawrence. Above all, they would assert their modernity by chronicling their own, new experiences. And, if necessary, they would go to extremes to have experiences that were indubitably new. Which meant, in many cases, that they were driven to extreme actions in order to have experiences worthy of chronicling.⁹⁰

Arguably, this dynamic interchange between lived experience and writing began in earnest for Nin when she discovered Lawrence and started to think of herself as a 'Lawrence woman.' Part of Nin's sense of what it meant to be modern during this period involves sexual experimentation and the recording of such experiments, in a style that imitates D.H. Lawrence's. To some extent, reading Lawrence's literature allowed Nin to experiment sexually – a kind of permission (or legitimation, at least) by art. Nin also considered such experimentation to be a vital part of her self-fashioning as a modernist writer.

The idea that 'Lawrence' functioned as a code-word for Nin during this period plays out in her account of meeting Sanchez for the first time in many years:

Suddenly, we find ourselves in the same world, in Lawrence's world! [...] Instead of being strangers, we are so *close* that we get tense, excited, exhilarated, sizzling (as we always did when we were younger) [...] I bring my new self also – my costuming, ease, experience – a wakened woman – and my writing. [...] I rejoice over his splendid body and noble, diverting, unique face, and his slowly revealed mysteries, and his language, Lawrence's language, mine, through which understanding flows like a force, rushing us into intimacies, silent

⁸⁸ We could also read this as 'Lawrence's woman,' a further example of how intimate Nin felt herself to be with Lawrence.

⁸⁹ Robert Scholes, 'The Monstrous Personal Chronicles of the Thirties,' in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 31:3 (Summer, 1998), 415.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

communications, electric currents of livingness.⁹¹

'Lawrence' functions as a gateway for the currents of attraction flowing between Nin and her cousin (currents greatly in evidence too in the second volume of her early diary). Intimacy is produced by this common 'language' which does not belong to Lawrence but which puts the writer into a kind of fantasised *menage a trois* with Nin and Sanchez. Importantly, this encounter also goes beyond language but it is the language that allows this 'rushing [...] into intimacies,' these 'silent communications.' By casting this moment of her relationship with Sanchez as taking place beyond language, once a common language has been established, Nin also gestured toward Lawrence's desire to have sex both ways. As Williams has argued, Lawrence criticised 'sex in the head' - meaning 'sex made visible, sex in the wrong place [the mind rather than the body] and aroused to visual pleasures,'⁹² a desire to fix sex in language which Lawrence attributed to women.⁹³ Lawrence's ideal sex takes place beyond language, it is mystical⁹⁴ and in the dark, a 'darkness which therefore slips off the page.'⁹⁵ Yet, as any reader of Lawrence knows, he frequently puts sex into language. How could he depict the 'good' from the 'bad' sex otherwise? According to Williams, this speaks to a fundamental contradiction within Lawrence's oeuvre and philosophy: 'Lawrence is a writer who polemicises against writing through writing.'⁹⁶ Nin does not polemicise against writing nor, in her later diaries, is she shy of putting sex into language.⁹⁷ Yet she does share Lawrence's feeling that sex is something that transcends language, alongside his sense that, if sex *is* to be put into language it must be the right kind of language: language that invokes the mystical, a language of flows, currents and silent understanding.

Lawrence's novels became sex manuals for Nin and her husband. In an entry for April 15 1930, Nin writes: 'I give all my time to absorbing Lawrence. I live in his world. His idea of love is ours. He moves us [Nin and Guiler] both to incalculable

⁹¹ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 318.

⁹² Linda Ruth Williams, *Sex In The Head*, 1.

⁹³ We can see this in the portrayal of Connie Chatterley before she 'submits' herself to mindless sex with Mellors.

⁹⁴ A phrase that Lawrence uses especially throughout *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*.

⁹⁵ Linda Ruth Williams, *Sex In The Head*, 8.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 8-9.

⁹⁷ Despite protests to the contrary, see Chapter 5.

depths.’⁹⁸ A conversation with Guiler about ‘love and philosophy’ suggests the extent to which Lawrence had moved the couple:

We came to the conclusion that the center of our universe is our love, both as a finite, physical, human climax, and also as an infinite thing, for, said Hugh, “I certainly see and love in you not only your body, your breasts, your legs, your love-moisture, but the you beyond yourself, the you that sparks the ‘little flame between us,’ as Lawrence says.”⁹⁹

This is what we believe in.¹⁰⁰

This passage suggests that Lawrence provided Nin and Guiler with a new language for their intimacy and new ways to experience it: ‘by his own fervor and naturalness, [Lawrence] has uncovered, crystallized my love for Hugh. I marvel that I should have been so long reticent about it, shy of it.’¹⁰¹ This sexual liberation was bound up, for Nin, with a linguistic and literary liberation:

Lawrence has loosened my own tongue so much, broken down my reticence, given me a world to live in, a world where I fit. Over and over again, in his descriptions of women I find myself. In his treatment of language, in the poetic intensity of his prose, I find courage for my own writing. I find, at last, a kind of home, or nook. He would have understood my writing and me.¹⁰²

Putting aside the possibility that Lawrence might actually have considered Nin as just so much sex in the head, to Nin, Lawrence was the prophet leading by experience celebrated by Murry. This language of ‘loosening’ and ‘breaking down’ suggests the connections that Nin forged between the liberation of her body and of her writing. Nin performs intimacy here as that which gives one a home, understanding, and a language of one’s own.

In her discovery of Lawrence, Nin felt that she had found an artist she could sympathise with, who aided her own efforts to become an artist. Integral to Nin’s intimacy with Lawrence was her sense that they were both writers interested in how language could be used to express feeling. Other artists in Nin’s circle galvanized her self-image as a woman with a particular feeling for art. A letter from Antonin Artaud following a visit to an art gallery with Nin performs Nin’s own sense of her artistic sensibilities well.¹⁰³ Artaud writes:

⁹⁸ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 292.

⁹⁹ *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, 194.

¹⁰⁰ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 293.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 294.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

¹⁰³ Playwright, theatre director and theorist.

I have brought many people, men and women, to see this marvellous painting,¹⁰⁴ but this is the first time I have seen an artistic emotion touch someone and make her throb with love.¹⁰⁵

This passage combines an Eliotian language of the particular emotion of art (as distinct from personal emotions¹⁰⁶) with a Lawrencian language of the textuality of emotion: art touches Nin, and makes her ‘throb.’ Nin feels art. She also has artistic feelings:

I said once to John [Erskine], “I have an abnormal capacity for passion.” John said casually: “Many artists are oversexed.” Which is not it at all. Oversexed implies a purely physical overflow, while my “passion” includes all feelings. Perhaps the whole difference lies in the poetry.¹⁰⁷

Poetry turns sex into ‘passion.’ This rather amusing moment, where Erskine misreads Nin’s ‘artistic feeling’ as sexual coyness, speaks also to the potential, both in Nin and Lawrence’s work, for the language of abstraction (‘passion’) to slip instantly into the corporeal or concrete (‘sex’). However, one could also argue that this moment speaks to an Eliotian poetics. Nin presentation of her ‘abnormal capacity for passion’ suggests Eliot’s privileging of the universality of emotion¹⁰⁸ displayed in ‘good’ art. Nin suggests here that it is poetry that transforms her feelings, a manner of thinking arguably very much in line with Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent.’

An Unprofessional Study.

*She got no feeling off it, from my working. She had to work the thing herself, grind her own coffee.*¹⁰⁹

*One is supposed to have read everything and enjoyed everything and to understand exactly the reasons for one’s enjoyment, but not to enjoy anything excessively.*¹¹⁰

Nin wrote *An Unprofessional Study* in a hurry, off the back of a lie:

Last Friday I went to see Titus¹¹¹ [...] I happened to say that I had written a book about Lawrence – which was a Latin exaggeration [...] His ears pricked up. “Can you bring it tomorrow?”

¹⁰⁴ The painting Artaud refers to here is ‘Lot and His Daughters’ by Lucas van Leyden. The story of Lot and his daughters returns in Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁵ Antonin Artaud in a letter to Nin, *Anaïs: An International Journal*, Vol.1, 1987, 57.

¹⁰⁶ In ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent,’ Eliot refers to ‘a new art emotion,’ 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 311.

¹⁰⁸ For various readings of Eliot’s theory of the universality of emotion, see *T.S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), James Edwin Miller’s *T.S. Eliot’s Personal Wasteland: Exorcism of the Demons* (Pennsylvania State University, 1978), and *T.S. Eliot in Context*, ed. Jason Harding (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, 256.

¹¹⁰ Edmund Wilson, *Axel’s Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (1931) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 99.

¹¹¹ Edward Titus, publisher.

I was caught.
I said it needed revision. Damn little liar.¹¹²

She would proceed to write *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* in the following two weeks, according to her account. Whilst Nin referred to the finished manuscript as *D.H. Lawrence: A Study in Understanding*, it was eventually published under the title *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study*. Although we cannot be certain who chose the published title, the difference between the two titles illustrates the discrepancy between how Nin *wanted* the book to be viewed and how it was subsequently packaged. Whilst ‘understanding’ suggests the personal touch, the subjective approach to Lawrence that Nin favoured, ‘unprofessional’ could potentially be read as marking Nin out as an amateur – a fan rather than a critic.¹¹³

Both Eliot and the New Critics venerated critical objectivity. As Peter Nicholls argues, artistic technique was viewed as a form of ‘mastery.’¹¹⁴ Personal feeling for art (or artists, for that matter) was eschewed by figures like Ezra Pound and Eliot as part of an ‘appeal to the visual and objective which affirm[ed] distance and difference.’¹¹⁵ The branding of Nin’s text as an *unprofessional* study of D.H. Lawrence contradicts this narrative of critical objectivity, and functions as a code-word for how close Nin was to Lawrence within its covers.¹¹⁶ According to her editor Gunther Stuhlmann, Nin was afraid of professionalism:

When [Nin] tried to be “professional,” when she faced an amorphous, uncaring world “out there,” something, she felt, was missing. “I am terrified of my conscious work,” she concluded in 1932, “because I do not think it has any value. Whatever I do without feeling has no value. What Anaïs Nin cherished most, in life and in art, it seems, was “feeling.”¹¹⁷

Stuhlmann goes on to describe Nin’s early work on Lawrence as emerging from an ‘overflow’ of this feeling, a term which recalls Romanticism and the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling’ depicted in Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, whilst setting

¹¹² *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 379.

¹¹³ However, in a tie-in book to a film documentary, Nin would later say ‘I called it an unprofessional study, because I was very well aware of having dropped out of school early, and of being self-taught – no academic.’ See Robert Snyder’s *Anaïs Nin Observed: From a Film Portrait of a Woman as Artist* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1976), 36.

¹¹⁴ Nicholls, 196.

¹¹⁵ Nicholls, 197.

¹¹⁶ There have been several interesting readings on the professionalization of modernism. See, for example, Lawrence S. Rainey’s *Institutions of modernism: literary elites and public culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and Aaron Jaffe’s *Modernism and the culture of celebrity*.

¹¹⁷ Gunther Stuhlmann ed., *A Literate Passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller, 1932-1953* (London: W.H. Allen and Co. Plc, 1988), vii.

Nin's writing apart from the emphasis on objectivity within New Criticism.¹¹⁸ The term 'overflow' also recalls editor John Ferrone's reading of Nin's 'outbursts' in Chapter 1, whilst also reinscribing Nin's self-narrative as a writer who often wrote unconsciously, with her body.¹¹⁹ Nin confirmed this narrative upon finishing *An Unprofessional Study*, writing 'I relied on my instinct. I even wrote the book with my body, as Lawrence would have it – not always intellectually.'¹²⁰

Nin would go on to describe *An Unprofessional Study* as a work of criticism, although she tempered the perhaps negative connotations of the phrase by referring to the text as a 'tremendous piece of *creative* criticism.'¹²¹ In an amusing passage, she also 'diagnoses' herself as a critic:

Miss Lemer praised the Lawrence book to the limit [...]. Verdict: my criticism better than my stories.

Ha! said the doctor. Is that where it hurts?

Yes, right here, in the *critic zone*, I answer, and then I ask him: Can't you cure me of criticismitis?

What for?

Because I want to do some of the writing myself.

Impossible, dear lady, criticismitis is a chronic malady, a fundamental weakness.¹²²

Although Nin mused that 'to have a more powerful critical tendency' would be 'quite consistent' with her 'French quality of mind' and soothed herself with the knowledge that '[in] Gide one tendency did not exclude the other,' she nevertheless feared the loss of her creative abilities to her critical.¹²³

As it stands, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* champions subjectivity over the notion of critical objectivity and impersonality purveyed by T.S. Eliot. Yet Nin formulated her *own* version of objectivity which came through feeling. She describes her reading as 'a perpetual transcending, from my own personal evaluations [...] I may

¹¹⁸ William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Routledge, 2001), 307.

¹¹⁹ Critics Helen Tookey, Carol Siegel and Philippa Christmass read Nin's writing as anticipating the French feminist school of *l'écriture féminine* championed by Hélène Cixous in the late 1970s. Although these readings have opened up new ways of thinking about Nin's use of language and the body, I am more interested in reading her work within contemporaneous discourses about emotion and art.

¹²⁰ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 379.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 381.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 391.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 390. Coincidentally or not, Nin would never produce another full-length author study, although she did publish several collections of essays, including *The Novel of the Future* and *In Favour of the Sensitive Man* both of which included references to Lawrence.

only build a philosophy from the element of individuality.’¹²⁴ Arguably, such a philosophy is built in *An Unprofessional Study*, although it has less to do with Lawrence’s philosophy than it has to do with Nin’s development of her own ways of thinking. In an interview with Keith Berwick in 1970, Nin developed this theory of objectivity through subjectivity:

KB: One of the words that crops up again and again in your reflections is the word objectivity. Now would it be fair to say that what you’ve sought is the objectivity of intense subjectivity?

A.N: Yes, that’s a very wonderful definition. I used to call the objectivity we were taught pseudo-objectivity. I felt there was another. There is the objectivity you arrive at by some kind of very organic and sincere process. You think you really can see through the appearance of things. You can understand people’s feelings; that’s what I meant by objectivity.¹²⁵

In her use of ‘objectivity,’ Nin quite literally makes it her own but still works within the parameters of the vocabulary of New Criticism. Nin’s theory of objectivity here is closer to a version of ‘sympathy’ with others perpetuated in the nineteenth century novel’s omniscient narrator, than it is to T.S. Eliot’s notion of impersonality.

Fittingly, *An Unprofessional Study* opens with a quote by Henry James that speaks to the methods of New Criticism yet is strikingly anomalous as a point in Nin’s text: “‘The critic’s task is to compare a work with its own concrete standard of truth.’”¹²⁶ The rest of the text bears no relation to this credo. What we have instead is a text where one is never quite sure who is speaking: Nin or Lawrence. This lack of surety bears out on a visual level as, whilst Nin uses quotation marks, she never references the texts she is quoting from. As a result, unless one is completely familiar with Lawrence’s oeuvre, Nin could as well be quoting herself as quoting Lawrence. Evelyn Hinz picks up on this stylistic (and arguably, ideological) feature, writing that ‘[t]echnically, [Nin’s] method involves not stopping to identify the works of Lawrence from which she quotes but rather treating such passages as her use of his words to express her own ideas.’¹²⁷ We often get the impression that Nin is channeling Lawrence, or even that she uses

¹²⁴ *Volume Four*, 417.

¹²⁵ Interview with Keith Berwick, in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, ed. Wendy M. DuBow, 55.

¹²⁶ Anaïs Nin, *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (1931) (London: Neville Spearman Limited, 1961), 1.

¹²⁷ Evelyn J. Hinz, *The Mirror and the Garden, Realism and Reality in the Writings of Anaïs Nin* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 27.

Lawrence to ‘channel’ herself - using his words as a vessel for her ideas.

In the opening section, entitled ‘The Approach to D.H. Lawrence’s World,’ Nin casts herself as a tour-guide for the uninitiated reader: ‘[r]eading Lawrence should be a pursuit of his intuitions to the limit of their possibilities, a penetration of his world through which we are to make a prodigious voyage.’¹²⁸ She calls for a reading of Lawrence that works through sensation to match his own ‘intuitional reading.’¹²⁹ This reading-with-the-senses works to feel beneath the ‘sharpness’ of Lawrence’s textuality:

He had both a tender and a violent, a sober and an extreme way of probing feelings and entanglements. Beneath the pounding and the sharpness we must sense the poet who works through visions and the primal consciousness.¹³⁰

Nin is no longer put off by the sometimes violent or floundering texture of Lawrence’s work. Here, she arrogates to herself the ability to look beneath this textuality of feeling to deeper feelings. Elsewhere too, Nin is interested in the texture of Lawrence’s writing:

Somers in *Kangaroo* speaks of “feeling sensitive all over,” and it may be that quality in Lawrence which makes him do that very special kind of writing which sometimes looks crinkled up with sensitiveness, almost bristling with it.¹³¹

Lawrence’s writing has ‘feeling all over’ and these feelings bristle. There is a gesturing towards the potential discomfort that Lawrence’s writing causes the reader here – it is bristly, pointy, sharp. It irritates and marks. Such an affect is concomitant with Nin’s close reading of Lawrence in her diary as a writer capable of changing (one’s) feelings, of making an impression.

Nin performs her intimacy with Lawrence through a series of devices. As we have seen, one stylistic device is to leave unmarked the moments when she is quoting from Lawrence. Another rhetorical device almost gives the impression that Lawrence is speaking through Nin: ‘[f]irst of all he asks us to begin at the beginning of the world with him.’¹³² Nin positions herself as an intermediary between Lawrence’s world and the world of the reader, a medium with access to the ‘other side.’ Earlier, I discussed the works on Lawrence published shortly after his death and argued that the biographical bent of these books could be read as a desire to bring Lawrence back to life. I would argue that we can read these moments in *An Unprofessional Study* as part of the same

¹²⁸ *An Unprofessional Study*, 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 6.

desire. On several occasions, Nin goes as far as to finish Lawrence's statements for him,¹³³ further evidence of Nin's belief in her ability to explain Lawrence better than he explains himself. But these moments also perform a sympathetic conversation between Lawrence and Nin.

More interesting still are passages in which Nin announces Lawrence's absence. Lawrence is 'too busy, too intent, just now, to entertain us,'¹³⁴ she writes. 'He is not chiselling to give us a work of formal art. He is living and progressing within his own book.'¹³⁵ Although Lawrence is brought back from the dead here ('he is living') it is not to produce impersonal works of art for the reader. Rather it is to lead by example through 'his own book.' We can liken this reading of Lawrence to Nin's own reading of the diary as a deeply subjective text which has a universal, objective appeal.¹³⁶ Lawrence's presence is perpetuated through his novels, just as Nin would later depict her own presence as remaining alive in the diary, even after her eventual death.¹³⁷

Quite unexpectedly, embedded in the chapter 'Language-Style-Symbolism' comes a facsimile reproduction of the first and last handwritten pages of the introduction to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. It functions as a visual shock, a moment where Lawrence's writing breaks into the text. Bearing in mind that his handwriting is nigh-on illegible and the fact that the reproduced passage had already been published,¹³⁸ one can only assume that it is intended to be read as a graphological seal of approval from Lawrence, suggesting that his work belongs in *An Unprofessional Study* even if we can't read it there. This moment works also as a further attempt to inscribe Lawrence's presence in Nin's book. However, whilst the rest of the text has served to demonstrate how close Nin is to Lawrence through stylistic and rhetorical illustrations of intimacy, this moment is disruptive, revealing the distance between Nin's hand and Lawrence's.

Having finished *An Unprofessional Study*, Nin felt that she needed to get some distance from Lawrence:

My God, it has meant more to me to explain him than to do my own creation. The more I read him the more I found in him. Any other author read as I have read Lawrence would have sickened me. The diamond hardness is still there.

¹³³ For example, 18, 28.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 84-85.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 84.

¹³⁶ For a fuller reading of this notion of the subjective leading to the universal experience, see Chapter 5.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 4.

¹³⁸ As *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1930) (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd, 1973).

Now I must rest and get my distance.¹³⁹

Nin figures her close reading as potentially disgusting; recalling the earlier discussion regarding illness and introspection. Lawrence is the only writer she could have got this close to. This is suggestive of Nin's earlier claim that she wrote the book with her body. Lawrence becomes the ultimate intimate, providing Nin with new discoveries every time she reads him. The deeper she goes, the more she finds. The implication is that there could be no end to Nin's close reading of Lawrence. He produces endless meaning, endless material for interpretation.

Yet, despite this narrative of close reading, Nin writes of the 'diamond hardness' of the book and the need to have 'distance.' It seems we have slipped into another system of valuing the art object,¹⁴⁰ what Peter Nicholls refers to as the "“clean,” “hard,” inorganic values of Imagism and Vorticism,"¹⁴¹ where the art object is considered from a distance and, as Nicholls puts it, 'the immediate pleasures of the “caressable”'¹⁴² are denied. In describing *An Unprofessional Study* in these terms as well as those of tactile engagement, Nin accrues the pleasure of both kinds of reading. She is both close to and distant from her book, able to touch Lawrence but also able to admire the text's 'diamond hardness' from afar.

Nin received praise from her friends, if scant wider recognition for *An Unprofessional Study*. Nin writes of how her old English literature teacher, Madame Boussinescq pronounced:

“This is not an abstract criticism: you feel the person, the writer you are handling. You let him speak for himself. There is a gradual and very attractively presented penetration.” She had never read Lawrence, but now she wants to. She sees where he influenced Sherwood Anderson and Waldo Frank – and what a big man he was.¹⁴³

Like Nin, Boussinescq reads *An Unprofessional Study* as a physical interaction with Lawrence, albeit a rather one-sided act where Nin does the 'handling.' Boussinescq's reading makes Lawrence flesh, whereupon he is given permission to speak by Nin. The phrase 'gradual and attractively presented penetration' comes with the obvious *double entendre* of criticism as a phallic act which would be made farcical by Boussinescq's

¹³⁹ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 379.

¹⁴⁰ As we have seen, to some extent Nin reads *An Unprofessional Study* as both work of art and work of criticism.

¹⁴¹ Nicholls, 197.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Volume Four*, 382.

subsequent comment about what a ‘big man’ Lawrence was, if it wasn’t for the fact that there are two phalluses at work in Nin’s study: hers and Lawrence’s.¹⁴⁴

An Unprofessional Study was published in 1931. The only review in evidence was written by Waverley Lewis Root in the *Chicago Tribune* and entitled ‘The Femininity of D.H. Lawrence Emphasized by Woman Writer.’¹⁴⁵ As the title suggests, Root’s review is constructed through a series of contemporaneous arguments about the relationship between gender and writing.¹⁴⁶ Whilst Root credits Nin with having taken on the ‘task of analysis and comprehension from the male intellectual angle rather than from the female intuitive side,’ (a compliment, one suspects, Nin would not have appreciated), the ‘fact of [Nin’s] sex’ means that she is not able to present a unified reading of Lawrence:

She dissects Lawrence’s work, and puts before us the diverse elements of his writing and of his being: but the task of synthesis has been too much for her. Perhaps, being a woman, she saw no need for it. Certainly there is no indication [...] that she felt it necessary to unite all of her details into one whole that would give us the unity that is D.H. Lawrence.¹⁴⁷

Nin is lost in details, she is unable to form a bigger picture of Lawrence. She can ‘dissect’ but not ‘synthesize,’ taking Lawrence apart without being able to put him back together. In this way, Root denies Nin’s ability to make Lawrence present through her reading of him. Root presents the ability to synthesize as a masculine trait throughout his review, writing that ‘[i]n terms of mental geometry, woman’s mind measures planes, man’s mind solids.’¹⁴⁸ Nin’s reading is superficial, she can only make contact with the surfaces, the ‘planes’ of Lawrence’s work. A man’s mind would have had the ability to make Lawrence ‘solid.’ Root’s comment performs the rhetoric of objectivity whilst it also praises the male reader’s ability to go deep, to produce a thick, coherent and three-dimensional Lawrence. Root concludes that Nin relies too much on feelings, both Lawrence’s and her own. He writes that Nin ‘feels with Lawrence and understands him with her senses’ but that Lawrence’s feelings ‘cannot be used as analytical measuring

¹⁴⁴ We could argue that Nin’s is definitely bigger.

¹⁴⁵ The original of this article is reproduced in *Anaïs Nin Observed* complete with Nin’s marginalia. Unfortunately, I was unable to find the original in the Nin archives, suggesting it has been lost.

¹⁴⁶ Although this modernist narrative of gendered writing has emerged in certain parts in this chapter, it has not been my main focus, as it has been rehearsed several times in critical readings of Nin’s work already. (See, for example Podnieks, Hinz and Christmass).

¹⁴⁷ Waverley Lewis Root, ‘The Femininity of D.H. Lawrence Emphasized By Woman Writer,’ in *Anaïs Nin Observed*, 37.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

sticks.’ ‘Miss Nin,’ Root finishes,

[g]ives too much weight to Lawrence’s own interpretation of depths of character: she seems to see in his two “psychological” works an explanation at once of the workings of the unconscious mind in general, and of Lawrence’s unconscious mind in particular (although it might be pointed out, it would be a contradiction in terms for Lawrence to be able to explain his own unconscious).¹⁴⁹

Next to the last part of Root’s statement Nin has written, sarcastically, one imagines: ‘How clever!’¹⁵⁰ This was the only review, to the best of my knowledge that *An Unprofessional Study* received. Although Nin viewed it as a gateway into a new milieu of modernist artists, this text did not publicly establish her as a writer. However, in later accounts of this time, such as that provided by *Volume One* of the edited published diary, Nin’s discovery of Lawrence was depicted as a personal and artistic awakening:

You live like this, sheltered, in a delicate world, and you believe you are living. Then you read a book (*Lady Chatterley*, for instance) [...] and you discover that you are not living, that you are hibernating. [...] Millions live like this (or die like this) without knowing it. They raise children. And then some shock treatment takes place, a person, a book, a song, and it awakens them and saves them from death.¹⁵¹

In *Volume One*, Nin credits D.H. Lawrence with having saved her: ‘I have written a book about D.H. Lawrence out of gratitude, because it was he who awakened me.’¹⁵² For readers of the expurgated diary then, Nin’s artistic and personal journey began with Lawrence. In fact, both versions of the published diary (the edited and the unexpurgated) posit the writing of *An Unprofessional Study* in early 1931 as a pivotal moment for Nin in terms of her awakening. Yet, as Tookey points out, ‘it was in 1930 that [Nin] made what were to be her crucial literary discoveries.’¹⁵³ Just before the turning of the year, Nin reads *Women in Love*. In October, 1930, her essay on Lawrence is published. And, as Tookey identifies, at the same time Nin writes of how, after a period of extreme toothache, she ‘peek[s] out, alive and excited, to talk books with Mr. Davies at Brentano’s and to devour *transition*.’¹⁵⁴ If Lawrence gave Nin a ‘kind of home, or nook’ for Nin’s burgeoning identity as a writer, then reading *transition* helps

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *The Diary of Anaïs Nin. Volume One: 1931-1934*, edited and with an introduction by Gunther Stuhlmann (New York and London: The Swallow Press and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), 7.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Tookey, 124.

¹⁵⁴ *Volume Four: 1927-1931*, 353.

Nin to articulate this identity further:

Reading the last number of *transition* has been tremendous for me. I read all these things after I have done my work and then find an affinity with modernism which elates me. If now I am more conscious of my modernism, at least my work remains *natural*, because modernism came to me through vision and is not [...] an acquired tendency.¹⁵⁵

In *transition*'s emphasis on linguistic experimentation, engagement with surrealism, and welcoming approach to new writers, (as well as its celebration of established writers and artists such as James Joyce and Man Ray), Nin felt that she had found a potentially sympathetic space for her work. *Transition*, as Tookey writes, was 'preoccupied with style and form as ideologically significant' and displayed a 'new consciousness of language as a medium' which we could liken to Nin's interest in the textuality of her own language and that of Lawrence's.¹⁵⁶

Nin didn't want to have her modernism 'in her head.' She felt instead that she had come to modernism on her own terms, through subjective response and feeling rather than through a modish jump onto the modernist bandwagon. As Tookey writes, 'Nin was keen to maintain her sense that this [affinity with modernism] was based on a shared vision; being "modernist" was *not* a matter of following a trend.'¹⁵⁷ This is borne out in an entry Nin makes towards the end of 1931, where she writes:

The tremendous, immeasurable importance of *transition* for me. This was the island I had been steadily sailing to – dreaming of – but I was not so very certain of its existence. I thought I would have to build it up alone. No. Here is my group, my ideas, my feelings against banal forms. [...] Now I read Jung, [Eugene] Jolas, like a famished man; here are the minds I love, here are the ideas I have obscurely, vaguely felt. I know now what my instincts were leading me into, why I grimaced at "novels," at *Harper's* poetry, at John's [Erskine] trite characters, "realistic" stories, why I loathed the "Slippery Floor" as soon as I had written it. Here at last is depth as I understand it, vision and intellect working in unity. Lawrence and *transition*. What a year for me!¹⁵⁸

Nin felt that she had found her nook at last. This passage combines an Eliot-like disparagement of sentimental forms whilst also articulating Nin's own approach to art through a language of instinct, feelings and depth.

One can understand why Nin gravitated towards *transition* and saw it as an island she 'had been steadily sailing to.' Noël Riley Fitch writes that '*transition* saw

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 358.

¹⁵⁶ Tookey, 127.

¹⁵⁷ Tookey, 126.

¹⁵⁸ *Volume Four*, 1931.

[...] as its task to declare war on traditional literature,' instead heralding 'the source of creation in the irrational, unconscious world of dreams, calling for a new language to express that creation.'¹⁵⁹ This manifesto confirmed Nin's own sense that there needed to be a new language for feeling, played out in her early readings of Lawrence's textuality. Furthermore, a 'Proclamation' in a 1929 issue of *transition* announced that the editors are '[t]ired of the spectacle of short stories, novels, poems and plays still under the hegemony of the banal word, [...] static psychology, [and] descriptive naturalism.'¹⁶⁰ Instead of bowing to this 'hegemony of the banal word,' artists should be writing new kinds of stories, 'narrative [should not be] mere anecdote, but the projection of a metamorphosis of reality.'¹⁶¹

Reading Lawrence and, latterly, *transition*, Nin began to realise this vision of the relationship between art and experience, writing and life.¹⁶² Hers was to be 'writing with feeling,' writing as a transmutation of personal experience, writing that was deeply subjective and, thus, by Nin's logic, ultimately objective. Commenting on this process of turning life into art in an entry for August, 1930, Nin describes the physicality of her writing process:

Nerves so raw that when people come in, strangers, I am like a *photographic plate* and feel physically the "impression" they make on my visual sense, on my mind, on my nerves, all through my body. Extremely useful for writing. This is not mere observation; it is eating people. From that point of view the instrument is in good order.¹⁶³

Recalling the intimate erotics of orality read in Chapter 1, this passage performs the intimate nature of Nin's art. It was people that interested Nin the most in her art – their moods, their predilections, and their modes of expression. Yet rather than presenting the otherness of those around her through her art, Nin presumed a closeness to others that borders on the annihilatory work of identification considered in Chapter 1. She does not just observe people, she eats them. Taking others in to her writing, as she took Lawrence in, Nin theorized her art as objectivity filtered through subjectivity. This was not art that was impersonal, but rather art that was so personal it became universal, according to

¹⁵⁹ Noël Riley Fitch, 'Introduction' to *In transition: A Paris Anthology. Writing and Art from transition Magazine: 1927-30* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 13. Fitch is also the author *Anais: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin*.

¹⁶⁰ *In transition*, 19.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² For a more detailed reading of Nin's relationship with *transition*, see Tookey, 125-9.

¹⁶³ *Volume Four: 1927-31*, 325-6.

Nin's logic. As such, Nin is a fascinating object of study for considerations of modernist approaches to emotion in art. Writing as a woman in the early 1930s, Nin could not escape from accusations of sentimental subjectivity such as those in Waverly Root's review of *Unprofessional Study*. Yet Nin's valorization of the subjective in art and writing combined with a high modernist poetics of making language new, objectifying language, and mishandling it. Reading Nin's work on D.H. Lawrence in particular, we are forced to reconsider the boundaries between impersonality and personality in critical accounts of modernism.

In the next chapter, we will consider how critics in the 1990s responded to the ways in which Nin wrote about her incestuous relationship with her father, seizing particularly on Nin's tendency to write her experiences as if they were works of literature, once more challenging the distinction between art and life.

Seduction: the ‘Father Story’ and the incest narrative.

*“I don’t feel as if you were my Father.”*¹

Introduction.

Through reading and writing about D.H. Lawrence, Anaïs Nin shaped and narrated a new modernist story - where the boundaries between life and art were made indistinct. The diary increasingly became a space where Nin’s reflections on her emotional and sexual life tangled with her desires as a writer. During the period of 1932-34, discussed in the unexpurgated published diary *Incest*,² Nin entered psychoanalysis in an effort to untangle some of these knots, continued her sexual and artistic partnership with Henry Miller and met with her father Joaquin Nin,³ following a twenty year estrangement. Through this encounter, life and art became ever more entangled.

On June 23rd, 1933 Nin joined her father who was in the throes of ‘conquering a paralyzing lumbago’ in Valescure, France for a short holiday.⁴ After the holiday, Nin wrote her account of the trip, which describes how father and daughter found many secrets to reveal to each other, and made ‘a [...] pact of similarity.’⁵ During the holiday, Nin’s father tells her that he has had a dream about her where he kissed her ‘like a lover.’⁶ He tells her that he does not see her ‘as a daughter’⁷ and she replies that she does not feel that he is her father. Joaquin Nin asks his daughter to move nearer, and then asks if he can kiss her. They kiss and Nin’s father cautions that they ‘must avoid possession,’⁸ but Nin goes on, ‘with a strange violence’⁹ to ‘lay [herself] over him.’¹⁰ Over the course of the holiday, the pair have sex several more times. In the diary, Nin calls this episode the ‘Father Story.’¹¹

¹ Anaïs Nin, *Incest: from “A Journal of Love.” The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1932-1934*, (Florida: Harcourt Inc., 1992), 208.

² Ibid.

³ Not to be confused with Joaquin Nin-Culmell, Anaïs Nin’s brother.

⁴ *Incest*, 204.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 208.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 209.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The ‘Father Story’ was written two weeks after the event it describes. The published version does not entirely match the version that I found in the archive and the differences between these versions will be read here as a further example of the way Nin’s diaries were shaped for publication. However, my main reading will be of the published version of the ‘Father Story’ along with critical responses to it.

This chapter will argue that the ‘Father Story’ is the tale of a seduction which also seduces. Just as ‘seduction’ has its etymological roots in the notion of ‘leading aside or away,’ the ‘Father Story’ appears in *Incest* as a moment where the narrative goes off-course.¹² The entry begins ‘FIRST DAY OF FATHER STORY.*’¹³ The asterisk refers the eye downwards, away from the main text, where an editorial footnote reads:

This section in the original text is preceded by the notation: “Chamonix, July 8, 1933. Hôtel du Fin Bec. *Chambre* 208.” It follows several pages of short notes which, apparently served as the basis for this coherent recollection of A.N.’s meeting with her father at Valescure.¹⁴

Footnotes appear in *Incest* infrequently and usually serve the purpose of providing translations or small amounts of biographical information where Nin has failed to do so. There are no other footnotes in *Incest* that comment on Nin’s writing process in this way. The ‘Father Story,’ then, is marked as a narrative in need of editorial qualification, even if the editor himself is not entirely sure of the story’s provenance. It is the nature of this narrative as a narrative of incest that arguably marks it out as in need of qualification. As we shall see throughout this chapter, the incest narrative invites questions and anxieties about authenticity, proof and fact.

Taking us aside, this footnote directs our reading of the ‘Father Story’ before we have even begun it. It gives the ‘Father Story’ a special status, further marking it out as distinct from the rest of *Incest*. It also undermines that which it references as it reveals that the ‘Father Story’ came from notes. What we are reading is not what was originally written nor is it a diary entry for June 23, 1933 (if we go by the logic that diary entries for a certain day are written on that day). Such a revelation throws into question the provenance of the rest of the diary’s entries. Were they written on the same day as the date of entry in the diary? This is a moment, then, where our attention is drawn to the potential ‘afterwardness’ of the diary entries we read, a notion that contradicts the ‘white heat writing’ Nin professes to practice.

The diary has been led aside and left aside.¹⁵ As the note tells us, the entry that we read as being for June 23, 1933 was actually written two weeks later. Nin writes her account of her time in a Valescure hotel with her father from another hotel in

¹² www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 20, 2011.

¹³ *Incest*, 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ There are resonances here with Chapter 4, which considers the period where Nin professes to have ‘given up’ her diary, but actually continues to write diary-like entries on scraps of paper.

Chamonix.¹⁶ The reader's sense of time in the diary is disrupted; we know that the entry we are reading was not *written* on June 23, 1933 because the editor's note tells us so, but the entry itself *appears* on the page after the entry for June 22, 1933 compounding the familiar 'dailiness' of the diary. The 'Father Story' entry, then, is a retrospective narrative posing as one written contemporaneously with the events it describes. Although the editor's note betrays this retrospective quality, the main body of the text still absorbs the 'Father Story' into its daily structure. If one had not noticed the footnote, one might think that this was the diary as usual.¹⁷ By having its own title,¹⁸ the 'Father Story' further accrues an identity distinct from the rest of *Incest*.¹⁹ The 'Father Story' is that which Nin has 'led away' from the rest of her diary. The title also leads the reader away from the rest of *Incest* by marking out this section of the text but also by designating what is to come as a 'story.' Are we meant, then, to read this as a piece of fiction? What difference might it make if we read it as a diary entry or even as a kind of memoir? These questions are at stake throughout this chapter.

The undeniable literariness of the 'Father Story' provokes these questions. Nin's use of figurative language, ellipses and, at times, an omnipresent narrative stance has raised many critical hackles, arguably because her use of such devices is seen as highly inappropriate and incongruent with the subject matter of incest. Reading against such responses, I will argue that the 'Father Story' points up the literariness of other incest narratives, suggesting that literariness is inscribed in the very telling of incest in its present cultural manifestation.²⁰ In critical readings of incest in the 1990s and beyond, literariness and narrativity are what make the telling of incest possible, and are also the devices that generate anxiety around this telling. That which is most literary about the 'Father Story' is that which is most seductive and causes the most critical discomfort. By comparing the 'Father Story' with another father story from the 1990s, Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss*, I will unpack this critical discomfort.

¹⁶ Nin stays in Chamonix with Henry Miller.

¹⁷ There are other features that mark the 'Father Story' as different from the rest of the entries in *Incest*. After the first date of June 23, 1933, the narrative is not divided into any further entries, despite the fact that several days pass. The effect is one of simultaneity, as if all of the 'Father Story' happens in one, long day. The story also features more direct speech than is usual in Nin's diary entries.

¹⁸ No other sections of *Incest* have their own title.

¹⁹ There is also the echo in 'Father Story' of 'fairy story,' pointing towards the literary elements of the story's structure.

²⁰ There is not the scope here to consider how incest narratives circulate in cultures other than British and American culture.

Book critics, responding to *Incest* in the early 1990s,²¹ were preoccupied with and often displeased by the potential fictionality of the 'Father Story': its literary affect(s) coupled with the undecidability of its truth claim. One reviewer wrote that the 'Father Story' had 'the portentous, heavy-breathing prose of a cheap romance novel.'²² Others branded Nin as a sensationalist, a liar, and a fantasist. Part of this chapter's work will be to argue that critics have been resistant to the literariness of the 'Father Story,' either by ignoring it altogether or by denouncing its affects. I will begin by considering Freud's seduction theory and its aftermath as a way to frame some of the issues we encounter reading the 'Father Story.' Following this, I read the 'Father Story' using Jean Baudrillard's theorisation of seduction to tease out some of the complexities in this story.

Nin's encounter with her father arguably prevents her from writing (other than, possibly, in note-form) during their holiday.²³ Indeed, an entry for July 23, 1933 suggests that Joaquin Nin asked his daughter not to write about their encounter: 'I had promised Father utter secrecy.'²⁴ Here, Joaquin Nin is the repressive father of many incest narratives, seeking to silence his daughter. Christine Froula writes of how the incest narrative divides into two stories 'the father's or the daughter's.'²⁵ The reader has to make a choice about which one they believe in.²⁶ Yet Joseph Allan Boone, reading Peter Brooks,²⁷ Teresa de Lauretis,²⁸ and Roland Barthes,²⁹ identifies another trend within literary theory that denies the possibility of *any* narrative being driven by the daughter: 'the father's image has [...] loomed large in the minds of several literary theorists who have attempted to locate the motor of narrative desire, the origins of plot, in the story of Oedipus.'³⁰ For De Lauretis, particularly, 'the representation of female

²¹ *Incest* was published in 1992.

²² Michiko Kakutani, 'The Diary as End Rather Than the Means,' *The New York Times*, December 4, 1992.

²³ Whenever Nin's father is predominantly the influence or shaper of Nin's 'story,' epistemological uncertainty about the nature of this story arises. In Chapter 1, the question was: 'who influences Nin's writing?' Here, it could be 'who (or what) prevents Nin from writing in her usual manner?'

²⁴ *Incest*, 216.

²⁵ Christine Froula, 'The Daughter's Seduction: Sexual Violence and Literary History,' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 11:4, (1986) 630.

²⁶ Freud, Christine Froula argues, ends up believing in the father's story over the daughter's.

²⁷ *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984).

²⁸ *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

²⁹ *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill, 1975).

³⁰ Joseph Allan Boone, 'Of Fathers, Daughters, and Theorists of Narrative Desire: At the Crossroads of Myth and Psychoanalysis in *The Man Who Loved Children*,' *Contemporary Literature* 4 (1990), 512.

desire as the motor of narrative is an impossibility.³¹ It is arguably not Nin's desire for her father that drives the content of the 'Father Story' as Joaquin Nin does the majority of the pursuing. But it *is* Nin's desire to tell the 'Father Story' that brings it into being, after her initial resistance. As such, the 'Father Story' represents Nin's attempts to generate her own meaning beyond that which her father ascribes her. It represents some of the 'pleasures of female narratability' that Boone posits whilst placing at stake 'the question of female desire and its relation to narrative authority.'³² The ambiguity and contradictions of the 'Father Story,' if anything, represents a resistance to the quest for 'final meaning' that Boone sees at work in Brooks' theories of the Oedipal narrative.³³ The ambiguity and open-endedness of the 'Father Story' coupled with critics' desire to read for the plot is one of the main friction points between Nin and the critics.

Yet initially there is something desirable for Nin about keeping incest outside of written language.³⁴ After the 'Father Story' in *Incest*, she writes 'I had wanted the journal to die with the confession of a love I could not make. I had wanted at least my incestuous love to remain unwritten.'³⁵ Having already read the 'Father Story,' we know that Nin fails to keep this promise. But we can unpack the desire itself by considering a line that Nin writes just prior to those above: 'I won't question myself. I won't dissect myself. Let things happen.'³⁶ Following the period of the 'Father Story,' Nin grapples with issues centred on self-knowledge, self-analysis and surrendering herself to feeling - this notion of letting things happen that she writes of above. In common with D.H. Lawrence, Nin both resists putting experience into language whilst also constituting her experience through language.³⁷

Writing about the holiday with her father would mean that Nin would have to acknowledge it. Writing would make it so. Nin's temporary resistance to making a 'confession' works through this logic of writing as acknowledgement. We can only speculate *why* she resisted writing about the incident; it could be that she felt the

³¹ Boone is specifically referring Teresa de Lauretis's *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

³² Boone, 514.

³³ Boone, 513.

³⁴ This is not the same as keeping incest out of language altogether. It is only when Nin realises that there is no one she can tell about her Father that she turns (back) to writing. Nin implies that if there had been someone she could have confided in, she would not have written the 'Father Story.' *Incest*, 216.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See Chapter 2.

pressure of her promise to her father (although she would later flout this promise), that she was ashamed and attempting to hold this shame back, or that she was afraid that the ‘Father Story’ would be read by somebody.³⁸ However, the fact that she didn’t write about the event at the time is worthy of comment, as one gets the sense from Nin that she often wrote about events right after they had happened.

If her father wanted Nin to keep their relationship a secret, which included not writing about it in the diary, Nin initially wanted it to be a secret even from herself.³⁹ In an entry for August 18, 1933, Nin depicted this as resistance to self-analysis: ‘I want to live by my feelings. Artistically and humanly, they are of better quality than my analysis.’⁴⁰ This is not a condemnation of writing as such but of a certain kind of writing, that which criticises and analyses rather than transposes feelings.⁴¹ Yet ultimately Nin uses the diary as a touchstone for realising these feelings. When her father tells her that there is ‘[n]o need to write’ about their relationship because they are ‘old enough to remember it all,’⁴² Nin responds:

I know this is not true. When I read back in the journal I have many surprises. Faithfulness to the nuances of continuity and progression is only obtained by the daily record. I feel it imperative. It is a kind of supreme treachery. Because Father had begged me not to write. Faithfulness to the journal seems to force me each time to write in spite of the feeble reproaches of Eduardo, the anxiety of Hugo, Henry’s fears, [...] and, finally, my promise to Father.⁴³

Throughout the ‘Father Story’ and following it, Nin writes of having a ‘veil’ over her feelings, of not being able to ‘realise’ them.⁴⁴ Nin figures the act of writing and then reading back as a return to these feelings, as well as a memory prompter. But she also represents writing as an act of resistance, a ‘supreme treachery’ towards those who would have her give up the diary.⁴⁵ The journal supersedes Nin’s human relationships because she views these relationships as inherently lacking: ‘[t]he journal has always

³⁸ Nin has a recurring fear that someone will read the diary, despite at points also courting this possibility: ‘I thought I would die in this hotel room alone, and I was anxious about the journal, wondering if I should not get up and burn it. Whether I would have time before my death to burn all the volumes.’ *Incest*, 220.

³⁹ Compounding this desire for self-secrecy, in a letter to her father dated August 7, 1933, Nin writes ‘I long to become a simple woman whose life is secret even to herself.’ *Incest*, 237.

⁴⁰ *Incest*, 242. We can relate Nin’s comment here to the last chapter, where Nin valued her artistic feelings over impersonal objectivity.

⁴¹ See Chapter 2.

⁴² *Ibid*, 243.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 243-4. In the archived version of this passage it is written entirely in capital letters, suggesting the emphatic feeling underpinning Nin’s resistance to her father. *Diary 43. Father: Henry. 1933 August 12-September 18* (Collection 2066: Box 16, FII).

⁴⁴ Tookey also writes convincingly on the veil.

⁴⁵ This notion of writing as an act of resistance will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

filled the insufficiencies of human beings.’⁴⁶ According to Rosaria Champagne, ‘the incest taboo is a taboo against writing and reading’ rather than a taboo against the incest act itself.⁴⁷ Diane Price Herndl, along with others champions the notion of the writing cure.⁴⁸ Overcoming the taboo of writing about incest becomes a way to overcome incest itself:

As the “writer,” woman becomes not just a subject, but a subject who produces that which is visible and will be visible even in her absence. She produces a discourse which will take her place [...] Writing can provide an other to “hear” her discourse, even if such another is not present; “she” can be “read.” That is, she can be seen. Writing can become the Other, insofar as she inscribes herself, represents herself in her text. Writing separates her from the unbearable presence of experience by representing it as other, that which is written, as the not-me.⁴⁹

Nin explained her decision to write the ‘Father Story’ as resulting from a realisation: ‘when I realized there was *no one* I could tell about my Father, I felt suffocated. I began to write again while Henry read at my side. It was inevitable.’⁵⁰ She views the journal as a receptive space in the way that Herndl views writing as providing an ‘other to “hear”’ a woman’s discourse. For Nin, writing in the diary creates an intimate to listen to her story. However, whilst Herndl suggests that writing works to ‘other’ the ‘unbearable presence of experience,’ Nin arguably writes in order to ‘come into’ her experience. This especially bears out in writing her feelings towards her father, feelings which she often describes as ‘veiled.’⁵¹ Writing, whilst it produces this figure of the veil, is also viewed by Nin as destroying it: ‘[t]he diary proves a tremendous, all-engulfing craving for truth, since to write it I risk destroying all the edifices of my illusions.’⁵² The diary produces illusion, it veils experience, but it is also that which destroys illusions.⁵³

Literary critics, in the main, have not attended to Nin’s choice of language in

⁴⁶ *Incest*, 220.

⁴⁷ Rosaria Champagne, *The Politics of Survivorship: Incest, Women’s Literature, and Feminist Theory* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996), 87.

⁴⁸ In the 1980s and ‘90s, critics and therapists championed the ‘writing cure’ as a vital component in the recovery or ‘healing’ process following the experience of incest. Writers such as Suzette Henke, Judith Lewis Herman, Ellen Bass and Lauren Davis and Rosaria Champagne all placed the writing cure at the forefront of this process. Reading critical responses to the ‘Father Story,’ the prevalence of this approach is made apparent.

⁴⁹ Diane Price Herndl, ‘The Writing Cure: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Anna O., and “Hysterical” Writing,’ *NWSA Journal* 1:1 (Autumn, 1988), 68.

⁵⁰ *Incest*, 217.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 222.

⁵² *Ibid*, 232.

⁵³ One senses that Joaquin Nin acknowledges this in asking Nin not to write. Here, writing is that which is opposed to seduction as well as that which produces it.

their interpretations of the ‘Father Story.’⁵⁴ Nin writes of ‘illusion,’ ‘splendor’ and ‘seduction’ alongside ‘poison,’ ‘absence’ and ‘unreality.’⁵⁵ Critics come back with ‘trauma,’ ‘abuse of power’ and ‘child abuse.’ There have been more diagnoses of Nin as a victim of child abuse or adult-onset incest, using the ‘Father Story’ as evidence, than close readings of the story itself. Biographers Noël Riley Fitch and Deirdre Bair both speculate that Nin’s adult relationship with her father is a response to his sexual abuse of her as a child, whilst Suzette Henke views the diary as that which ‘allowed [Nin] to name and analyse the painful incidents of her past, to assert artistic and psychological mastery over chaotic historical events.’⁵⁶ On the rare occasion that a critic does address the moments of pleasure that Nin expresses in the ‘Father Story,’ it is with discomfort. Responding to Nin’s praising her father as a ‘beautiful’⁵⁷ man, Suzette Henke writes ‘[i]t is Nin’s illusion of autonomy and control, of satanic pleasure and bohemian *jouissance*, that I find so troubling in this admittedly perplexed portrait of father/daughter incest.’⁵⁸ Henke displaces her own perplexity onto Nin’s text. Moments in the ‘Father Story,’ where Nin’s responses do not fit readily into the model of traumatised incest victim, trouble critics because they illustrate the waywardness of Nin’s story and its resistance to a fixed (therapeutic) diagnosis.⁵⁹

I also consider the branding of the diary; which situates it primarily as an incest narrative from the off, but an incest narrative with a hint of the erotic. What is at stake in a father *and* daughter story that crosses the lines between testimony and erotica, fact and fiction? We appear to have strayed far here from the poetics of proximity, distance, touch and resistance that stand for the work of intimacy. And yet intimacy and seduction are close, if uneasy bedfellows. Whilst intimacy suggests a desire to ‘go deep,’ to move closer, to ‘get inside’; seduction is a leading aside or away from something. Seduction,

⁵⁴ Podnieks attends briefly to Nin’s language.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 205-210.

⁵⁶ Suzette Henke, ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love*: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire,’ *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Nalbantian, 121.

⁵⁷ *Incest*, 210

⁵⁸ Henke, 127.

⁵⁹ The idea of whether we can (or indeed should) read Nin as traumatised is beyond the scope of this chapter. Henke, especially, has read Nin in this way. In *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life-Writing*, Henke develops her theory of scriptotherapy, (a correlative to the idea of the writing cure). In ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love*: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire,’ Henke argues that ‘[o]nly through the healing process of scriptotherapy – through the creation of autobiographical fiction as a semi-veiled testimony to traumatic injury – could Nin finally achieve a triumphant, if tentative, spiritual absolution.’ See Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women’s Life-Writing* and ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love*: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire,’ 132.

perhaps, is that which asks us to move closer ('over here'), which promises depth but fails to deliver - preferring flirtation. Speaking to this resistance to depth, Baudrillard writes about seduction as that which is opposed to interpretation. In this sense, it is intimacy's opposite – in as far as intimacy is concerned 'with the inmost nature or fundamental characteristic of a thing.'⁶⁰

Theorising Seduction: Freud and the Critics.

*"Bring Freud here, and all the psychologists. What could they say about this?"*⁶¹

*The seduction theory includes the intuition that there is something of particular psychoanalytic significance about the event of incest, which I believe has to do with the way the event of incest itself blurs for its victim the very capacity to differentiate fantasy from reality.*⁶²

In a now-famous letter to Wilhelm Fleiss, Sigmund Freud muses about the structuring of 'reality' in the unconscious, writing that he has 'a certain insight that there are no indications of reality in the unconscious.'⁶³ Thus, Freud concludes, 'one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect.'⁶⁴ This realisation comes on the brink of Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory, a moment that many have considered as the birth of Freudian psychoanalysis.⁶⁵ This section reads the seduction theory and Freud's abandonment of it in favour of the Oedipal theory as framing some of the complexities around narrating incest that will arise in the 'Father Story.' The 'afterwardness' of Nin's telling of the 'Father Story' speaks to the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (or 'deferred action') illustrated in Freud's seduction theory; where the significance of an event is not realised until afterwards.⁶⁶ The effect of time on the 'Father Story' lends a coherency to the event that it otherwise might not have had. But the reader also reads the 'Father Story' long after

⁶⁰ www.oed.com. Last visited: 25 April, 2011.

⁶¹ *Incest*, 208.

⁶² Karin Ahbel-Rappe, "'I No Longer Believe": Did Freud Abandon the Seduction Theory?' *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 54:171, (2006).

⁶³ Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1897-1904*, ed. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1985), 264.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Many support this account of the birth of psychoanalysis resulting from the 'death' of the seduction theory. See work by Rosaria Champagne, Barbara Johnson and Celia Harding. Jeffrey Masson describes Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory as the death of psychoanalysis rather than its birth. For this account, see Masson's *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984).

⁶⁶ In the case of the seduction theory, Freud's patients are adults before they realise scenes of seduction from their childhood. In Nin's case, two weeks elapse before she writes the 'Father Story.'

the fact, another version of *Nachträglichkeit* where recent narratives of incest and trauma bear back on the ‘Father Story.’

Furthermore, Freud’s reading of ‘seduction’ gestures towards questions of agency and complicity that circulate throughout the ‘Father Story.’ The definitional knottiness of Freud’s choice of language comes through in critical attempts to distinguish a ‘seduction,’ from a ‘rape,’ from ‘incest’ in the seduction theory; struggles which also beset readings of the ‘Father Story.’ Freud’s eventual unwillingness to distinguish between ‘truth and fiction cathected with affect’ is integral to Nin’s reading of her relationship with her father and in readings of the ‘Father Story’ that seek to definitively pin it down as either fact or fiction, truth or fantasy.

The letter to Fleiss follows a period where Freud grappled with the validity of the seduction theory first proposed in his 1896 paper ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria.’ The central thesis of this paper stated that:

[at] the bottom of every case of hysteria there are *one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience*, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood but which can be reproduced through the work of psychoanalysis in spite of the intervening decades.⁶⁷

Freud suggests that before patients come for analysis, they ‘know nothing’ of these early experiences and that the discovery of them in the analytical space quite often leads to expressions of shame in the analysand.⁶⁸ The analysis prompts these memories. Freud recognised that he might meet with the accusation from colleagues ‘that the doctor forces reminiscences of this sort on the patient, that he influences him by suggestion to imagine and reproduce them,’⁶⁹ but countered that he had ‘never yet succeeded in forcing on a patient a scene I was expecting to find, in such a way that he seemed to be living through it with all the appropriate feelings.’⁷⁰ Freud anticipated that his thesis would meet with opposition:

Some people will say that sexual abuses of this kind, whether practised upon children or between them, happen too seldom for it to be possible to regard them as the determinant of such a common neurosis as hysteria. Others will perhaps argue that, on the contrary, such experiences are frequent – much too frequent for us to be able to attribute an aetiological significance to the fact of their occurrence. They will further maintain that it is easy [...] to find people who remember scenes of sexual seduction and sexual abuse in their childhood years,

⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria,’ 271.

⁶⁸ ‘Aetiology,’ 273.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 274.

and yet who have never been hysterical.⁷¹

This almost incidental use of the term ‘seduction’ by Freud is an unfortunate choice of words, according to Jeffrey Masson, as ‘seduction [...] implies some form of participation by the child.’⁷² Masson argues that Freud did not mean ‘seduction’ in the way that it would commonly be taken to mean, suggesting complicity between the child and the adult, but as a synonym for other terms:

Freud used various words to describe these “infantile sexual scenes”: *Vergewaltigung* (rape), *Missbrauch* (abuse), *Verführung* (seduction), *Angriff* (attack), *Attentat* (a French term, meaning an assault), *Aggression*, and *Traumen* (traumas) [...] in this early paper, there is no doubt that what Freud meant by a sexual seduction was a real sexual act forced on a young child who in no way desired it or encouraged it.⁷³

Although one would initially agree with Masson’s reading of ‘seduction’ as interchangeable with other phrases applied to these childhood scenes, there is one obvious moment in ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’ which undermines Masson’s reading. Freud divides his original cases into three groups, ‘according to the origin of the sexual stimulation.’⁷⁴ The first group, in line with Masson’s reading, is defined as a non-consensual group, thereby eliminating the possibility of seduction:

In the first group it is a question of assaults [...] instances of abuse, mostly practised on female children, by adults who were strangers. [...] In these assaults there was no question of the child’s consent, and the first effect of the experience was preponderantly one of fright.⁷⁵

However, in the second group Freud suggests a more consensual state of affairs:

The second group consists of the much more numerous cases in which some adult looking after the child – a nursery maid, or governess or tutor, or unhappily all too often, a close relative – has initiated the child into sexual intercourse and has maintained a regular love relationship with it – a love relationship, moreover, with its mental side developed – which has often lasted for years.⁷⁶

Although Masson does not acknowledge it, Freud’s seduction theory does contain in it

⁷¹ Ibid, 275. This uncertainty surrounding the frequency of child sexual abuse persists to this day and continues to underpin debates over repressed as versus false memory when it comes to adult recollections of childhood abuse. These debates came to a head in the 1990s. The issue of false memory undeniably forms the backdrop to critical responses to the ‘Father Story.’ See: Robert Allan Baker’s *Child Sexual Abuse and False Memory Syndrome* (Prometheus Books, 1998), and Elizabeth F. Loftus and Katherine Ketcham’s *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (Saint Martin’s Press, 1998).

⁷² Jeffrey Masson, ‘Freud and the Seduction Theory: A Challenge to the Foundations of Psychoanalysis,’ *The Atlantic Monthly* 253:2 (February, 1984).

⁷³ Masson, *ibid*.

⁷⁴ ‘Aetiology,’ 276.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*.

the possibility of an adult seducing a child, although Freud considers this seduction ‘unhappily.’ The ‘initiation’ of a child into sexual intercourse and the maintenance of a ‘regular love relationship’ suggests a mutual, participatory state of affairs between adult and child quite distinct from an assault practiced without a child’s consent. Freud goes on to write that he has found that ‘two or more aetiologies [from these groups] were in operation together,’ implying that he intended a distinction to be made between ‘scenes of sexual seduction and sexual abuse,’ that ‘seduction’ and ‘abuse’ should not be read as synonyms, as Masson suggests.⁷⁷ Masson elides seduction with terms that Freud uses to imply a forced sexual encounter (‘rape,’ ‘abuse,’ ‘assault,’ and ‘attack’). However, John Forrester has argued that ‘seduction’ should *not* be elided with these other terms.⁷⁸ I would agree with Forrester that ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’ engages with one definition of ‘seduction’ as we might more commonly understand it, *i.e.* not as a synonym for ‘abuse,’ but as an ‘allurement to some course of action.’⁷⁹ However there are problems with the way Forrester differentiates between ‘rape’ and ‘seduction.’ In addressing the issue of why Freud called it the ‘seduction theory’ rather than the ‘rape theory,’ Forrester writes:

The reason Freud employed the term ‘seduction’ instead of ‘rape’ was that the traumatic effects of the event *when remembered* arose from the events not being experienced as rape. Instead, the subject’s reactions to the memory were ones that suggested his or her implication in the event: they might feel shame, guilt or tenderness.⁸⁰

Here, Forrester’s conclusion that ‘shame, guilt or tenderness’ are not reactions one would experience when remembering a rape is erroneous, implying that there are appropriate reactions to a memory of a rape that distinguish it from a memory of a seduction (so, the subject could not be remembering a rape because they were feeling ashamed, guilty or tender – responses which Forrester ascribes to a seduction). Forrester’s reading is also unclear; it is difficult to discern whether he means that the subject is traumatised because what she remembers as a seduction was actually a rape, or whether the subject is remembering a seduction, with the ‘appropriate’ reactions. Critical readings of the ‘Father Story’ share Forrester’s attempt to read and categorise

⁷⁷ Ibid, 273.

⁷⁸ Forrester also writes that some of the terms, such as ‘Vergewaltigung’ (‘rape’), ascribed to Freud by Masson were not actually used by Freud: ‘Freud did not call his theory the ‘rape theory,’ nor did he use the word ‘rape.’ See *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 76.

⁷⁹ www.oed.com. Last accessed: 24 April, 2011.

⁸⁰ Forrester, 76.

experience through reaction. Readings of Nin's feelings during and after the 'Father Story' conclude in bewilderment at the 'inappropriateness' of her responses to her father,⁸¹ deny these reactions outright, or denounce Nin for having had them. As such, she is either read as a victim or, especially in reviews of *Incest*, as a seductress or a slut.

Freud also has some difficulty in separating seduction and rape in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria.' Whilst he begins by dividing his patients into three groups - the first group characterised by an assault, the second by a seduction, and the third by relations with near-peers - he then elides the first and second of these groups. He emphasises the second group, where the child is seduced into having a relationship with an adult that they know, rather than assaulted by a stranger. Freud writes:

All the singular conditions under which the ill-matched pair conduct their love-relations – on the one hand the adult, who cannot escape his share in the mutual dependence necessarily entailed by a sexual relationship, and who is yet armed with complete authority and the right to punish [...] and on the other hand the child, who in his helplessness is at the mercy of this arbitrary will, who is permanently aroused to every kind of sensibility and exposed to every sort of disappointment [...] all these grotesque and yet tragic incongruities reveal themselves as stamped upon the later development of the individual and of his neurosis, in countless permanent effects which deserve to be traced in the greatest detail.⁸²

Forrester argues that this passage points to the seduction of a child by an adult, where the relationship goes beyond the issue of whether the child has consented or not, to resembling a relationship 'as complex as one between adults,'⁸³ although 'Freud recognises the absolute authority which the adult exerts over the child.'⁸⁴ That said, Freud does suggest that the child is seduced, in the sense that s/he is 'led astray'⁸⁵ by the adult, 'prematurely aroused' to sexuality before s/he is ready. From this, Forrester concludes:

It is clearer now why Freud called his theory of neurosis the seduction theory rather than the rape theory. In his account, it is not so much the presexual shock (his phrase) or the fright induced in the child that is aetiologically significant. Rather, it is the implication of the child in a world that is foreign to it, a world which it is none the less destined, come puberty, to be obliged to make its own. 'Seduction' is etymologically a 'leading away'; Freud's theory is close to this sense – with a difference: the child is more properly being 'led towards.'⁸⁶

⁸¹ We saw this with Henke who was 'troubled' by Nin's partially positive response to her father.

⁸² 'Aetiology,' 283.

⁸³ Forrester, 79.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ www.oed.com. Last accessed: 24 April, 2011.

⁸⁶ Forrester, 80.

In a letter to Fleiss on September 21, 1897, Freud memorably confided ‘I no longer believe in my neurotica [theory of the neuroses].’⁸⁷ Freud confesses not only to difficulties finding the evidence needed to further prove his theory but also to an ideological difficulty:

Then the surprise that in all cases, the *father*, not excluding my own, had to be accused of being perverse – the realization of the unexpected frequency of hysteria, with precisely the same conditions prevailing in each, whereas surely such widespread perversions against children are not very probable.⁸⁸

It is both the prevalence of child sex abuse that Freud balks at and the fact that this brands so many fathers as ‘perverse.’ In ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’ Freud implicates a much wider group of adults as potential abusers: adults who are strangers, nursery maids, governesses or tutors, as well as other children closer in age, often siblings.⁸⁹ In fact, Freud barely mentions fathers in ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria,’ leading us to wonder why they had become, in his mind, not only the main but the *sole* perpetrators of child abuse by the time of his letter to Fleiss.

Freud puts another concern to Fleiss regarding the seduction theory, namely, his discovery of ‘the certain insight that there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect.’⁹⁰ According to Freud, one cannot rely on the unconscious to provide us with ‘real’ memories as distinct from fantasies (or fictions, as Freud calls them) which have been loaded with a special importance. It could then follow, Freud writes, ‘that the sexual fantasy invariably seizes upon the theme of the parents’⁹¹ – an early inkling of the Oedipal theory.⁹² It is this moment in Freud’s letter to Fleiss that will reverberate throughout this chapter. The ‘Father Story’ thwarts one’s ability to read the difference between truth and fiction, fantasy and reality. As the question, ‘of the difference between a memory of having been seduced and a fantasy of having been seduced,’⁹³ as Ahbel-Rappe puts it, troubles Freud in his letter to Fleiss, so does it

⁸⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1887-1904*, 264.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ ‘Aetiology,’ 105.

⁹⁰ *The Complete Letters to Wilhelm Fleiss, 1887-1904*, 264.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 264-5.

⁹² For a more detailed account of how Freud would move away from but also, intermittently, return to the seduction theory after the letter to Fleiss, see Karin Ahbel-Rappe, “‘I No Longer Believe’: Did Freud Abandon The Seduction Theory?” 54.

⁹³ Ahbel-Rappe, 178.

trouble readings of the 'Father Story.'⁹⁴

The 'Father Story' generates critical anxiety around the aesthetics of Nin's prose that speak to wider anxieties produced by the incest narrative and the style in which it is narrated. Critical respondents to the 'Father Story' are often unable to distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect. I will argue that this is because *Nin* does not make these distinctions. The 'Father Story' works through a logic of seduction that resists such distinctions, a logic which leads the reader away, seductively.

The Story's Seduction.

*The great stories of seduction, that of Phaedra or Isolde, are stories of incest.*⁹⁵

*I am interested not in the physical possession but in the game, as Don Juan was, the game of seduction, of maddening, of possessing men not only physically but their souls, too.*⁹⁶

Jean Baudrillard theorises seduction as constituted through 'play, challenges, duels, the strategy of appearances.'⁹⁷ The 'Father Story' performs all of these elements. Nin writes of how she shares in common with her father an interest in '[p]laying with souls,' and of 'mixing pleasure with creativity.'⁹⁸ Together, the pair enjoy banter, compare and admire each other's appearances but also, crucially, engage in a struggle for control over the story being told. The question of who is seducing whom and what is at stake in being on either end of this seduction is paramount. We are left to ask, with Baudrillard, whether it is 'to seduce, or to be seduced, that is seductive?'⁹⁹ Seduction moves both ways in the 'Father Story.' It plays out the dynamics of a seduction: the back and forth, the resisting and then yielding, the flickering of illusion. The textuality of the 'Father Story' is also seductive. Composed of ellipses, suggestive lines, and allusions, the story leads us on but to no final destination. The 'Father Story' is one which resists ultimate and satisfying interpretations. It suggests but does not (always) explicate, offering up a host of meanings that are left hanging, unrealised.

⁹⁴ It does not appear to trouble Nin in her writing of it.

⁹⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 69.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 185.

⁹⁷ Baudrillard, 7.

⁹⁸ *Incest*, 206.

⁹⁹ Baudrillard, 81

According to Baudrillard, the seducer ‘turns himself into an illusion’¹⁰⁰ as part of his seduction strategy. It soon transpires that Nin’s father is a master. He has an ‘inordinate respect of illusion’ which plays out in his personal toilette, despite his being ill: ‘in all the days of his illness there was not a moment of disillusion. He bore it with such grace and such dignity. Though it hurt him deeply to move, he took his bath, he shaved; his hair was perfumed, his nails immaculate.’¹⁰¹ For Nin, her father’s toilette signifies his artificiality, his appearance is made unreal (‘mask-like’) through the attention he pays to it. Moreover, she reads his behaviour as coquetry which the OED defines as ‘the use of arts intended to excite the admiration or love of the opposite sex.’¹⁰² At the same time, Nin recognises this seductive artistry in herself: ‘at the same moment that I saw these traits in Father, I saw them starkly in myself.’¹⁰³ If Nin sees her father as a seducer, it is because it takes one to know one.¹⁰⁴ As well as paying attention to his appearance, Joaquin Nin sets other scenes:

In the car [...] Father organized the details of his life. And then he sped out along the sea, revelling in the lights, the colors. We sat on a rock, facing the sea. This moment he had imagined, visualized, and he had set about realizing it. And there he talked about his love affairs as I do, mixing pleasure with creativity, interested in the creation of a human being through love. Playing with souls.¹⁰⁵

Like Nin, her father creates scenes in order to perform them and uses stories to seduce.¹⁰⁶ He visualises and then realises the scene that Nin finds herself in, much as an author would. He applies the same artistry to his relationships, able to mix the ‘elements’ of his love affairs. We read him as a creator, ‘interested’ but emotionally distanced, creating others through his love, playing with others’ souls. Joaquin Nin practices the art of seduction:

Seduction consists of finery, it weaves and unweaves appearances, as Penelope weaved and unweaved her tapestry, as desire itself was woven and unwoven beneath her hands. For it is appearances, and the mastery of appearances, that

¹⁰⁰ Baudrillard, 98.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² www.oed.com. Last visited: 23 April, 2011.

¹⁰³ *Incest*, 205.

¹⁰⁴ This recognition plays out in the ‘pact of similarity’ between Nin and her father.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 206.

¹⁰⁶ In a passage from the archived diary, Nin again depicts her father’s fondness for scene-setting. However, this time she finds the trait disconcerting:

The movement is right, the lights. Life orchestrated, guided, moulded. No. When we walk together don’t take my arm. Movement subjugated, movement moulded. [...] Life contained, shaped, improved on. Style. Form. Now you can come. And wear your black satin negligee [...] And fear installs itself in my being. (*Diary 44 Audace September 19-November 8*, 89.

rule.¹⁰⁷

Although it is Nin telling the 'Father Story,' it is her father who is weaving its appearance, lending it finery, but who is removed from his creation. As Baudrillard says: 'the seductress does not attach any meaning to what she does, nor suffer the weight of desire.'¹⁰⁸ All souls can be played with.

However, Nin does produce meaning from her father's seductions: 'I watched him, I watched his face. And I knew he was telling me the truth, that he was talking to me as I talk to my journal. That he was giving me himself. This self was generous, imaginative, creative. And at certain moments, inevitably untrue.'¹⁰⁹ Note that for Nin, her father *is* his face – 'I watched him, I watched his face.' She reads his appearance to get (at) the truth, aptly, because Joaquin Nin appears to be composed entirely of surfaces, of illusions and artful details. And yet, if Joaquin Nin's truth is all about surfaces then Anaïs Nin's must be too, for she recognises her father's truth as her own: 'he was talking to me as I talk to my journal.' The diary is figured here as a space where stories are woven, a space for creativity and lies.

Nin also presents herself as a journal that her father talks to, a blank page to be marked with his words, an empty receptacle to be filled with his significance. If her father is giving her the truth, then Nin is filled with it. She yields to *his* truth, *his* words. This is a moment that reveals the complexity of seduction which, as Baudrillard has it, enacts a constant exchange and alternation between the seducer and the seduced: '[t]here is no active or passive mode in seduction, no subject or object, no interior or exterior: seduction plays on both sides, and there is no frontier separating them.'¹¹⁰

The seducer only becomes seductive by distinguishing himself from that which is not seductive. For Baudrillard, sex is opposed to seduction¹¹¹ – 'sex is everywhere',¹¹² it is visible and 'hyperreal.'¹¹³ Nin's father talks to her about his sexual relationship with her mother, in an effort, one suspects, to lead Nin aside from any loyalty to Rosa Nin: 'I

¹⁰⁷ Baudrillard, 88.

¹⁰⁸ Baudrillard, 87.

¹⁰⁹ *Incest*, 206.

¹¹⁰ Baudrillard, 81. Jane Gallop makes a similar point, writing that 'the dichotomy active/passive is always equivocal in seduction, that is what distinguishes it from rape.' See *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 56.

¹¹¹ One is reminded of D.H. Lawrence who, as we recalled, resisted but also courted visual representations of sex. See Chapter 2 and Linda Williams' *Sex In the Head*.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 5.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 6.

discovered a war, a sexual war, like the one between Lawrence and Frieda, June and Henry. Father trying to ascend as an artist; Mother the spider, voracious, bestial, not voluptuous, naturalistic, unromantic.’¹¹⁴ In the ‘Father Story,’ Rosa Nin embodies sex without artifice, the naturalist to her husband’s seductive artist. She is the destroyer of illusion, implying that seductiveness cannot circulate without complicity. Whereas the details of Joaquin Nin’s toilette are seductive, Rosa Nin’s is quite different:

Terrible list of crude details. Smell of perspiration, strong smell of unwashed sex. These things tortured my Father, the aristocrat, cursed besides with an excessive sense of smell – a passion for perfumes and refinements. The period bandages left in the night table, the underclothing not changed every day.¹¹⁵

The accoutrements of seduction: perfumes and refinements, cover up and over the material reality of sex and the sexual body, with its smells and voracity. The seductive body is a well-managed, controlled body. Sex is figured here as that which devours seductiveness (Rosa Nin is ‘voracious’) but not before it has ‘tortured’ it and stripped away all its artifice.

It is clear that Nin aligns herself with her father against her mother in the ‘Father Story,’¹¹⁶ making sure that she notes down the details of her own seductive arsenal, such as her ‘satin negligee.’¹¹⁷ When her father tells her that he has had a dream about her, she is also ornamented: “‘I had a dream of you which frightened me. I dreamed that you masturbated me with jewelled fingers and that I kissed you like a lover.’”¹¹⁸ Jewels, which have no purpose other than to ornament, which are all about the quality of their surfaces, are seductive objects. Here, they work to transform a sexual act into a seductive act. Joaquin Nin’s fear here could either arise from the taboo content of his dream or from the potential of these jewels to cut him.

Following the conversation about his dream, Nin’s father asks her to move nearer, cementing his role as the seducer – the one who will be yielded to:

“Let me kiss your mouth.” He put his arms around me. I hesitated. I was tortured by a complexity of feelings, wanting his mouth, yet afraid, feeling I was to kiss a brother, yet tempted – terrified and desirous. I was taut.¹¹⁹

In feeling that she is about to kiss a brother, Nin makes her father an equal rather than

¹¹⁴ *Incest*, 206.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ There are obvious shades of the Oedipal myth here.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

an elder. But this passage also potentially illustrates Nin's adherence to the incest taboo – she has already fantasised about kissing her father many times.¹²⁰ A certain amount of resistance is necessary for the seduction, for it is during the moment of suspense here, before we know whether Nin is going to kiss her father or not, that we are seduced by the 'Father Story.' It is a decisive moment, one in which the reader will either be repelled by the scene or further drawn into it. We lean forward, our eyes race ahead. Although Nin is being seduced by her father here, we are being seduced by Nin, who in the mould of Baudrillard's seducer:

Knows how to let the signs hang. He knows that they are favourable only when left suspended, and will move of themselves towards their appointed destiny. He does not use the signs up all at once, but waits for the moment when they will all respond, one after the other, creating an entirely unique conjuncture of giddiness and collapse.¹²¹

If Nin is taut in the moment before she kisses her father, we are taut with expectation until the first release:

He smiled and opened his mouth. We kissed, and that kiss unleashed a wave of desire. I was lying across his body and with my breast I felt his desire, hard, palpitating. Another kiss. More terror than joy. The joy of something unnameable, obscure. He so beautiful – godlike and womanly, seductive and chiselled, hard and soft. A hard passion.¹²²

This is a different kiss from those fantasised in Chapter 1, where nothing was imagined beyond the kiss and where kisses were closed-mouthed. Yet it is not the kiss but the oscillation between terror and joy that makes this passage seductive and makes this a seduction. As Baudrillard writes, seduction depends on this circulation, this oscillation of meaning back and forth.¹²³ We cannot *interpret* Nin's response to the kiss because her response changes, it flickers between terror and joy, is both and neither, just as her father is hard and soft, godlike and womanly. We do not know whose 'wave of desire' is 'unleashed.' Nin remains in a state of suspension, yielding and not yielding to her father:

He caressed my breasts and the tips hardened. I was resisting, saying no, but my nipples hardened. And when his hand caressed me – oh, the knowingness of those caresses – I melted. But all the while some part of me was hard and terrified. My body yielded to the penetration of his hand, but I resisted, I resisted

¹²⁰ See Chapter 1.

¹²¹ Baudrillard, 109.

¹²² *Incest*, 209.

¹²³ See 54 and throughout.

enjoyment.¹²⁴

Is the mark of a successful seduction when the quarry yields or when the quarry enjoys? Because if it is the latter, then Joaquin Nin's seduction fails: "I want you to enjoy, to enjoy," he said. "Enjoy." And his caresses were so acute, so subtle; but I couldn't, and to escape from him I pretended to.¹²⁵

Nin deludes her father, the illusionist. She evades the seduction rather than yielding to it but gives all the signs of having yielded. She is not seduced by her father, so she feigns enjoyment to avoid the seduction, bringing to mind Baudrillard's words on 'the fear of being seduced:'

If seduction is a passion or destiny, it is usually the opposite passion that prevails – that of not being seduced. We struggle to confirm ourselves in our truth: we fight against that which seeks to seduce us. In this struggle all means are acceptable, ranging from relentlessly seducing the other in order not to be seduced oneself, to pretending to be seduced in order to cut all seduction short.¹²⁶

In fact, all of Nin's depictions of sex in the 'Father Story' testify to the failure of her father's seductiveness, if the aim of the seduction was to have her totally yield to his seductiveness. But this is only if we read the orgasm as the sign of a completed seduction. Nin writes her lack of orgasm as a sign that she doesn't yield fully to her father: 'my yielding was immense, with my whole being, with only that core of fear which arrested the supreme spasm in me.'¹²⁷ This yielding and not yielding actually stages the further possibility of seduction. There are always more sites of resistance to be overcome.

Nin writes of how she goes on 'with a strange violence' to 'lay over her father.'¹²⁸ It is a moment when the seduction is ruptured. The game appears to be over. We may think Nin has yielded to her father but she has effaced him as a seducer by climbing on top of him. She lifts her negligee, strips the moment of its artifice, and calls her father's bluff. If before she has described her father as 'god-like,' when she lays over him her father says (gasps?): "*Toi, Anaïs. Je n'ai plus de Dieu!*"¹²⁹ In the moment that she takes him, that he yields to her, he loses God, loses his god-likeness and

¹²⁴ *Incest*, 209.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Baudrillard, 119.

¹²⁷ *Incest*, 209.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Literally: 'You, Anaïs! I have lost God!'

momentarily cedes his position as a seducer to Nin. 'Then,' Nin writes, 'I wanted to leave him.'¹³⁰ She draws back from the seduction. She supposes that her father is afraid of her reaction, her 'revulsion.'¹³¹ Revulsion and seduction are strange bedfellows here, both share in common the act of moving away from something but whilst 'seduction' suggests a leading aside, revulsion connotes a 'tearing off,'¹³² a violent removal, and perhaps a counterpoint to the 'strange violence' with which Nin lays over her father.

But Nin's revulsion is tempered by a sense of her father as vulnerable. She imbues herself with the power to hurt her father (recalling the 'strange violence' with which she lays over him), and is compelled by this power:

I saw him so vulnerable. And there was something terrible about his lying on his back, crucified, while yet so potent – something compelling. And I remembered how in all my loves there has been a reaction away – that I had always been so afraid. And this flight, I would not hurt him with. No, not after the years of pain my last rejection had caused him. But at this moment, after the passion, I had at least to go to my room, to be alone.¹³³

For Baudrillard, the seduction embodies weakness:

In a strategy of seduction one draws the other into one's area of weakness. A calculated weakness, an incalculable weakness: one challenges the other to be taken in. [...] To seduce is to appear weak. To seduce is to render weak. We seduce with our weakness, never with strong signs or powers. In seduction we enact this weakness, and this is what gives seduction its strength. We seduce with our death, our vulnerability.¹³⁴

Nin views her father as 'crucified,' an image, when combined with his 'potency,' that she finds compelling. She is drawn in by her image of him as dead but vital. By displaying desire, desire that cannot be satisfied without the consent and participation of the seduced, the seducer is weak yet still seductive. Nin is also seduced by her own power here, as it is projected onto the image of her father as crucified. She has both rendered her father weak and is weakened in her revulsion towards him. Still, Nin writes that she returns to her room 'poisoned':

I thought of nothing. I was divided, and dying because of the division – the struggle to seize joy, and joy unattainable. The oppressive unreality. Life again receding, eluding me. I had the man I loved with my mind; I had him in my

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² www.oed.com. Last accessed: May 9, 2011.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Baudrillard, 83.

arms, in my body. I had the essence of his blood in my body.¹³⁵

If seduction delights in the play of illusions then here Nin experiences the dark side of the seduction: where all is unreal and nothing tangible. The seduction has failed - Nin cannot skirt on the surfaces of her experience with her father, can no longer delight in the accumulation and endless play of signs between them - but has instead yielded *too much* to her father. Nin attributes the atrophying of her joy to the fact that she is related to her father: 'This man's love, because of the similitudes between us, because of the blood relation, atrophied my joy. And so life played on me its old trick of dissolving, of losing its palpableness, its normalcy.'¹³⁶

Nin has the essence of her father's blood in her body, signifying the logic of the Communion, where the faithful imbibes the blood and body of Christ.¹³⁷ But this talk of blood also recalls the prohibition against the mating between blood relatives that, Nancy Fischer identifies, was once an important part of the incest taboo. According to Fischer, there are 'two ways of talking about incest – in terms of blood and child sexual abuse' corresponding 'to older and newer systems of kinship and sexuality.'¹³⁸ Viewing incest in terms of blood ties represents 'an older system of organizing sexuality where the family is defined in terms of biological relations.'¹³⁹

Blood represents something other than familial ties for Nin, though. In imagining her father's blood in her body, which we can also read as his semen, she feels her own life 'receding, eluding.' Filled up by her father, she loses herself. Joaquin Nin is depicted in the 'Father Story' as excessively fluid - he flows into Nin, and fills her up. Nin writes that her father's sperm is 'overabundant.'¹⁴⁰ It spills out of her as she walks down the hall. There is a sense that Nin is engulfed in her father's fluids, that his excessive fluidity washes away the boundaries of her subjectivity. With similarity comes death: Nin writes that her father's sperm is 'poison' and that the 'similitudes' between them atrophy her joy.¹⁴¹ This is in counterpoint to Nin's earlier celebration of her similarities with her father:

¹³⁵ Ibid, 210.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 1.

¹³⁸ Nancy Fischer, 'Oedipus Wrecked? The Moral Boundaries of Incest,' *Gender and Society* 17:1 (February 2003), 93.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 211.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 210.

We are not talking. We are merely certifying each other's theories. Our phrases interlock. There is not a tangential word. Focused [...] on the same attitude. [...] The similitudes, the final complete synthesis, is in Father. I see in Father the whole – the finished, the created whole. I am dazzled.¹⁴²

This passage suggests both co-authorship and narcissism. As with Nin's tendency to complete D.H. Lawrence's sentences, here, her phrases interlock with her father's. Intimacy is performed here as the ability to speak the same language. Nin is dazzled, not so much by her father but by her own ideal reflection in him. If they are focused on the same attitude then this attitude is reached by a narcissistic gaze. As Baudrillard writes, all seduction is narcissistic, 'the distance between the real and its double, and the distortion between the Same and the Other, is abolished.'¹⁴³ Both Nin and her father see a 'perfect synthesis'¹⁴⁴ in the other, they are seduced by their ideal selves reflected in the other's eyes. In this, their relationship performs what Baudrillard, quoting Vincent Descombes, describes as seduction:

What seduces is not some feminine wile, but the fact that it is directed at you. It is seductive to be seduced, and consequently, it is being seduced that is seductive. In other words, the being seduced finds himself in the person seducing. What the person seduced sees in the one who seduces him, the unique object of his fascination, is his own seductive, charming self, his lovable self image.¹⁴⁵

We can say that it is the near-constant exchange of seductive narcissism between Nin and her father that powers the 'Father Story.' But just as this similarity draws Nin into the mutual seduction with her father, it is the same similarity that atrophies this seduction. Within similarity, there is still some distance over which the seduction reaches. When Nin is penetrated by her father, this *similarity* is internalised, becoming sameness, an erasure of all difference that Nin experiences as a kind of death.¹⁴⁶ Nin feels the 'oppressive unreality'¹⁴⁷ of the situation, speaking to Baudrillard's observation that '*to seduce is to die as reality and reconstitute oneself as illusion.*'¹⁴⁸ She ceases to be real even to herself.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Ibid, 204.

¹⁴³ Baudrillard, 67.

¹⁴⁴ Joaquin Nin says to his daughter: 'You are the synthesis of all the women I have ever loved.' *Incest*, 208.

¹⁴⁵ Vincent Descombes as quoted in Baudrillard, 68.

¹⁴⁶ According to Baudrillard, 'death is always incestuous.' 69.

¹⁴⁷ *Incest*, 210.

¹⁴⁸ Baudrillard, 69.

¹⁴⁹ Critics have read this moment as enacting a kind of disassociation indicative of a traumatised

Nin explains her departure from the seduction scene as a way to preserve and maintain the power of the seduction:

I was amazed at my own self, that it was I who was leaving – yet he alone would have understood why. Fear of disillusion, fear that I should break physically, be less beautiful, less than all he expected. A flight from the most precious experience at a certain moment, always. *Trop pleine*. Like him, wanting all ecstasies to remain suspended – never satiation in love. Fear of satiation. Feeling our ecstasy had been timed perfectly, that since he was so much me, he too would want the pause.¹⁵⁰

Ultimately, Nin's flight is part of the seduction story. It is designed to keep the seduction seductive, suspended and unsatiated. Once again, the 'Father Story' becomes about the preservation of appearances - Nin fears the illusion of her beauty will lessen for her father. She must go away before either of them begins to look, or feel, too closely. Before intimacy sets in.

Nin's father went to the train station and Nin sat 'inert [...]for five hours'¹⁵¹ thinking about her father 'unfocused' and 'bewildered' before leaving to join Henry Miller in Avignon.¹⁵² For the next three months, her diary would be filled with thoughts of her father. In this time, Nin would ruminate over their relationship, writing in the diary that they shared a 'great tragedy' in life; that they had both found 'worshipers but no matches' until they had found each other.¹⁵³

Notes on a seduction: the archival 'Father Story.'

*Je veux effacer tout cela.*¹⁵⁴

*Am I going to be jealous of your letters too?*¹⁵⁵

True to Gunther Stuhlmann's footnote, there is a marked difference between the origins of the 'Father Story' and what it would subsequently become in *Incest*. There is also a difference between the archival version of the 'Father Story' and the published version, although this difference is less extreme. The notes are composed of fragmentary phrases, allusions that one struggles to decode, and scribbled lines.

response to incest. Whilst one can see the potential in such readings, they are rather undermined by Nin's desire to 'seize joy.' *Incest*, 210.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 214.

¹⁵² Ibid, 215.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 218.

¹⁵⁴ Anaïs Nin, *Diary 42 Incest. 1933 June 13 – August* (Collection 2066: Box 16, FII), 71.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 108.

Whereas there are only two phrases in French in the published 'Father Story,' an editing decision presumably made in deference to the English reader but also a moment that heightens Joaquin Nin's exoticism; in the archival notes, Nin slips between French and English. There is also a section towards the end of Nin's notes in Spanish, written in another hand I will suggest is her father's.

As such, these notes resist an easy reading on several levels.¹⁵⁶ The almost free associative nature of their content excludes the reader; we cannot always be sure why Nin is making the connections she is making. For example, in one sequence, Nin writes the following: 'Dreams. His dream. I'm afraid. For the first time I'm afraid. It is reciprocal. Casse-noisette [nut-cracker]. Knocking on door. I knocked with my penis. Tu freine [you slow down].'¹⁵⁷ 'Dreams. His dream' could perhaps refer to Joaquin Nin's dream of his daughter masturbating him. But it could also refer to the air of illusion that hangs over the 'Father Story.' 'Casse-noisette' invites an association with 'penis' but neither feature so obviously in the 'Father Story' where Joaquin Nin's 'penis' becomes the euphemistic 'his desire.'¹⁵⁸

There is no knocking and there are very few penises in the published 'Father Story.' Yet in the archived version of the story which appears in the diary approximately 30 pages after the original notes, Nin expands on this note about her father knocking with his penis, writing of '[e]xtremes of sensuality and abstractions, of spirituality and devilry. He would come and knock at my door and say: "Do you know what I knocked with? With my penis!"'¹⁵⁹ This moment undermines the version of Joaquin Nin in the published 'Father Story' as a suave seducer, presenting him more as a crude, comedic figure. The euphemistic depictions of sex between Nin and her father cede to a more direct account. It is also notable that in the 'Father Story,' Joaquin Nin never goes to his daughter's room. She always goes to his, suggesting that Nin was invested in presenting herself as the one who pursued her father to a large extent.

It becomes clear when comparing the archival notes with the published 'Father Story' how much writing up Nin did. The notes barely exceed two short pages, whereas in *Incest* the 'Father Story' is eleven pages long. The 'coherency' that Gunther

¹⁵⁶ Nin's handwriting is also more illegible than usual in these notes, suggesting that she might have written them in a hurry, or in a heightened emotional state.

¹⁵⁷ *Diary* 42, 71.

¹⁵⁸ *Incest*, 209.

¹⁵⁹ *Diary* 42, 108.

Stuhlmann ascribes to the ‘Father Story’ is often lacking from its content but less so from its narrative progression which moves smoothly through several days and nights. In the archival notes we have no sense of time. As a reader, the effect is disorientating, compounded by the enigmatic associations that Nin makes. If anything, then, the notes are a more seductive discourse than the ‘Father Story,’ playing out the appearances, inflections and sometimes senseless circulation of signs that Baudrillard assigns to the seductive text.¹⁶⁰

The fragment of text in a different hand that comes at the end of these notes is another suggestive moment, as it suggests that Nin gave her father access to her diary during the holiday, meaning that he could well have read the notes preceding this fragment. The content of this fragment is suggestive too. It is written in Spanish¹⁶¹ and reads, largely: ‘sensitivity at any cost, but not morbid and debilitating. A lachrymose sensitivity, a strong, brave, creative and fertile sensitivity; it heals, [it is] far-sighted, calm, like an Olympic sparkle able to arrive at brilliance.’¹⁶² Again, as in Chapter 2, Nin has the right kind of feelings: the artistic ones - her sensitivity is ‘creative.’ The depiction of this sparkling sensitivity also resonates with the dream of Nin as masturbating her father with jewelled fingers: her sense of feeling is adorned, sparkling.

The archival notes, then, stand as both compliment and potential threat to the integrity of the published ‘Father Story.’ One can, at certain moments, connect up Nin’s notes with the coherent narrative they went into producing. Yet one looking for a behind the scenes glimpse at the making of the ‘Father Story’ in the notes will be disappointed. The notes contain in them a multitude of interpretative possibilities, none of which are fully realised, like the ‘Father Story,’ only more so. These are so many (paper) trails that lead nowhere.

If we are looking for reactions to believe in, for the truth about Nin’s response to her father, then we won’t find it in the ‘Father Story’ or the archival notes. Both are filled with the contradictions, these ‘flickerings’ that the seductress produces. According to Baudrillard:

The sovereign power of the seductress stems from her ability to “eclipse” any

¹⁶⁰ Baudrillard, 54.

¹⁶¹ Nin communicated with her father both in French and Spanish - mainly in French.

¹⁶² In the original: ‘¿Sensibilidad? Si, a ultranza; pero no una sensibilidad lacrimosa, mórbida y debilitante, [...] una sensibilidad fuerte, valiente, creadora y fecunda; sana, clarividente, serena, como un destello olimpico capaz de llegar a la fulguración.’ (*Diary* 42, 73). Unfortunately, some words in the original were illegible.

will or context. [...] She constantly avoids all relations in which, at some given moment, the question of *truth* will be posed. She undoes them effortlessly. Not by denying or destroying them, but by making them shimmer. Here lies her secret: in the flickering of a presence. She is never where one expects her, and never where one wants her.¹⁶³

Nin refuses to lie down and do our bidding. We will see in the critical response that Nin is also very rarely where critics want her to be, although that doesn't stop them putting her where they want her nevertheless.

Nin's publishers chose the title of *Incest* from one of several that Nin gave to her diary volumes in this period.¹⁶⁴ It was undoubtedly chosen as a title for its shock value, as Nin's sexual relationship with her father is by no means the only sexual relationship in the diary.¹⁶⁵ Nin is often sold through sex.¹⁶⁶ With its title, *Incest* is instantly marked out with a kind of cultural shorthand that ranges far beyond the sexual act itself, into issues of morality, trauma, victim-perpetrator narratives and theories of seduction. The sleeve notes to *Incest* advertise a 'shattering psychological drama' wreaked by an act of 'ultimate transgression,' presumably the incest act, further marking the diary with this shorthand.¹⁶⁷ The ways in which Nin is critically cast as either sexual abuse victim or calculated seductress speaks to the culturally inscribed, polarised extremes of the incest narrative, as we shall see. Whilst the cover of *Incest* features a rather ambiguous and not overtly sexual image - that of two hands emerging from what appears to be folds of fabric (although there is always the possibility of reading folds of fabric as sexual, as bed-sheets perhaps, or labial folds) - the audio book version of *Incest* features on its cover a naked woman, shot side on, head bowed, apparently peering into her own vagina. This is an apt image bearing in mind Nin's preoccupation with sex and sexuality in *Incest*.

In line with the sexual branding of the diary, in his introduction to *Incest*, Rupert Pole emphasises the authentic, unexpurgated nature of the diary and the wild and immediate quality of the prose contained within:

[Nin's] passionate awakening is well captured in the frequently wild writing to

¹⁶³ Baudrillard, 85.

¹⁶⁴ Two other titles were 'Schizoidie and Paranoia' and 'Flagellation.'

¹⁶⁵ Erica Jong writes that this title might have been an unfortunate choice: '*Incest* is faintly commercial and may actually be a liability.' 'Donna Juana's Triumph: Anaïs Nin and the perfect narcissistic love,' *TLS*, June 25, 1993, 3-4.

¹⁶⁶ However, as we shall see in Chapter 5, Nin characterised herself in the 1970s as one who did not have 'explicit' sex.

¹⁶⁷ *Incest*, sleeve-notes.

be found in the unexpurgated diary – a prose that some readers will no doubt find startlingly different from the polished, poetic prose of the expurgated diary. Recall, however that Anaïs wrote her diary at white heat, immediately following the events she was describing.¹⁶⁸

The ‘Father Story’ was not, in fact, written in white heat,¹⁶⁹ although readers might well have been startled by its difference in content and tone from the expurgated diary. This emphasis on white heat writing represents an anxiety around the literariness of Nin’s diary, with its ‘polished, poetic prose.’ I would argue that this statement is underpinned by an anxiety about the fictionalisation of incest that threatens a reading of it as ‘true.’ The fact that the ‘Father Story’ was created and reworked by Nin two weeks after the fact undermines the diary’s claim to immediacy, represented by the notion of white heat writing. It also challenges any sense of an intimate relationship between Nin and the reader. The reader can be under no misconception that they are a witness to the real event of the ‘Father Story,’ if there even was such an event. Nor can they read the ‘Father Story’ as a direct transcription of an intense experience.

In Pole’s construction of the difference between the expurgated and the unexpurgated diary, the expurgated diary stands for everything carefully composed, edited, smoothed out and enhanced, whilst the unexpurgated diary is ‘wild’- out of control, untamed and natural. The association of the unexpurgated diary’s ‘wild writing’ with Nin’s ‘passionate awakening’ suggests that Nin’s writing performs her sexual awakening.¹⁷⁰ Compounding this, ‘white heat writing’ suggests writing that is forged almost in the oven of the event rather than crafted, coolly, afterwards.¹⁷¹ Although Nin wrote the ‘Father Story’ up to two weeks *post coitus*, here she writes about sex in its immediate after-glow which infuses the writing itself. The notion of white-heat writing aims to promote a sense of the intimacy of Nin’s writing, it comes hot from the body itself.

There are shades in this phrase ‘white heat’ of the title of a piece of soft pornography or erotica. This is no coincidence, as Nin’s work often traverses these lines. As we have seen, the book covers of Nin’s novels and diaries as well as, more

¹⁶⁸ *Incest*, ix.

¹⁶⁹ Kathryn Harrison also used this phrase ‘white heat’ when commenting on *The Kiss*, according to a review in *Newsweek*: ‘It was written in one of those strange periods of white heat.’ Jeff Giles, ‘A Father. A Daughter. A Kiss Wasn’t Just a Kiss,’ *Newsweek*, THE ARTS; Books; February 17, 1997, 62.

¹⁷⁰ Chapter 2.

¹⁷¹ Tookey writes convincingly of the ‘blurring of the distinction between ‘spontaneous’ and crafted writing’ in Nin’s diary. 27.

predictably, her erotica often feature sexually-loaded images. Furthermore, Nin's erotic fiction, published in two volumes as *Delta of Venus* and *Little Birds*, also contain stories with incest themes, most notably in 'The Hungarian Adventurer' where a father rapes his two teenage daughters.¹⁷² According to *Publisher's Weekly*, *Delta of Venus* was the ninth best-selling work of fiction in 1977 in America, sandwiched between *How to Save Your Own Life* by Erica Jong and *Daniel Martin* by John Fowles. *Delta of Venus* has continued to sell well ever since suggesting that there are many readers who do not balk at reading incest as erotic. The question begs to be asked: do we read the Father Story as a piece of erotica too? I would argue that cover notes to *Incest* direct an erotic reading of the diary; as they state that within the diary 'one can find the genesis of [Nin's] widely known erotic writings.'¹⁷³ Thus, the diary is positioned as a kind of sketch book for Nin's erotic fiction.

The positioning of *Incest* and incest as erotic can be read as accounting for the discomfort displayed in many critical responses to the text. Nin's text raises questions about the 'appropriate' way to read incest, suggesting that there could be an element of titillation in this reading that makes readers uncomfortable.¹⁷⁴ By associating *Incest* with Nin's erotica, the potential for this titillation is made all too plain for some critics. 'The Father Story' is difficult to categorise – are we to read it as testimony, erotic fiction, or Nin's own version of psychological truth-telling? These questions gesture towards the ambiguity of incest itself, played out in Freud's seduction theory.

The 'Father Story' practices several literary devices that make critics uncomfortable. We have already discussed the fact of its title, which undermines any readings of the narrative as generating truths. We have also seen how Nin and her father engage in mutual characterisation and how Nin's father, especially, is preoccupied with scene-setting. He sets scenes not only for his daughter, but for the reader too. Critics have also baulked at the allusive and euphemistic language of much of the 'Father Story,' where 'waves of desire' are 'unleashed' and 'joy' is 'atrophied.' Criticisms are often directed at what is perceived to be the excessiveness of Nin's writing style. 'The heavy-breathing prose of a cheap romance novel,' writes one critic of the 'Father

¹⁷² 'The Hungarian Adventurer,' in *Delta of Venus* (London: W.H. Allan and Co. Ltd, 1978), 15-22.

¹⁷³ *Incest*, sleeve notes.

¹⁷⁴ If we hold with Freud's logic, it should be no surprise that the 'Father Story' is uncomfortably erotic. According to Freud's 'Oedipus Complex,' incest is the most erotic act – it is both our deepest desire and that which is denied to us by the incest taboo.

Story.¹⁷⁵ Nin comes on too strong for many critics who object both to the fictional devices of the 'Father Story' and what they perceive to be its failure as literary fiction. For some, then, the 'Father Story' is neither fish nor fowl: it is too literary to be read as a factual account of incest, and not literary enough to be read as high art. Baudrillard writes seduction as that which is opposed to interpretation:

In seduction [...] it is the manifest discourse – discourse at its most superficial – that turns back on the deeper order [...] in order to invalidate it, substituting the charm and illusion of appearances. These appearances are not in the least frivolous, but occasions for a game and its stakes, and a passion for deviation – the seduction of the signs themselves being more important than the emergence of any truth - which interpretation neglects and destroys in its search for hidden meanings. This is why interpretation is what, *par excellence*, is opposed to seduction, and why it is the least seductive of discourses.¹⁷⁶

As we have seen, the Father Story features two characters deeply concerned with appearances. But the narrative itself also keeps us on the surface, especially in the section leading up to Nin having sex with her father. The contradictions in Nin's narrative – where she yields but doesn't, feels joy but terror and revulsion, keeps the reader at a loss as to Nin's true response to the sex.

Indeed, if we try and find the truth in any of Nin's narrative: if we attempt to ascertain whether the incident happened at all, or, at the very least, in the way that Nin describes it, then we will continually be frustrated. Of course, that will not stop us from interpreting, as all reading involves a process of interpretation. But several critics are frustrated by the 'Father Story's' style, which denies them the opportunity to perform a culturally-inscribed reading of the incest narrative. Instead, many critical readings go no further than commenting on the style of the 'Father Story.' This is not to argue that critics are seduced or charmed by the 'Father Story.' Far from it, as we shall see.

In a psychoanalytic reading, the question of whether the 'Father Story' was 'true' or not would be of little importance. As we have seen, following his abandonment of the seduction theory, Freud considered the real event as something to be noted but not privileged. It is *psychic reality* and subjective truths that are the most important concerns for psychoanalysis. Moreover, the literary effects or embellishments of Nin's 'Father Story' are in keeping with a psychoanalytic narrative. Lest we forget, the Oedipus theory began with an ancient story. Yet whilst the states of conflict that Nin

¹⁷⁵ Kakutani, 'Means.'

¹⁷⁶ Baudrillard, 54.

represents in the ‘Father Story’ would be a usual and perhaps even desirable part of a narrative produced in psychoanalysis, the ambiguity surrounding issues of consent and desire in her relationship with her father has led to much critical wrangling.

Biographer Noël Riley Fitch takes it as read that Nin was abused by her father as a child and creates a version of Nin’s life story that moves smoothly from that assumption:

The title of her first novel, *The House of Incest*, and scenes in four pieces of fiction say it all. Señor Joaquín Nin y Castellanos [...] seduced his daughter. This fact is impossible to prove conclusively, but it is borne out by her subsequent behaviour, which fits the classical patterns of a child who has been seduced.¹⁷⁷

Where other critics balk at the fictional elements of Nin’s incest narrative, Fitch reads Nin’s fiction as evidence of her real-life seduction at the hands of her father. But, whilst Fitch’s use of the term ‘seduction’ here is almost certainly intended to frame her reading as Freudian, she does not distinguish between ‘seduction’ and ‘abuse’ in the way that Freud does.¹⁷⁸ Fitch’s over-arching argument suggests that she views Nin as a victim of abuse rather than a consensual participant in a seduction. In one fell swoop, Fitch resolves both the ambiguity surrounding Nin’s childhood relationship with her father and that generated by the ‘Father Story.’

Fitch takes fiction for fact and hacks from it a series of ‘classical patterns’ of abuse. From these patterns, Fitch divines Nin’s ‘motivation’ for sleeping with her father as an adult.¹⁷⁹ In Fitch’s version, Nin is an unknowing victim – as a child she was ‘apparently unaware’ that her father was molesting her by taking photos of her in the nude.¹⁸⁰ There is no allowance for the possibility that Nin was aware of this attention from her father, or that, in their context, these photographic episodes were not sexually motivated.¹⁸¹ A childhood event that remains highly ambiguous in all of its details is read as an open and shut case by Fitch: Nin’s father took photos of her naked as a child so obviously she went on to sleep with him as an adult. For Fitch, Anaïs Nin acts

¹⁷⁷ Noël Riley Fitch, *Anaïs: The Erotic Life of Anaïs Nin*, 3. The four pieces of fiction by Nin that Fitch is referring to here are three short stories: ‘Life in Provincetown’ (unpublished), ‘The Hungarian Adventurer’ (in *Delta of Venus*), and ‘Two Sisters’ (in *Little Birds*) and Nin’s novella *Children of the Albatross*.

¹⁷⁸ Fitch produces pseudo-Freudian readings throughout her text.

¹⁷⁹ Suzette Henke also reads Nin’s early relationship with her father as a dominant and lasting force. See ‘Anaïs Nin’s *Journal of Love*: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire,’ 120 and throughout.

¹⁸⁰ Fitch, 3. Fitch’s use of ‘apparently’ here is loaded, implying that perhaps Nin was aware that she was being molested.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

without knowledge: she is destined as a ‘child of abuse’ to repeat and re-enact an abusive relationship with her father in adulthood.

Fitch draws on the theory of recovered memory that came to precedence in the 1980s. Nin’s other biographer, Deirdre Bair similarly fits Nin into a theoretical (and therapeutically sanctified) framework of the abused child. This framework, in something of a full circle, also owes much to Freud’s seduction theory. The recovered memory movement regarded ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’ as its founding text, taking from it the credo that adults could repress and then recover memories of (often very early) childhood sexual abuse through various kinds of therapy: most controversially, hypnosis and the use of sodium pentothal – otherwise known as the ‘truth serum’ - radical diversions, both, from the talking cure.¹⁸²

In line with the theory of recovered memory, Deirdre Bair quotes an account made by Nin in her late forties when, according to Bair, Nin was trying ‘repeatedly to recall what happened during [childhood] scenes of violence [with her father].’¹⁸³ Frustratingly, Bair does not provide a page reference for Nin’s account, so it is impossible to read it in any context beyond that which Bair provides. However, I will reproduce Bair’s quotation in full here to demonstrate the ambiguities of memory, truth and fantasy played out in this account. According to Bair, Nin writes:

My Father has taken me up to the little attic room to spank me. He takes my pants off. He begins to hit me with the palm of his hand. I feel his hand on me. But he stops hitting me and he caresses me. Then he sticks his penis into me, pretending to be beating me. Oh, I enjoy it, I enjoy it. In and out, in and out, with my ass exposed, my pants down, he takes me from behind. But my mother is coming up the stairs. We have no time. I clutch at him, suck him in, palpitating. Oh, oh, my Mother is coming up the stairs. My Father [’s] hands are on my ass – hot – I’m wet – I’m eager, eager. Open, close, open close. I must feel him all before she comes. I must shoot quickly – stab, once, twice – and I have a violent orgasm.¹⁸⁴

Nin’s use of the present tense at the beginning of this account lends it the kind of immediacy that one would associate with the recovered memory as re-lived. It also

¹⁸² Richard Webster writes engagingly on how the seduction theory was co-opted from the 1980s onwards by academics and therapists in the United States in arguing for the possibility of the repression and subsequent recovery of memories of childhood sexual abuse. Webster provides a succinct critique of the ways in which ‘The Aetiology of Hysteria’ has been appropriated as the founding text of the recovered memory movement who have denied the potentially strong-armed tactics that Freud used to extrapolate childhood sexual abuse narratives from his patients. See: *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis* (London: Harper Collins, 1995).

¹⁸³ Bair, 17.

¹⁸⁴ As quoted in Bair, 18.

brings to mind Freud's 'A Child is Being Beaten,'¹⁸⁵ where the fantasy of a beating is erotically loaded. Nin's response to the sex with her father here is unambiguous: she 'enjoys' it - whereas issues of response were much more complex in the 'Father Story.' However, perhaps the most interesting part of this passage is not the main recollection itself but the ways in which Nin reflects on the recollection. At the end of the account that Bair quotes, Nin writes:

I believe this really happened. I do not believe my father penetrated me sexually but I believe he caressed me while or instead of beating me. I remember the attic room where he took us to beat us. I only remember with sureness a time I wept so much he didn't have courage to beat me.¹⁸⁶

Nin's childhood represents what Carolyn Steedman refers to as a 'landscape of feeling that might be continually reworked and reinterpreted.'¹⁸⁷ The lines between what Nin believes, what she remembers and what she fantasises are indistinct here. Her reflection suggests that she *does not* believe that she had sex with her father in the way that she recounts but that she believes his beatings encompassed sexual 'caresses' – whether during or instead of the beatings (where is the line between a smack and a caress?). She remembers the attic room and then she remembers 'a time' (one time?) that her father didn't beat her but didn't necessarily have sex with her either. The passage goes from a position of surety - 'I believe this really happened' - to a position of diminished surety: Nin can only 'remember with sureness' that there was an occasion when her father didn't beat her. In a 1936 diary, Nin returns to these childhood scenes of beating. Of the beatings, she writes that 'she could not remember experiencing pleasure as a child' but, as an adult, recollected these scenes and used them as sexual fantasies: 'When I discovered this [pleasure] it became a fantasy which I used when I could not feel the orgasm with Gonzalo.'¹⁸⁸ Memories become fantasies, fantasies memories in an elision of the boundaries between the real and the fantasised that has much in common with Freud's post-seduction theory model.¹⁸⁹

Bair doesn't impose the kind of unequivocal reading of child abuse on this passage that Fitch argues for in her biography. Bair also sought out the opinions of

¹⁸⁵ See Sigmund Freud, 'A Child is Being Beaten' (1919), *Penguin Freud Library*, Vol.10, *On Psychopathology*, ed. Angela Richards. London: Penguin, 1993. 159-194.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 128.

¹⁸⁸ Anaïs Nin, *Diary 49 [Revolte] 1935 October-1936 March 23*, 79.

¹⁸⁹ Memories also come out of writing. The 'recollection' described above opens with: 'while writing erotica I remembered this.' (*Diary 49*)

psychologists and psychoanalytic critics when it came to her reading of Nin's relationship with her father.¹⁹⁰ But to some extent, Bair also falls foul of reading Nin's passage above as evidence that she was 'fondled' by her father as a child when the passage itself does not deal in surety or evidence.¹⁹¹ Both Bair and Fitch attribute responses to Nin, as when Bair writes of Nin's reaction to her father taking photographs of her: 'Something told her such attention was bad, but it all made her feel so good.'¹⁹² This kind of biographical license detracts from and simplifies Nin's textual responses to her relationship with her father (which, let us not forget, are the only texts we can read), as does both Bair and Fitch's tendency to pathologise their subject, diagnosing Nin as fitting into the 'classical patterns' of the abuse victim.

Elizabeth Podnieks views the diary as 'the personification of a lover, an instrument of seduction.'¹⁹³ I would reframe this to say that the writing in the diary is often *seductive* but it often figures as a rival in Nin's scenes of seduction, rather than an instrument.¹⁹⁴ In common with Bair, Fitch and Henke, Podnieks speculates that Nin's sexual relationship with her father as an adult develops from his abuse of her as a child.¹⁹⁵ However, Podnieks also unpacks the 'Father Story' with a literary tool, that of Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty.'¹⁹⁶ Reading the scene where Nin views Lucas Van Leyden's painting *The Daughters of Lot*¹⁹⁷ with Artaud, Podnieks convincingly argues that Nin frames her emotions artistically, a framing she will bring to bear 'in her experience and depiction of her own incest.'¹⁹⁸

Podnieks also draws on the work of Judith Herman,¹⁹⁹ the pioneering academic and psychiatrist who in 1981 wrote one of the most influential incest studies *Father-Daughter Incest*. Herman argues that the figure of the 'Seductive Daughter'²⁰⁰ 'is part of the literary [...] tradition'²⁰¹ and 'familiar to everyone'²⁰² because of texts such as

¹⁹⁰ Bair, 555.

¹⁹¹ Bair, 18.

¹⁹² Bair, 21.

¹⁹³ Podnieks, *Daily Modernism*, 325.

¹⁹⁴ At one point or another all the major male figures in Nin's life considered the diary to be a rival (see Chapter 4). Podnieks' argument that the diary is a 'lover' is salient here. See Podnieks, 325.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 2 for an account of this scene.

¹⁹⁸ Podnieks, 327.

¹⁹⁹ Fitch and Bair also rely on Herman's theories.

²⁰⁰ Judith Lewis Herman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (1981) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)

36.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Herman reads this figure of the Seductive Daughter, produced by the 'literature of male sexual fantasy',²⁰³ as part of an attempt to exonerate adult male abusers. Podnieks argues that Nin made the role of the Seductive Daughter her own: 'she was appropriating the role of the femme fatale in order to gain control of her body and of the text in which the body was being (re)written.'²⁰⁴ This is not just the writing cure then, but the literature cure, where Nin appropriates literary figures to empower herself.

Several newspaper reviews of *Incest* shared the conviction that Nin slept with her father as an adult because of a childhood of sexual abuse. In a *Chicago Tribune* review, Penelope Mesric gave this summary of the 'Father Story':

Muddled by his charm, humiliated by memories of the sexual acts he forced upon her when she was a child and motivated, too, by her own perverse pleasure and sense of daring, Anaïs had sexual relations with her father for a period of some months when she was an adult.²⁰⁵

Many critics seem to be preoccupied with Nin's memories and their haunting of the 'Father Story,' unsurprisingly bearing in mind the prevalence of the recovered memory theory at the time of these reviews. Mesric can't decide here whether Nin is a victim or a pervert: was she humiliated or thrill-seeking when she slept with her father? The latter reading of Nin falls into the characterisation, oft-plundered, of Nin as the seductress/nymphomaniac – casually sleeping with whomever she can get her painted talons on, thinking nothing of the consequences, a voracious man-eater. In several of the reviews of the 'Father Story' critics *want* Nin to feel humiliated by her relationship with her father and are condemnatory when they don't see signs of this. After providing an abbreviated list of Nin's sexual partners, *New York Times* writer Bruce Bawer asks '[d]id Nin feel guilty about any of this?' – as if the answer should always be 'yes' but he suspects it might be 'no.'²⁰⁶ Bawer has his own way of resolving this though. 'In the end,' he concludes 'one feels for this aging flirt.'²⁰⁷ If Nin refuses to feel or act humiliated of her own accord in a way that we can recognise then we should feel pity for her, ensuring that she is humiliated by default.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Podnieks, 327.

²⁰⁵ Penelope Mesric, 'Flings and Eros: Anis Nin and the Trials of Making Avant-Garde Whoopie,' *Chicago Tribune*, March 19, 1995.

²⁰⁶ Bruce Bawer, 'I Gave So Much to Others?' *The New York Times*, March 5, 1995.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

Other journalists puzzled over the blurred lines between fact and fiction in the 'Father Story.' Claire Messud writes that 'it is impossible to know where fact and fancy meet.'²⁰⁸ Natasha Walter fails to glean any facts from the 'Father Story,' writing that its 'passages will be read and re-read, but despite their apparent openness they yield very little' and that Nin 'gestures towards grand feelings [...] but nothing goes deep with her or her father.'²⁰⁹ Here, Walter recognises the seductiveness of the 'Father Story' but does not appreciate it. She objects to the superficiality of the 'Father Story,' especially to the moment where Joaquin Nin puns on his desire for his daughter, further underlining the critical uneasiness with the ludic qualities of the 'Father Story.'²¹⁰ Finally, Claire Messud suggests that the seductive qualities of Nin's persona should be resisted; Messud's is a moment of suspicion that speaks volumes about the potential of the seduction to both seduce and repel. Messud writes that Nin's 'exuberant inconsistency, her utter selfishness [...] might be aspects of her character that seem momentarily more enticing than they are abhorrent, but only momentarily.' Writing about Nin becomes part of a seductive posthumous masterplan: 'even writing this much about her, one is playing into her posthumously grasping, perfectly manicured hands.'²¹¹

Five years after *Incest* was published, another 'father story' made even larger waves. Kathryn Harrison's 1997 memoir, *The Kiss*, tells the story of an affair with her father conducted when she was in her early twenties. Like Nin, Harrison was estranged from her father throughout her childhood and left to the care of grandparents.²¹² Harrison's mother was still in love with her father, although it becomes clear in the opening section of the book where her father's main interest lies. Harrison's father pays a rare visit to Harrison and her mother when she is twenty and on spring break. When Harrison takes her father back to the airport after the visit, he kisses her:

My father pushes his tongue deep into my mouth: wet, insistent, exploring, then withdrawn. He picks up his camera case, and, smiling brightly, he joins the end of the line of passengers disappearing in the airplane [...] I am frightened by the kiss. I know it is wrong, and its wrongness is what lets me know, too, that it is a

²⁰⁸ Claire Messud, 'Dear oh dear diary,' *The Guardian*, 20 April, 1995.

²⁰⁹ Natasha Walter, 'Daddy's girl in love,' *The Independent*, 10 July, 1993.

²¹⁰ In the 'Father Story,' Nin writes of how her father 'went into a long fantastic tale, full of puns, about a speech he would make to mother: '*Tu m a pris souvent, mais tu ne savais pas comment me prendre. Anais sait. Je voudrais l'espouser.*' [You have taken me often, but you did not know how to take me. Anais knows. I would like to marry her.] *Incest*, 213.

²¹¹ Messud.

²¹² Harrison's mother was also largely absent.

secret.²¹³

Harrison's use of the present tense, in common with Nin's 'Father Story', makes the reader even more of a spectator to the scene. This is the 'kiss' of the title. Harrison and her father embark upon an affair which her mother and grandparents suspect, but do not confront her with. Harrison becomes increasingly depressed throughout the affair. She writes her father as an intense, stiflingly character, and obsessively trained on his daughter. Eventually, after Harrison's mother dies from cancer, the affair ends. Harrison's relationship with her mother is integral to the text, unlike with Nin's 'Father Story' where her mother is brought out as an object of unseductive vulgarity and then discarded.

That said, there are a series of striking parallels between Nin's and Harrison's narratives. The most obvious is the overarching biographical context to the father-daughter relationship: the pair are reunited after a long absence and an affair begins, seemingly, with mutual consent – although, as we have seen, issues of consent are rarely simple. But there are other notable similarities between the two texts. For example, both Harrison and Nin represent their first sexual encounters with their fathers as a 'poisoning' experience. After the first time she sleeps with her father, Nin returns to her room, 'poisoned.'²¹⁴ Harrison, after this first kiss with her father, writes:

In years to come, I'll think of that kiss as a kind of transforming sting, like that of a scorpion: a narcotic that spreads from my mouth to my brain. The kiss is the point at which I begin, slowly, inexorably, to fall asleep, to surrender volition, to become paralyzed. It's the drug that my father administers in order that he might consume me. That I might desire to be consumed.²¹⁵

Both also depict the father figure as feminine in some way, a suffocating maternal figure, all-encompassing and controlling. Harrison's text is also very different from Nin's. The prose style is much plainer and has a matter-of-fact quality that we don't find in the 'Father Story,' which is decorated with literary embellishments. Indeed, Susan Cheever has referred to Harrison's prose as 'affectless' although I would argue rather that *The Kiss* generates a kind of affect that Cheever doesn't recognise as belonging to an incest narrative.²¹⁶ A successful author, Harrison had previously published a fictional

²¹³ Kathryn Harrison, *The Kiss* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997), 68-9.

²¹⁴ *Incest*, 210.

²¹⁵ Harrison, 70.

²¹⁶ Susan Cheever, 'Innocence Betrayed,' *The New York Times*, March 30, 1997.

(although highly autobiographical) incest account in *Thicker Than Water*. This, her first novel, had been released to almost unanimous critical praise, with Michiko Kakutani from *The New York Times* (a critic we will hear from again shortly, with regards to Nin), describing *Thicker Than Water* as: ‘Harrowing [. . .] it not only succeeds in conveying the horrors that parents may inflict upon their children, but [. . .] manages to wring from its heroine’s story the hope and possibility of transcendence.’²¹⁷ Other reviews were similarly glowing. Critical responses to *The Kiss* were much more mixed. In the main, they tended towards the vicious.²¹⁸ In his review, entitled ‘Daddy’s Girl Cashes In; Kathryn Harrison Writes a Shameful Memoir of Incest,’ Jonathan Yardley castigates Harrison, as the review title suggests, for using her ‘shameful’ background as a ‘cash cow’:

It is a measure of the times that this book – slimy, repellent, meretricious, cynical -- is enjoying the rapt attention of the gods of publicity. [...] It is the Flavor of the Month, so those of us in the boondocks are expected to belly up and smile.

No way. “The Kiss” is trash from first word to last, self-promotion masquerading as literature.²¹⁹

Yardley objected to *The Kiss* because he believed that Harrison had published it to cash in on the popularity of the confessional memoir, rather than, as her publishers argued, because Harrison wanted to publish it before her children were old enough to be affected by her revelations. Yardley also reacted to the style of the book, which he described as ‘chockablock with romance-novel clichés and mannered, heavy-breathing minimalism.’²²⁰ In common with *The Kiss*, *Incest* ran up against criticisms of its ‘romance novel’ style. Michiko Kakutani (seen above giving high praise to Harrison’s fictional incest narrative), describes the ‘Father Story’ thus:

Nin’s incestuous affair with her father -- described in the portentous, heavy-breathing prose of a cheap romance novel -- appears to have been a way for her to recapture the man who had abandoned her as a child. By seducing and subsequently abandoning him, she felt she could somehow reinvent her

²¹⁷ As quoted on <http://kathrynharrison.com/thicker.htm>.

²¹⁸ Cheever’s ‘Innocence Betrayed’ is one of the few sympathetic reviews. Others are on Harrison’s website, see: <http://kathrynharrison.com/thekiss.htm#FullReviews>.

²¹⁹ Jonathan Yardley, ‘Daddy’s Girl Cashes In; Kathryn Harrison Writes A Shameful Memoir of Incest,’ *Washington Post*, 5th March, 1997.

²²⁰ Ibid.

childhood and settle old emotional scores. At the same time, Nin's romance with her father, like so many of her affairs, also strikes the reader as a willful way of courting psychological havoc, a way of stirring up further melodrama in her life that might provide further grist for her literary mill.²²¹

Kakutani's gripe with Nin is the same as Yardley's with Harrison: they object to the style in which the incest narrative has been told. This style, perceived as that of the romance novel, is described as 'trashy' by Yardley and 'cheap' by Kakutani.²²² Both reviewers denigrate these respective incest narratives as low-brow, catering to the lowest possible denomination of readership. It is notable too, that both reviewers employ the phrase 'heavy-breathing,' hinting that both these incest narratives arouse their readers to heavy-breathing, but also suggesting an excess of the erotic or sexual in these texts. Kakutani and Yardley also share a suspicion that Harrison and Nin ramp up the excess in their narratives to ensure sales figures and readers. Yardley rounds up his vilification of Harrison and *The Kiss* with a final dig at her motivation:

This confession isn't from the heart, it's from the pocketbook. She talks to her publicist about "the implicit dishonesty of keeping a secret such as this," but that is 100 percent humbug. The real act of dishonesty is this shameful book, which exploits the private life of the author's family - if, by the way, anything herein actually happened as she claims it did - for personal gain and talk show notoriety.²²³

A writer cannot write from the heart and from the pocketbook at the same time: it has to be one or the other. Yardley also throws suspicion on the verity of Harrison's text – if it is written using romance novel clichés, and if the author would like to earn some money from it then it can't be true. Moreover, that which is 'private' should be kept private; to bring it into the public is humiliating for all those involved, not least Harrison herself, who, I think it's safe to say, Yardley would quite happily see humiliated. By stark contrast, other critics did not get enough detail from *The Kiss*. In an article for *Newsweek*, Jeff Giles writes of how '*The Kiss* is written in a lovely but dispassionate prose that's hard not to interpret as shell shock' and that 'Harrison herself remains blank, remote, largely unknowable.'²²⁴ As with certain readings of the 'Father Story,' Harrison's writing style occludes the narrative content that critics expect to find. Just as one cannot know Nin from reading the 'Father Story,' nor can Giles know Harrison by

²²¹ Kakutani, 'Means.'

²²² We can interpret these phrases as directed at the authors themselves, too.

²²³ Yardley.

²²⁴ Jeff Giles, 'A Father. A Daughter. A Kiss Wasn't Just a Kiss.'

reading *The Kiss*. Responses to Nin and Harrison's stories display frustration at the kinds of access they grant readers. Whereas Nin's prose is read by many critics as excessive and hence, off-putting, here Harrison 'dispassionate' prose does not give enough of the emotional reaction that Giles expects and wants. He is left to speculate that Harrison 'has still got quite a few secrets left.'²²⁵

Whilst the 'Father Story' and *The Kiss* are radically different pieces of writing, they have garnered very similar critical responses. Reviews of both are driven by two questions: 'why has the author written about incest?' and 'how have they written it?' Although it is difficult to accuse Nin of writing the 'Father Story' for money, bearing in mind that her career was pretty much non-existent at the point that she wrote it, she has been accused of sensationalism and narcissism, two accusations that were also directed at Harrison. *The Kiss* had to bear the extra accusation of being a money-spinner: if sex sells, then incestuous sex sells more.

Conclusion

*Every act related to my writing was connected in me with an act of charm, seduction of my father.*²²⁶

*In "The Kiss," Ms. Harrison [...] makes you wonder if a memoir can ring too artistic for the truth.*²²⁷

This brief comparison of reviews of *The Kiss* and *Incest* demonstrates the anxiety surrounding the presentation and motivation behind the published incest narrative.²²⁸ We are reminded of Ahbel-Rappe's reading of the seduction theory from beginning of this chapter:

The seduction theory includes the intuition that there is something of particular psychoanalytic significance about the event of incest, which I believe has to do with the way the event of incest itself blurs for its victim the very capacity to differentiate fantasy from reality.²²⁹

To this claim, I would add that the incest narrative also blurs this capacity in this reader,

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ *The Journals of Anaïs Nin: VI. 1955-66* (London: Peter Owen, 1976), 109.

²²⁷ Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, 'Life With Father: Incestuous and Soul-Deadening,' *The New York Times*, February 27, 1997.

²²⁸ This anxiety has reared up in the media again recently with the publication of *Tiger, Tiger* by Margaux Frago, her account of a relationship that started when she was 7 with a 51 year old man.

²²⁹ Ahbel-Rappe, 171.

or perhaps more accurately, shows up the impossibility of distinguishing reality from fiction when it comes to the incest narrative. If it is true, as Freud wrote to Fleiss that ‘there is no way to tell the difference between truth and fiction cathected with feeling,’ then, as readers of *Nin*, we are left disorientated, without a (moral) compass with which to navigate the ‘Father Story.’ The ‘Father Story’ speaks to our desire, as readers, to have our reading directed by generic signposts. As it is, we do not always know how to read the ‘Father Story.’ Is it a real-life testimony? A Freudian fairy-tale? A lie? A study in seduction? The ‘Father Story’ does not offer itself up to close reading; it leads us away from interpretation, seductively. We cannot pin this story down: a fact which makes certain readers nervous.

Following the recent rash of falsified memoirs (the most obvious being James Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces*), journalists and life-writing theorists have produced more nuanced readings of the genre and its stakes. In an article for *The New York* in January, 2010, Daniel Mendelsohn muses on the impact of the faked memoir:

One of the most interesting defenses of memoirs that turn out to be “enhanced” or downright invented is that they accurately reflect a reality present not in the world itself [...] but in the author’s mind. This line of argument raises a question that goes to the heart of our assumptions about literature, about the difference between fictions and nonfiction, and about truth, fiction, and reality itself.²³⁰

This speaks to the Freudian notion of psychological truth practiced by *Nin* but also to a thwarted desire to manage the differences between literature and reality that has played out throughout this chapter. As Mendelsohn writes, moments of slippage between literary genres, and between truth and fiction make people nervous: ‘it’s hard not to think that a lot of the outrage directed at writers and publishers lately represents a displacement of a large and genuinely new anxiety, about our ability to filter or control the plethora of unreliable narratives coming at us from all directions.’²³¹ *Nin* is not a writer to turn to if one wants to soothe this anxiety. But she does produce a story that helps us read it.

If, as Baudrillard writes, ‘to be seduced is to be turned from one’s truth,’²³² then *Nin*’s therapist Otto Rank fails to seduce *Nin* in the next chapter. Yet in asking her to

²³⁰ Daniel Mendelsohn, “‘But Enough About Me’: what does the popularity of memoirs tell us about ourselves?” *The New Yorker*, 25 January, 2010.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Baudrillard, 81.

give up the diary, Rank facilitates another moment where the reader is led aside, where the diary vanishes, only to reappear as fragments, scraps and sketches. Taking hold of Nin's diary, Rank thinks he will be able to read her more closely. He seeks to control Nin's story. But Nin is more interested in psychoanalysis for the ways it allows her to perform her complexes, giving her new roles to play, new kinds of interpretation to slip out of.

Chapter Four.

Writing on the couch: psychoanalysis and the Diary.

*“You are a kind of victim to an immense psychoanalytical drama”*¹

*People like hearing stories about psychoanalysis.*²

*Why not live literarily – why not, when it is an improvement on the reality?*³

Introduction.

In the last chapter, we read seduction as that which creates illusions, distracts or frustrates interpretation, and is opposed to intimacy. We saw how an integral part of Nin’s self-image was styled around seduction and seductiveness, an image that made critics anxious as it speaks also to the potential literariness of the incest narrative. In this chapter, the work of seduction will continue as Nin enters psychoanalysis. The analysis room becomes a stage to perform on, somewhere else to dissemble, entertain and seduce. But it is also a site for resistance, evasion, dissolution. As an analysand, Nin attempts to disrupt transference intimacy, turning on her analysts, kissing them and making them feel. I will argue that Nin’s performances of intimacy in the analysis room play out psychoanalytic themes of resistance, transference, phallic authority and interpretation whilst disrupting these themes. Nin’s intimate involvement with her first two analysts forces us to rethink the dynamics of the psychoanalytic relationship.

Anaïs Nin’s 1945 short story, ‘The Voice’ depicts an analyst who longs for intimacy. He is the ‘Voice’ of the title, confined to a hotel room where he listens daily to ‘the unfaithful lying on the divan, looking down at them, with his own face against the light.’⁴ True to his name, the Voice is anonymous and unseen by his patients, a blank screen for their transference. But he confides to one of his patients, Lilith⁵ that he craves greater intimacy from his patients: “‘I want them to know me, and they don’t. Even when they love me, it is a love that is not addressed to me. I remain anonymous.’”⁶ The Voice feels himself to be a voyeur, always watching other people’s love, never feeling his own:

¹ Eduardo Sanchez to Nin, *Incest*, 332.

² John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*, 221.

³ Nin defends herself against Antonin Artaud’s accusation of ‘literary living,’ *Incest*, 235.

⁴ Anaïs Nin, ‘The Voice,’ in *Winter of Artifice* (London: Peter Owen, 1945), 120.

⁵ Famously, Lilith is Adam’s first wife in Jewish folklore, and has also been depicted as a demon.

⁶ *Ibid*, 148.

“My body is cramped. I want to do the things they do. At most I am allowed to watch. I am condemned to see through a perpetual keyhole every intimate scene of their life. But I am left out. Sometime I want to be taken in. I want to be desired, possessed, tortured too.”⁷

Transference ensures that intimacy is always misdirected; the analyst is never the intimate that the analysand wants. The Voice is trapped in his role and in his body, excluded from relationships, destined to be ‘the oracle or the seer.’⁸ No-one attempts to bring him out of this role, until Lilith. Lilith asks the Voice questions. In their session, she asks him to swap places with her - she moves to the chair and he lies on the couch. Following this encounter, the Voice begins to fall in love with Lilith. He starts to feel and, through this feeling, discovers a parity with his patients which he knows that they will find alarming because they do not want him ‘to be like them.’⁹ Lilith confides to another character, Djuna¹⁰ that she is also falling in love with the Voice: ‘I feel he is like a soul detective, and that the day he captures me, I will love him.’¹¹ Djuna cautions that this love is a ‘mirage’ and a ‘mystical illusion’ to which Lilith replies ‘it’s poetry.’¹² Djuna replies ‘it may be poetry [...] but at some moment or other your body will revolt because it’s not real.’¹³ Djuna warns Lilith ‘if you come closer [to the Voice] you will defeat your own salvation.’¹⁴

Despite Djuna’s warning, Lilith and the Voice begin to spend time with each other outside of analysis. Lilith loves the way that, ‘no matter what she [tells] him,’¹⁵ the Voice can make fantastic stories from the seemingly trivial moments of her everyday life. When Lilith buys a bracelet, the Voice ‘[pounces] upon it with excitement and [raises] the incident to a complete, dazzling, symbolical act, a part of a legend.’¹⁶ Lilith begins to feel that every incident has a ‘meaning’ and is part of a ‘divine pattern [...] of which the Voice alone knew the entire design.’¹⁷ Imbued with a new sense of the all-encompassing significance of her life, she feels ‘like an actress who had never known

⁷ Ibid, 136.

⁸ Ibid, 148.

⁹ Ibid, 153.

¹⁰ Purportedly named after the writer, Djuna Barnes whom Nin unsuccessfully attempted to befriend.

¹¹ Ibid, 158.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid. Following this Djuna suggests that she too has had a relationship with the Voice: ‘I tempted him as a man, and when he became a man and desired me, then I was angry at him, as if it had only been a test, a test of the saviour in him.’ 159.

¹⁵ Ibid, 166.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

how moving she had been.’¹⁸ The Voice gives her the script that brings her life together.

The Voice becomes increasingly dependent on Lilith but, true to Djuna’s warning, Lilith becomes disillusioned. She starts to ‘lose her faith in all interpretations’ sensing that they can be ‘manipulated to conceal the truth.’¹⁹ She uses ‘mythology’²⁰ to evade the Voice’s desire for her. She begins to notice the Voice’s physical form and finds it both revolting and unreal:

The body was denied: it did not flow into the clothes, espouse them. There was a kind of blight upon his body; it was the idea made flesh, the idea always standing in the way of natural gestures [...] His flesh was the colour of death. He had died in his body and never been resurrected. [...] It was a sad flesh tyrannized by the idea, drawn and quartered on a pattern, devoured by concepts.²¹

In ‘full daylight,’ the Voice is unreal, and ghostlike - disembodied and deformed by his role. The ideas have killed the body, rendering him ‘not a man.’²² When he is ‘not being the doctor,’ the Voice’s personality and physical form is under-developed, ‘stunted,’ and like a child.²³ He writes Lilith ‘inchoate love notes with ink blots’ and is ‘perspiring and nervous.’²⁴ When he is not being an analyst, he collapses. The story concludes that he remains ‘nothing but A VOICE.’²⁵

‘The Voice’ is the story of what happens when analysis doesn’t work. Lilith leaves her analyst, having lost faith ‘in all interpretations, since she saw how they could be manipulated to conceal the truth.’²⁶ No longer trusting in the analyst as a source of knowledge, she turns instead to self-knowledge and to ‘believe only in her feelings.’²⁷ In another sense though, we could read this as a story about what happens when analysis works ‘too well.’ Lilith is delivered from her reliance on the Voice and comes into her own knowledge. But, importantly, it is not knowledge that the process of analysis has furnished her with. In this sense, then, analysis, and the analyst are rendered obsolete. Neither gives Lilith the stories that she wants.

On the one hand, ‘The Voice’ delights in the pathos of the analyst-figure:

¹⁸ Ibid, 167.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 168.

²¹ Ibid, 164.

²² Ibid, 163.

²³ Ibid, 168.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 167.

²⁷ Ibid.

destined always to listen to others, never to be heard for himself. On the other, the story punishes the Voice when he starts to become more than an analyst. Initially, Lilith is attracted by the pathos, telling the Voice: “‘I feel the real you behind the analyst. [...] You are more than a symbol.’”²⁸ Both Lilith and the story initially invest in the notion of the analyst’s role as a screen, behind which is an authentic figure, hidden from all but the most perceptive of eyes: Lilith’s.²⁹ Lilith becomes the analyst’s analyst, able to see behind this screen. However, whilst Nin’s story is sympathetic to Lilith’s desire to look behind the analyst’s screen, ‘The Voice’ does not present the ‘man behind the Voice’ favourably. The story disfigures and rejects the Voice when he does begin to speak and appear as himself, when he comes out from behind the couch. The story does not allow the Voice to be anything other than a (failed) analyst. ‘Failed’ because he breaks one of the fundamental rules of the psychoanalytic dynamic: he becomes intimate with his patient.

Succumbing to Lilith’s seduction, the Voice is rendered vulnerable. Yet Lilith finds his desire for her repulsive, ‘every cell inside her body [closes] to the desire of the man.’³⁰ It is a ‘father she [is] looking for, not a lover.’³¹ The Voice loses his father-like status as one who is inviolable, all-seeing, and God-like by betraying his desire for Lilith. As a father-analyst she sees him as ‘a figure taller than other men, a type of saviour.’³² As a lover, he clutches and over-interprets:

He had not learned what she had learned: not to clutch at the perfume of flowers, not to touch the dew, not to tear all the curtains down, to let exaltation and breath rise, vanish. The perfume of the hours distilled only in silence, the heavy perfume of mysteries untouched by human fingers. The friction of words generated only pain and division. He had not learned to formulate without destroying, without tampering, without withering.³³

There are two kinds of intimacy at stake here: psychic and physical. This passage suggests that the Voice is an inept lover, as well as unappreciative of sensuality in the more abstract sense. The Voice holds on too tightly, especially to sensual experience.

²⁸ Ibid, 149.

²⁹ In ‘Advice to Doctors on Psychoanalytic Treatment,’ Freud writes that ‘[f]or the patient the doctor should remain opaque, and, like a mirror surface, should show nothing but what is shown to him.’ In revealing anything about himself, the analyst threatens the patient’s recovery. The patient depends on the analyst’s opacity because it is this which allows him to project his own unresolved desires onto the analyst, the process of ‘transference.’ See Sigmund Freud, ‘Advice to Doctor on Psychoanalytic Treatment,’ in *Wild Analysis*, 39.

³⁰ ‘The Voice,’ 162.

³¹ Ibid, 163.

³² Ibid, 162.

³³ Ibid, 163.

Clutching, he destroys. Nor does he appreciate the ‘mysteries,’ a word that, for Nin, is indelibly associated with (good) sex.³⁴ Instead, he ‘tear[s] all the curtains down,’ an image which suggests the destruction of illusion through the need to see what is behind the curtains, in other words, a need to interpret. Here, ‘the friction of words’ is the wrong kind of friction, producing pain rather than pleasure. As we shall also see in Nin’s relationship with her first analyst, the Voice’s need to generate words produces an answering resistance in Lilith. Good sex in Nin’s language is that which flows, moves, breathes. It is artistic. *Incest* features a very similar passage:

Flesh touching flesh generates a perfume, and the friction of words only pain and division. To formulate without destroying with the mind, without tampering, without killing, without withering [...] That respect for the perfume will become my law in art. It is the poet affirming himself because of the struggle against psychoanalysis.³⁵

This passage further reveals the positive alignment between sensuality and art. The ‘poet’ recognises and appreciates the sensuality of two bodies touching, whilst the analyst only creates friction by seeking to describe, interpret and formulate through language. Bad sex jars, rubs, probes.³⁶ It is dry, staccato and divisive. It interprets and analyses. Bad sex tries to hold on to that which is transient, or, at least, that which reads itself as elusive. The same associations circulate in Nin’s experiences of analysis.³⁷ The ‘bad’ analyst for Nin is the analyst who probes her, who presses her in a ‘dry’ way, who thrusts into her. The ‘good’ analyst flows into Nin, both in his³⁸ speech and manner, he takes the pressure off, he works with ‘the current of life.’³⁹

Joseph Allan Boone has argued that hydraulic metaphors ‘[turn] up repeatedly in narratives of female sexual awakening [...] at the beginning of the twentieth century.’⁴⁰ Citing *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Boone considers Freud’s metaphor

³⁴ See Chapter 2.

³⁵ *Incest*, 361.

³⁶ ‘The Voice’ gestures towards what Renu Bora has identified as ‘the textual oppositions [of] shiny/matte, gleaming/dull, smooth/rough, polished/crude.’ Bora works these oppositions into her theory of textuality. See Renu Bora, ‘Outing Texture,’ in *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 96.

³⁷ Valerie Harms also uses the term ‘good analyst,’ which implicates the ‘bad analyst.’ For Harms, Rank and Allendy are both, largely speaking, ‘bad’ analysts ‘who profoundly failed [Nin] by their unprofessional conduct.’ (112). See Valerie Harms, ‘Anaïs and Her Analysts, Rank and Allendy: The Creative and Destructive Aspects,’ in *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Nalbantian, 112-119.

³⁸ Although Nin had female analysts after Rank, I will not be discussing them here. Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, her relationships with these analysts followed very different patterns.

³⁹ *Incest*, 370.

⁴⁰ Joseph Allan Boone, *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 64.

which characterises the libido as a powerful ‘stream’⁴¹ that, writes Boone, ‘always threatens to spill over.’⁴² Nin’s depictions of overfullness, overflowing and currents of life all represent moments of liberation, a sense that any dams between sex, the diary and life have fallen away, that libidinal desire flows freely between these shores. However, tides are also at work; sex pulls Nin away from the diary especially if it is good sex, the diary signifies a drawing back from life as well as a rushing towards it. Arguably, Freudian psychoanalysis represents an attempt to curb and redirect this libidinal flow.⁴³ Both of Nin’s first two analysts attempt to contain and redirect her desires. Allendy attempts to coax and then force away Nin’s errant attraction to Henry Miller, who also represents her pull towards a literary milieu. Rank sees Nin’s diary and her relationships as obstacles to her creative flow. Yet, in removing the diary-obstacle, Nin feels this flow drain away. It bubbles up, elsewhere, in the archive.

Analysis and sex speak the same language for Nin, although it is arguably analysis that is measured and judged against sex. Analysis also falls away when Nin is having sex, unless the sex is bad. The point at which Nin decides to have sex with her analysts in ‘real life’ is the point at which analysis begins to fail. Nin needs to believe her analysts are godlike in order to believe in them, and trust that their analysis will be effective. But she also wants to believe that they are human, so that she can seduce them. This chapter will argue that Nin’s confusion of sexual and analytic intimacy disrupts the distance between the two, distance that Adam Phillips has argued defines psychoanalysis: ‘psychoanalysis is about what two people can say to each other when they agree not to have sex.’⁴⁴ Sleeping with her first two analysts, Nin throws into question the extent to which the success of psychoanalysis relies on its participants not becoming physically intimate with each other. This chapter will ask, to some extent: what do Nin and her analysts say to each other in psychoanalysis when they agree to have sex?

Analysis potentially kills sex, but also lends to it an added frisson, a frisson which sex reciprocates in the analysis space. Nin goes to analysis, initially,⁴⁵ to resolve

⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962) 36.

⁴² *Libidinal Currents*, 64.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, 63-140.

⁴⁴ Adam Phillips, ‘The It in the I,’ in *Intimacies*, Adam Phillips and Leo Bersani, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7.

⁴⁵ Nin began analysis with Allendy in 1932.

her proliferating sexual conflicts but comes out of analysis with René Allendy feeling, firstly, that she does not want to be fit into a Freudian pattern, and, secondly, that she would like to kiss her analyst.⁴⁶ Kissing and subsequently sleeping with Allendy becomes a way for Nin to break free from the analysis, but also a way to render her analyst un-analytical.

Nin's second analyst, Otto Rank, arguably had the greater influence.⁴⁷ Having already published work on the artist, literature and creativity, Rank's theories regarding creative self-fashioning spoke to Nin's desire to be treated, in both senses of the word, as an artist. Rank legitimised and encouraged Nin's desire to dramatise and create. But he did not like the diary, seeing it as a threat to Nin's artistry and to the analytic process. On their second appointment, Rank asks Nin to give up her diary, with the explanation that it is an impediment to her fiction writing and to the analysis. What ensues, as we shall see, is a fascinating story of writing as resistance, graphomania, diversions, sketches and cover ups.

Otto Rank considered the diary to be an obstacle to the psychoanalytic process because it allowed Nin to analyse the analysis. He described it as a 'traffic island'⁴⁸ that Nin stood on, a site of resistance against the affecting flow of the psychoanalytic dialogue. Both Rank and Nin figure the diary as a space that Nin removes herself to, in order to manage, transform and cathect her experiences. In this way, then, the diary poses a kind of threat to psychoanalysis: it often performs the same therapeutic work as psychoanalysis and arguably in a way that Nin found more relieving.⁴⁹ In this chapter, I read the diary as a space where Nin works out conflicts often by dramatising them; a space where she remembers, repeats, and works through. It is a space for outpouring and unburdening, a place to make life manageable. This chapter will argue that it is the diary, rather than the analysis room, where Nin finds the most refuge. During this period, and despite Rank's best efforts, Nin becomes increasingly involved with the diary. She describes it as her 'opium,'⁵⁰ yet also views it as a refuge from a disenchanting world. Nin depicts her diary-writing as a kind of madness, as

⁴⁶ A very Freudian desire.

⁴⁷ However, I will also argue that, by reading Nin's analysis under Allendy, we produce a much more nuanced reading of her relationship with psychoanalysis than is currently perpetuated.

⁴⁸ *Incest*, 294.

⁴⁹ This begs the question, why did Nin go for psychoanalysis in the first place, if she already had the diary? Nin initially placed faith in psychoanalysis because she believed that there were conflicts in her life that she could not solve.

⁵⁰ *Incest*, 285.

graphomania, but also as the thing which keeps her sane.

Nin, I will argue, is fundamentally ambivalent towards psychoanalysis. Frequently put into opposition with other parts of her life, especially the diary, psychoanalysis moves between being curse and cure. However, Nin's later accounts of psychoanalysis present it as a remarkably unproblematic influence.⁵¹ It becomes so, arguably, because Nin leaves the sex out. Nowhere in Nin's public and published narratives of the 1970s does she mention the fact that she had sexual relationships with her first two analysts, René Allendy and Otto Rank.⁵² This missing detail is the key to Nin's ambivalence. Because the analyst can be seduced, so can psychoanalysis – it can be led away from itself, weakened and made vulnerable.

This chapter, then, will consider the triangulated relationship of sex, the diary and psychoanalysis. All three negotiate and perform different kinds of intimacy. But all three also rub up against each other in Nin's work, invading each other's territories. Sex takes place in analysis as well as in the bedroom. Nin leaves her diary with her analyst and, arguably, leaves her analyst for her diary. Nin's diary is both that which threatens her sexual relationships and an aphrodisiac. A 1932 letter to Henry Miller performs Nin's ambivalence towards psychoanalysis, but also presents psychoanalysis as a kind of performance. Nin writes to Miller:

I have not decided yet whether analysis simplifies and undramatizes our existence or whether it is the most subtle, the most insidious, the most magnificent way of making dramas more terrible, more maddening. [...] All I know is that drama is by no means dead in the so-called laboratory, that it depends on where your sense of voluptuousness is centered, and that for Allendy to discover, to interfere, [...] to insinuate, to hint, to explain, to penetrate is as passionate a game as it has been for you to live with June.⁵³

As well as staging Nin's association of analysis with the sex act, this passage is key for understanding Nin's subsequent dealings with analysis and analysts. Initially, Nin is not sure whether she needs psychoanalysis to dramatise or un-dramatise her existence. But once she finds the right analyst, psychoanalysis provides another stage on which to perform and new dramas to act.

⁵¹ See accounts in Bair and DuBow.

⁵² See Chapter 5.

⁵³ Anaïs Nin, letter to Henry Miller, dated 29 September, 1932, in *A Literate Passion: Letters of Anaïs Nin and Henry Miller, 1932-1953*, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann (London: Allison and Busby, 1988), 111-112.

René Allendy: the First Voice.

*She could not tell if the Voice was right or wrong, but she could feel with his words the invasion of a most painful secret. Exactly as if this set, tense, granite core of herself were being touched and found not to be granite. Found to have nerves, sensibilities and memories.*⁵⁴

*Yet another round of whispering on the bed.*⁵⁵

Nin comes to analyst René Allendy in two different ways, depending which version of the diary you read (the edited or unexpurgated). In the edited diary, Nin writes firstly of Allendy's text *Le Problème de la Destinée (Etude Sur la Fatalité Intérieure)*⁵⁶:

[Allendy] believes in destiny being motivated from within [...] Deep and unknown impulses push the individual towards repetitive experiences. Man tends to project those patterns outside of himself and to place the blame for all that happens to him on external forces.⁵⁷

It is these theories that Nin would later come to reject, leading her to visit Otto Rank. But in the edited diary, Nin is initially impressed by Allendy. She writes that he looks 'more like a magician than a doctor' and that he has the 'eyes of a seer,'⁵⁸ both descriptions which she would later use to describe the Voice. Although Nin told Allendy that she had 'always been very independent' and had 'never leaned on anyone,'⁵⁹ she left his office for the first time feeling 'a great distress at being left alone again, to solve my own difficulties.'⁶⁰ Afterwards, Nin mused upon the difficulty of recording her first conversation with Allendy in the diary:

There is a baffling thing about analysis which is a challenge to a writer. It is almost impossible to detect the links by which one arrives at a certain statement. There is a fumbling, a shadowy area. One does not arrive suddenly at the clear-cut phrases I put down. There were hesitations, innuendos, detours. I reported it as a limpid dialogue, but left out the shadows and obscurities. One cannot give a progressive development.⁶¹

These 'links' of free associative talk prove impossible to record, based as they are on the logic of the unconscious. From the off, then, the reader is made aware of a discrepancy

⁵⁴ 'The Voice,' 143.

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Will To Knowledge. The History of Sexuality: 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998) (1976).

⁵⁶ 'The Problem of Destiny (Study on the Interior Fatality).' *Le Problème de la Destinée (Etude Sur la Fatalité Intérieure)* (Paris: Gallimard, 27).

⁵⁷ *Volume One*, 74. Freud theorises destiny in the same way in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle: and Other Writings*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

⁵⁸ *Volume One*, 75.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 76.

⁶¹ Ibid, 76-7.

between the things Nin says in analysis, and the things she writes down in her diary. Although she writes that ‘one cannot give a progressive development,’ this, in fact, is exactly what she does. The ‘hesitancies, innuendos, detours’ of free association are made coherent, clarified and straightened out. The transition from talking in psychoanalysis to writing in the diary was unsatisfactory for Nin, even though she reported her conversation with Allendy as a ‘limpid’⁶² dialogue. Writing could not fully represent the unconscious.

In the unexpurgated diary’s account of this event, Nin sees the same ‘seer’s eyes’ but is much more suspicious of the man behind them:

I see a handsome, healthy man, with clear, intelligent, seer’s eyes. My mind is alert, expecting him to say something dogmatic, formulistic. I want him to say it, because if he does, this will be another man I cannot lean on, and I will have to go on conquering myself alone.⁶³

Nin goes prepared to be disappointed by Allendy. She is not impressed by the opulence of his office (as in the edited narrative), nor by his mystical air. Neither does she so easily surrender her ‘independence’ as in the edited version. Instead, Nin’s air is challenging, resistant to Allendy’s technique, and she is quick to point out when he makes a ‘mistake’⁶⁴ in his analysis. Nin goes to Allendy because Eduardo (her cousin) wants her to, for the sake of what Nin ‘would write down.’⁶⁵ Whereas in the edited diary, Nin finds it difficult to put her experience with Allendy into words, the unexpurgated diary suggests that she enters analysis for the express purpose of writing about it. Nin writes that she will visit Allendy ‘infrequently,’ in order to ‘absorb the material and work inspirationally,’ but also because infrequent visits will make her ‘less dependent.’⁶⁶ But both dependency and influence creep in. Nin writes of how ‘vague, meaningless incident[s]’ suddenly become ‘heavy with significance’⁶⁷ because of psychoanalysis. She resents this new, analytical perspective, likening it to onanism:

Analysis makes me feel as if I were masturbating instead of fucking. Being with Henry is to live, to flow, to suffer, even. I do not like to be with Allendy and to press dry fingers on the secrets of my body.⁶⁸

Analysis makes Nin touch herself, especially the sore spots. Nin associates fucking and

⁶² ‘Limpid’ is a positive word for Nin as it connotes fluidity.

⁶³ *Henry and June*, 114.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 115.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 116.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 128.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

Henry Miller with vitality, fluidity and strong emotion. All suggest movement towards an other (Henry, in this instance), rather than a state of stasis within the self. Allendy does not bring Nin out of herself. Instead, being with him means pressing ‘dry fingers’ on the ‘secrets’ of her body, an image that speaks of violation by the self, of the self. Rather than the ‘flow’ of fucking, here, Nin’s fingers are dry. They give her no pleasure.

In a later appointment, Nin confides to Allendy that she feels guilty for the times she has masturbated: ‘I used to fear it would diminish my mental power.’⁶⁹ At this point then, masturbation also poses a potential threat to Nin’s ability to make art.⁷⁰ Depicting masturbation as a pressing (down) on the secrets of her body, Nin imagines the loss of what she sees as her illusions, her art(s). In her fear that masturbation will diminish her ‘power,’ masturbation also figures as the thing that could stop Nin from moving forwards.⁷¹ Analysis, by turning Nin in on herself, threatens to do the same.

The Penguin Classics cover of *Henry and June* features a photograph of a naked woman, sitting in a chair. She is headless and it looks, at least, like she has her hand between her legs. As a signifying image for the text, this accords with Nin’s fear that analysis will make her lose her head. The photo also further yokes masturbation with analysis, as it seems that the figure is sitting in an old-fashioned type of office chair. The chair in itself is suggestive, as it could be read as the analyst’s chair (as opposed to the analysand’s couch). Are we to read Nin as the analyst rather than the analysand? Certainly, at points in her analysis with Allendy, she reads herself this way: ‘[w]henver he asks me to close my eyes and relax and talk, I go on with my own analysis. I say to myself, “He is telling me little that I do not know.”’⁷² Nin is unwilling to admit to any dark spots in her self-knowledge that the analyst might elucidate. This is a way to keep herself apart from the analysis, as writing in the diary will come to be.

Pressed on, Nin also feels oppressed by Allendy’s analysis. His questions are likened to ‘thrusts’ which do not ‘help.’ ‘The pain of living,’ writes Nin, is nothing ‘compared to the pain of this minute analysis.’⁷³ But Nin also surrenders to the pain of

⁶⁹ Ibid, 173. Such beliefs in the ‘dangers’ of masturbation were common at the time.

⁷⁰ Nin would later write positively about masturbation as part of her new, liberated sexuality. See *Incest*.

⁷¹ Also, in masturbation one does not usually have an audience – another facet that might have made Nin view it negatively.

⁷² *Henry and June: From the Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin*, ed. Rupert Pole (London: Penguin, 1990) 133.

⁷³ All quotes from *Henry and June*, 131.

Allendy's thrusting questions. Lying back, she feels an 'inrush of pain, despair.'⁷⁴ This pouring in is followed by an outpouring, a further reminder of Nin's reliance on hydraulic metaphors to describe pleasure. Nin cries. She feels 'weak.'⁷⁵ She leaves Allendy's office in what, arguably, is a version of post-orgasmic haze: 'when I leave him, I am in a dream, relaxed, warm, as if I had traversed fantastic regions.'⁷⁶

Analysis with Allendy does have its pleasures then - mostly moments described through this hydraulics of emotion: inrushing (rather than the pressing of dry fingers), outpouring and relaxation. But Nin rails against Allendy's refusal to take her art seriously and his tendency to slot her into patterns. She writes: 'Allendy has not taken my literary-creative side seriously, and I have resented his simplification of my nature to pure woman. He has refused to cloud his vision with a consideration of my imagination.'⁷⁷ According to Nin, Allendy tells Hugo⁷⁸ that Nin's 'literary adventures' carry her to 'milieus where [she doesn't] belong.'⁷⁹ Presumably, Allendy was referring to Nin's relationship with Henry Miller,⁸⁰ which he knew about and of which he was jealous, according to Nin's account. Allendy's analysis becomes a way to put Nin back in her place, as a woman (meaning, by Allendy's logic that she cannot also be an artist), but also a way to bring her back into the fatherly fold, represented by Allendy and Nin's husband.⁸¹ Confirming this, Nin writes that Allendy and Hugo are 'anxious over the child who has such a dangerous need of love.'⁸² Hugo Guiler was also in analysis with Allendy at the same time as Nin and, as this moment demonstrates, patient confidentiality was not at a premium. Allendy functioned as a kind of go-between to Nin, Hugo and Eduardo Sanchez, speaking to each about the other, generating his own living family romance from these relationships. Allendy's methods are an attempt to police Nin's relationship with Miller, although he is not successful.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 132.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 266.

⁷⁸ Nin's husband, Hugo/Hugh Guiler.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Miller famously refers to this 'adventure' with Nin as a 'literary fuck-fest.' See letter from Miller to Nin dated July 30, 1932 in *A Literate Passion*, 82.

⁸¹ To some extent, Otto Rank shares this believe in the impossibility of the woman artist, although he does acknowledge Nin as an artist in ways that Allendy doesn't. There is a long feminist tradition of analyzing the split between woman and artist. See, for example, Margaret Homans' *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁸² *Henry and June*, 266.

For Allendy, Miller represents a dangerous literary milieu⁸³ that Nin must be rescued from, to restore and realise her femininity. A related aspect of Allendy's cure is to strip Nin of her arts, her lies, role-playing and 'interest in perversions.'⁸⁴ Of this cure, Nin writes: 'Allendy says I must live with greater sincerity and naturalness. I must not overstep the bounds of my nature, create dissonances, deviations, roles [...] because it means misery.'⁸⁵ Allendy believes in an essential Nin who is pure, sincere and natural – the 'simple woman' that Nin resisted a moment ago. Her tendency to act out roles, and then to take these roles 'seriously'⁸⁶ is but a neurosis that must be cured, in order to lead her back to her essential self. But whilst Allendy believes in a Nin behind the roles, Nin is less convinced:

If psychoanalysis is going to annihilate all nobility in personal motives and in art by the discovery of neurotic roots, what does it substitute in place of them? What would I be without my decoration, costume, personality?⁸⁷

If Nin *does* believe in an essential self, then it is a self, paradoxically, that is inessential: composed of costumes, adornments, art. Stripped of her 'costume' by Allendy, she wonders if there will be anything else there.

The suggestion that psychoanalysis might substitute some other kind of clothing in place of Nin's missing costumes relates to Nin's suspicion of psychoanalysis' imposing patterns. In the same letter to Henry Miller where Nin wonders whether psychoanalysis can create 'drama,' she writes:

Do you remember the time I told you I was in great revolt against Allendy and analysis? He had made me reach just such a point where, by great efforts of logic on his part, he had *solved* my chaos, established a pattern, etc. I was furious to think I could be made to fit within one of those "few fundamental patterns." I felt exactly as you described: "Life's problems were too limited [...] that the function of the artist was to increase these problems[...] to make people wild and free so that there would be *more* drama to their lives."⁸⁸

Again, Nin uses Miller to represent the counter-position to Allendy here. Where Allendy wants to solve chaos, establish patterns, generate logic; Miller wants to rip up these patterns, generate more drama, push the limits of experience rather than circumscribing and managing it through psychoanalysis. One can see why Miller's position would be the more attractive to Nin, it both gives the artist a privileged role (to increase life's

⁸³ And a sexual rival to Allendy.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 196.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Anaïs Nin, letter to Henry Miller dated September 29, 1932, in *A Literate Passion*, 111.

problems or dramas) and represents the limitless hedonism that she had been enjoying with Miller, a hedonism that Nin also viewed as necessarily artistic. Nin goes on to tell Miller of how she sets out to upset 'Allendy's pattern'⁸⁹

[w]ith the most *ingenious* lies, the most *elaborate piece of acting* I have ever done in my life. [...] I used all my talent for analysis and logic, which *he* admitted I had to a great degree, my own ease at giving explanations, etc. [...] I did not hesitate to play with his own personal feelings, *every bit of power* I had, *I used*, to create a drama, to elude his theory, to complicate and throw veils.⁹⁰

Lying, performing and dramatising become a way for Nin to resist and outwit analysis. She tries to generate stories outside of Allendy's patterns that he won't be able to explain. Again, Nin assumes the role of auto-analyst here, rushing in with her own explanations, generating her own analysis, and creating her own dramas before Allendy has the chance to. Despite her best efforts to elude, complicate and 'throw veils' over Allendy's theories, eventually, he finds his pattern:

Allendy has beaten me, Allendy has known the truth, he has analyzed it *all* right, has detected the lies⁹¹ [...] and finally proved today again the truth of those damned "fundamental patterns" which explain the behaviour of all human beings.⁹²

Nin gets little satisfaction from having been beaten here. Nin does not want to be just another human being, conforming to type, fitting into patterns. Instead, she wants to embody Miller's artist as one who *makes* patterns for others, creating more and more dramas to be lived out.

It is this desire to be a designer of patterns, a writer of new stories rather than one who fits into the old ones that leads Nin to break off her analysis with Allendy. One morning, shortly after Allendy tells Nin that she 'must live with greater sincerity and naturalness,' she awakens 'with a feeling'⁹³ that Allendy is going to kiss her. Once in the appointment, she announces to Allendy, and the reader, that this will be their last.⁹⁴ We are not privy to the process that has led up to this decision. It reads, then, as both a

⁸⁹ Ibid, 111.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Italics are Nin's own.

⁹¹ Nin frequently likens her analysts to detectives. See also, Nin's novel *A Spy in the House of Love*, which features an analyst character called the 'lie detector,' mystified by the illusions of the central character Sabina, much in the way that Nin attempts to mystify her analysts. *A Spy in the House of Love* (London: Penguin, 2001).

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid, 197.

⁹⁴ We could compare Nin with Freud's Dora here. Like Dora, Nin asserts her power over the analytic contract by breaking it. Leigh Gilmore writes: 'we see something of the artist in Dora when she abruptly cuts off the analysis, with dramatic flair, on the final day of the year 1900.' Gilmore, 59.

response to the discomfort Nin expressed in the previous appointment, when Allendy told her that needed to drop her artistry, and as a device to get him to kiss her. Arguably, the discomfort and the kiss are linked. Nin seduces Allendy⁹⁵ as both distraction from and termination of the analysis. The lips are mightier than the talking cure. Following the inevitable kiss, which Nin describes as ‘too short and chaste,’⁹⁶ Allendy and Nin begin a relationship. The analysis, to some extent, continues, although Nin writes that she can see ‘the crumbling of [Allendy’s] objectivity,’⁹⁷ as their relationship intensifies – a falling away of the analyst that she delights in. Nin sexually dominates Allendy who, she writes, ‘submits to women.’⁹⁸ Yet, apparently, Allendy tells Nin’s husband that she needs to be dominated.⁹⁹

This staged power struggle, which Nin is very much the director of, comes to a head in a scene that provides ample drama for all. Allendy has asked Nin to go with him to a hotel. What Nin anticipates is ‘experience, curiosity, comedy.’¹⁰⁰ What she gets is a beating:

Allendy doesn’t kiss me. He sits on the edge of the bed and says, “Now you will pay for everything, for enslaving me and then abandoning me. *Petite garce!*”¹⁰¹ And he takes out of his pocket a whip! [...] “Henry hasn’t beaten you, has he? I’m going to possess you as you never have been possessed. You devil.”¹⁰²

Nin writes this scene as a hackneyed drama, much like Allendy’s other displays of machismo: ‘I recognize the dime-novel quality of it.’¹⁰³ This scene does not strike Nin as ‘voluptuous,’¹⁰⁴ sensual or dramatic - all words for the kind of sex that appeals to her.¹⁰⁵ Instead, she writes that Allendy’s ‘preliminary lashes’ make her ‘feel like hitting back’ and that her ‘pride is gravely offended.’¹⁰⁶ Despite the obvious comedy of this scene, which Nin also identifies, it is a disturbing one. Indeed, it becomes so disturbing because it treads such a thin line between farce and abuse.

⁹⁵ Although Nin writes that Allendy is going to kiss *her*, arguably she creates the scene for this kiss to take place.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 198.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 247.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 250.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 146.

¹⁰¹ ‘Little bitch!’

¹⁰² Ibid, 147.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ During this period, Nin writes most positively of the sex she has with Henry Miller.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Nin writes that Allendy lays her on the bed and whips her buttocks, ‘hard.’¹⁰⁷ Yet the rest of his performance fails:

His penis, after all this excitement on his part – lashes, struggles, caresses of fury [...] was still soft. Henry would have already been blazing. Allendy pushed my head toward it, as the first time, and then, with all the halo of excitement, threats, he fucked no better than before. His penis was short and nerveless. Voluptuary! [...] I played a comedy. Allendy said he had reached the height of joy. He lay panting and satisfied.¹⁰⁸

Allendy’s whip and his penis, both phallic tools of authority that we inevitably associate with psychoanalysis are, like his analysis, ineffectual. His patterns, like those made by his whip, do not leave a lasting impression on Nin. Playing a comedy, Nin writes that, when Allendy whipped then fucked her, she ‘was not there at all.’¹⁰⁹ She slips out of Allendy’s drama, in search of new stories and new ways to tell them.

Otto Rank: making the artist.

*Much that I am reading in Rank will illuminate intimations I had about the artist.*¹¹⁰

*“I am one of the artists you are writing about, Dr. Rank.”*¹¹¹

Even before Nin meets Otto Rank, he is present in the diary as a touchstone for Nin’s artistic self-fashioning. As with her interest in D.H. Lawrence, Nin presented herself as telepathically *simpatico* with Rank - her thoughts ran ‘parallel’¹¹² to his. Rank also represented an opportunity to ‘renew the process of psychoanalysis,’¹¹³ now that Allendy had been summarily dethroned via kisses and poor technique. Following the ‘Father Story,’ Nin’s desire to meet Rank increased. She writes that she ‘needs’ Rank, whom she sees as having ‘a stronger mind than Allendy’s.’¹¹⁴ She wanted to talk to Rank about ‘art, creation, incest,’¹¹⁵ to ‘confront a big mind and thresh out the subject. Plumb it.’¹¹⁶ As we have seen, Allendy’s kind of threshing did not satisfy Nin. Rank’s ‘big mind’ represented a restoration of Nin’s faith in the phallic authority of psychoanalysis.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 148.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 76.

¹¹¹ Nin plans what she will say to Rank in their first meeting. *Volume One*, 270.

¹¹² Ibid, 78.

¹¹³ Ibid, 93.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 227.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Otto Rank had originally studied with Freud and worked as his colleague, until he broke, dramatically, with Freud in 1926, following a dispute over Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*,¹¹⁷ which theorized that there was a stage that prefigured the Oedipal complex. Breaking from Freud, Rank continued to forge his theories which centered around the creative potential of the individual to fashion and manage their own experiences, in order to draw the ultimate pleasure from life. Rank argued for a subject who could determine their own experience, who wasn't entirely at the mercy of external influences especially those of the past. Rankian will was the preserve of the individual and could be used by the individual to shape their experience, as Esther Menaker puts it, 'unbound by any predictable stereotype of causality.'¹¹⁸ Arguably, Nin was attracted to Rank because of this emphasis on creativity, seeing in Rank's theories the potential for dramatizing her own conflicts, further transforming her life into art.

Nin's need for Rank following her incestuous encounter with her father also speaks to her desire to read incest artistically. Of the 'Father Story,' Nin writes 'all this incestuous love is still veiled and a dream. I want to realize it, and it eludes me.'¹¹⁹ She feels the difficulty of putting the 'Father Story' into words,¹²⁰ of bringing the event to fruition. Nin suspects that Allendy will interpret the 'veiled' quality of her feeling towards her father as guilt. Going to Rank, then, Nin wanted to be free of the man who read her as guilty, to talk instead to a man who would help her to read and realise her incestuous experiences artistically.¹²¹

On November 7, 1933, Nin went to see Rank without an appointment. He asked her for a 'clear, full outline of [her] life and work,' an act which set him apart from Allendy who, as we have seen, was not interested in Nin's work.¹²² Nin tells Rank that she knows the 'artist' in her could make 'good use of his conflicts'¹²³ but that, at present, she feels she is 'expending too much energy trying to master a confusion of

¹¹⁷ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (1929) (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹¹⁸ Esther Menaker, *Otto Rank - A Rediscovered Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

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¹¹⁹ *Incest*, 227.

¹²⁰ See Chapter 3.

¹²¹ Rank had already written about incest in literary terms. Cf. *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend: Fundamentals of a Psychology of Literary Creation* (1912) (John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 291. Nin's choice of a masculine pronoun here is somewhat confusing, but does suggest, as with elsewhere in her work, that she views being an artist as a masculine occupation at this point.

desires.’¹²⁴ Nin depicts the complexity (and sheer multitude, one imagines), of her relationships as that which compromises and detracts from her ability to create, even though she views the same conflicts as potentially creative.¹²⁵ Life, sexual life, and art all flow into and affect each other in Nin’s experience.

Nin goes to Rank, then, to find out how to manage her relationships in order to realise their creative potential. According to Nin, Rank connects up her relationships and her art in the same way, asking ““What did you *produce* during the period of extreme neurosis following your affair with John?””¹²⁶ It is the creative product, rather than the neurosis that Rank is interested in.

Rank differed from the largely Freudian mode of psychoanalysis practiced by Allendy in other ways too. According to Nin’s account of their first meeting, Rank was keen to distinguish his work from psychoanalysis:

“Psychoanalysis emphasizes the resemblances, I emphasize the differences between people. They try to bring everyone back to a certain normal level. I try to adapt each person to his own kind of universe. The creative instinct is apart.”¹²⁷

Whereas Nin resented Allendy’s attempts to normalise her; stripping her of her costumes, her art, Rank represented the possibility of difference and individuality. In privileging the ‘creative instinct,’ Rank’s work also spoke to Nin’s feeling that the artist was special, different from ‘normal’ people. This feeling was a crucial component of Nin’s self-fashioning in this period, although she would later perpetuate an image of herself as an everywoman.¹²⁸

In *Art and the Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development*,¹²⁹ Otto Rank places the creative impulse at the centre of all human life. However, the creative type or artist is set apart from both the ‘normal’ individual and the neurotic. Rank depicts the neurotic as a frustrated artist who has never ‘produced a work of art.’¹³⁰ The neurotic ‘suffers fundamentally from the fact that he cannot or will not accept himself, his own

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ At this point, Nin was having sexual relationships with her father, her husband, Henry Miller, René Allendy and, occasionally, her cousin Eduardo Sanchez.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Rank is referring here to John Erskine, whom we encountered briefly in Chapter 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 292.

¹²⁸ See Chapter 5.

¹²⁹ Nin writes the foreword for the new edition of this text. See Otto Rank, *Art and the Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (1932) (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989).

¹³⁰ Otto Rank, *Art and the Artist*, xxiv.

individuality, his own personality':¹³¹

On one hand he criticizes himself to excess, on the other he idealizes himself to excess, which means that he makes too great demands on himself and his completeness, so that failing to attain leads only to more self-criticism.¹³²

The artist, on the other hand, deals in productive self-idealisation. By 'accepting his personality,' the artist 'not only fulfills that for which the neurotic is striving in vain but goes far beyond it.'¹³³ Rank concludes: 'the precondition, then, of the creative personality is not only its acceptance, but its actual glorification, of itself.'¹³⁴ It is this tendency towards self-idealisation that marks the beginning of the artist's journey. In creating his own 'cult of personality,' the artist 'appoints himself as an artist.'¹³⁵ In fact, the artist's first act of creation *is* his own personality. This personality 'remains fundamentally his chief work, since all his other works are partly the repeated expression of this primal creation, partly a justification by dynamism.'¹³⁶ Later on in his text, Rank writes that the modern artist is particularly susceptible to an awareness of 'his own personality and its productiveness.'¹³⁷

Describing their first session, Nin writes of Rank '[i]mmediately I knew that we talk [sic] the same language.'¹³⁸ This language was that of the artist as one who stood apart from mere mortals, one who made her personality and life into a work of art, as Nin did. Rank's artist is also one who makes their own patterns, who creates their own world to live in. The artist is not subject to Freudian dramas in Rank's formulation. Instead, she creates her own dramas, for herself and others. For Nin, then, Rank's theory of the artist validated her own self-fashioning as an artist. Rank's theory of the artist as a constant generator of her own stories also represented an opportunity for Nin to escape the family romance.¹³⁹ Nin wrote of Rank that he was someone who understood 'the

¹³¹ Ibid, 27.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid. Rank goes on to write that this self-appointment is 'only possible if the society in which [the artist] lives has an ideology of genius, recognizes it, and values it.' 27.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 28. All pronouns are Rank's own and speak to a prevailing view that art was man's terrain. For a discussion of Rank's theory of women, see E. James Lieberman, *Acts of Will: The Life and Work of Otto Rank* (New York: The Free Press, 1985). According to Tristine Rainer, Rank's 'confusion about woman as artist reaggravates Anaïs' own conflict over that dichotomy.' See Rainer, 'The Birth of the Young Woman as an Artist,' in *A Casebook on Anaïs Nin*, ed. Robert Zaller (New York: Meridian, 1974).

¹³⁷ Ibid, 37.

¹³⁸ *Incest*, 292.

¹³⁹ Nin would no doubt have resented the many critical readings that put her right back into an Oedipal drama. See, for example Susan Kavalier-Adler's *The Compulsion to Create: A Psychoanalytic Study of*

more' - beyond the Freudian drama:

There is *more* in my relation to my Father than the desire of victory over my Mother. There is *more* in my relation to Henry than masochistic sacrifices or a need of victory over the other woman. There is – beyond sexuality, beyond lesbianism, beyond narcissism - creation, *creation*. [...] Immediately, [Rank] grasped the *core* of me; he said the stories I wrote as a child about being an orphan were not to be explained merely as criminal desire to do away with Mother out of jealousy, and Father out of an inordinate love. I wanted to create myself. I did not want to be born from human parents.¹⁴⁰

Nin resists being read as a Freudian subject, conditioned by the Oedipus complex. As Rank would put it, her 'will' was to create herself anew, separate from her parents.¹⁴¹ It is the need to make her *own* stories which forms Nin's core, suggesting, inevitably, that her core was made of stories.

Meditating lies.

*"What you call your lies are fiction and myths. The art of creating a disguise can be as beautiful as the creation of a painting."*¹⁴²

*"Truth" was always the best place to lie.*¹⁴³

Nin planned to deceive Rank. On the train to their appointment, she invented and then rehearsed stories of her neuroses:

I made this note in the train: On my way to see Rank, *je mâchonne des fourberies*.¹⁴⁴ I begin to invent what I will tell Rank instead of coordinating truths. I begin to rehearse speeches, attitudes, gestures, inflections, expressions. I see myself talking and I am sitting within Rank, judging me. What should I say to create such and such an effect?¹⁴⁵

The planned creation of effect here reminds us of the seductress who seeks to woo her quarry through the weaving of illusion. This moment speaks to Nin's belief in her ability to manipulate her personal effects (and affect) to get the reaction she wants, and, in doing so, to conceal and suppress the gestures she does *not* want to be seen. Nin's hyper self-awareness also fits with Rank's artist as one who believes in the endless

Women Artists (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁴⁰ *Incest*, 292.

¹⁴¹ Freud's 'Family Romances' also depicts a child imagining that their parents are not, in fact, their parents. Freud writes that '[the child's] sense that his own affection is not being fully reciprocated then finds a vent in the idea, which is often consciously recollected from early childhood, of being a step-child or an adopted child. See Sigmund Freud, 'Family Romances,' (1909) in *Collected Papers* 5, ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959) 74-78.

¹⁴² Nin quoting Rank in their first appointment, *Volume One*, 273.

¹⁴³ Gilmore, 106.

¹⁴⁴ Roughly translated, 'I chew on trickery.'

¹⁴⁵ *Incest*, 293.

creative potential of their own personality. We see Nin here as an actress preparing to audition for a role. This rehearsal is also motivated by a desire to please the ‘director,’ Rank, who was, according to Nin’s account, notoriously difficult to please. ‘I feared he would not find me interesting enough,’ writes Nin, ‘and I was going to dramatize my life. I had heard he only took cases which interested him.’¹⁴⁶ But Nin also writes that she was preparing for a ‘false comedy like the one I played for Allendy’¹⁴⁷ implying that she expected Rank to place her in a dissatisfying role.

Although Nin made a point of writing about her plans to lie to Rank, suggesting that she considered this to be an errant act, John Forrester has suggested that the psychoanalyst does not care whether the analysand lies or not:¹⁴⁸

In order to defuse the question of deception [...] the psychoanalyst first of all places the patient in a situation in which she has minimal incentives *either* for telling the truth *or* for telling lies. Which way she goes is entirely up to her. The analyst is professionally disinterested in the difference between truth and lies.¹⁴⁹

The analyst practices a kind of professional insouciance regarding the analysand’s level of honesty. The analysis scene is one in which the analysand can say anything that occurs to them ‘no matter how nonsensical, insulting, objectionable, or irrelevant,’¹⁵⁰ thus ruling out any privileging of the truth, to begin with at least. However, although the analyst may encourage the analysand to speak freely and without regard to stultifying notions of the truth, the analysand falls back on old rhetorical habits. According to Forrester:

Although patients are asked to obey this rule – that is they are asked to give up all the criteria by which speech is made sensible, is made to conform to the real, is uttered so as to entertain the other, and so forth – no patient ever succeeds in doing so. Individual patients are always sliding back into rhetorical modes they have been asked, and have agreed, to forgo: they attempt to seduce the analyst into believing in at least *something* [...] they try to coerce the analyst into distinguishing fiction from reality, jokes from the serious, dreams from nightmares.¹⁵¹

Again we run into the dynamic of the seduction, where the analysand seeks to reel the analyst into the real event – the realm of ‘what happened.’ Forrester depicts a contract

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Gilmore suggests that ‘the claim of psychoanalysis to disinterest in the literal truth is somewhat disingenuous or at least overstated. After all, Freud believed in lies.’ *Autobiographics*, 60.

¹⁴⁹ John Forrester, *Truth games: lies, money, and psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 70.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 71.

here, where both the analyst and analysand agree to suspend belief in the primacy of the truth when in the therapy room. As we will see too when Rank asks Nin to give up the journal, the psychoanalytic relationship thrives in an environment where the real world is cut off or, perhaps more aptly, surrendered.

Although by this point, Rank had broken with the Freudian school, he still operated, to some extent, within the tenets of psychoanalysis.¹⁵² As such, Forrester's reading of the role of the lie in the therapy room is relevant when it comes to Rank and Nin's relationship. We can liken Nin's rehearsal of moves, speeches, attitudes, gestures, inflections and expressions to interest Rank to Forrester's depiction of the canny analysand seeking to seduce the analyst. Forrester's view of the analysis room as a space where there is no difference between the truth and lies is also in line with Freud's musing to Fleiss about the unconscious that 'one cannot tell the difference between truth and fiction cathected with affect.'¹⁵³ It is Nin's expectation that Rank *won't be able to tell the difference*, leading to the 'false comedy' of the analysand tricking the analyst into believing her lies.

In fact, Rank believed that lies were a necessary part of coping with day-to-day life. In his work *Truth and Reality*, he theorises that the happiest men are those who 'can accept the appearance of reality as true.'¹⁵⁴ 'Appearance' is the salient word here, as Rank suggests that the happy man does not fully realise the reality of his existence. The neurotic, however, comprehends this reality all too well; he sees 'the deception of the world'¹⁵⁵ because of his tendency towards analysis. As such, 'he suffers [without] the illusions important for living.'¹⁵⁶ The artist, however, 'seeks and finds his own truth.'¹⁵⁷

Rank's theory aligns with Nin's belief in psychological truth - that is to say, truths that are not necessarily *objectively* true, but which bear out for the individual. Suzanne Nalbantian comments that Nin 'was ambivalent about the notion of absolute truths,'¹⁵⁸ and that 'duplicity had justification for one who believed in a self which is

¹⁵² For more of the context surrounding Rank's life and work, see Lieberman, and Esther Menaker, *Otto Rank - A Rediscovered Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹⁵³ From Freud's letter to Wilhelm Fleiss, September 21, 1897, discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁴ Otto Rank, *Truth and Reality* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc, 1978), 39.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Suzanne Nalbantian, 'Aesthetic Lies,' in *Anaïs Nin: Literary Perspectives*, ed. Suzanne Nalbantian, 3.

unlimited and undefinable.’¹⁵⁹ As Tookey identifies, ‘rather than viewing art as the distortion of a (fantasized) realm of pure ‘truth,’ [Nin saw] it in terms of a necessary symbolizing or mythologizing of experience.’¹⁶⁰ Art, especially the diary, was a way to improve on life, making it more palatable, with Nin writing that the diary ‘[covers] all things with the mist of smoke, deforming and transforming as the night does.’¹⁶¹ Nin saw this transformation as essential: ‘[all] matter must be fused this way for me through the lens of my vice, or the rust of living would slow down my rhythm to a sob.’¹⁶²

It is highly likely that Rank would have been delighted by Nin’s plans to lie to him, seeing it as an example of her creative will in action. But Nin tussled with her motivations for going to Rank, writing: ‘I meditate lies as others meditate confessions. Yet I am going to him to *confess*, to get help in the solution of my conflicts, which are too numerous and which I don’t succeed in mastering by writing.’¹⁶³ Nin once again displays her fundamental ambivalence towards psychoanalysis. She cannot decide what analysis is *for*; whether it is yet another stage on which to dramatise her conflicts, or whether it provides the possibility of their solution. Nor is she sure what kind of analysand she wants to be: the artist, or the neurotic searching for a cure. In the edited diary, preparing for her first visit with Rank, Nin wonders ‘should I come and say, Dr. Rank, I feel like a shattered mirror, or mention my book on D.H. Lawrence and the other books I was writing?’¹⁶⁴

In the end, Nin settled on a compromise. She would go to analysis not to solve her conflicts, or to create new ones, but to fully consider the conflicts she has:

Preparing to deform – and all to interest Rank, and also to interest myself, for I am vastly interested in complexities. In fact, I am going to Rank for the sport of it, not to solve, but to aggrandize, dramatize my conflicts, to see all that they contain, to seize them in full.¹⁶⁵

Nin deforms herself by putting on rehearsed expressions for Rank. But ‘deform’ also means to unravel, and to lay out. Nin’s intention to deform her ‘confusion of desires’ is another example of her manipulation of the material of her life as a creative and dramatic act. This moment further speaks to Nin’s tendency to view the analysis room

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Tookey, 164.

¹⁶¹ *Incest*, 366.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 293.

¹⁶⁴ *Volume One*, 270.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

as a theatre where she can both entertain and be entertained.

Opium.

*Rank thinks in interactional terms.*¹⁶⁶

*Is this what Rank wanted, to throw me into my novels, books, out of the intimacy of the diary?*¹⁶⁷

In the same account, Rank takes Nin by surprise. She writes: ‘on November 8, 1932, Rank asked me to give up my journal and I left it in his hands. He delivered me of my opium.’¹⁶⁸ This was not the first time that Nin had likened her diary to opium. Although Allendy never took Nin’s diary away from her (in fact, he barely mentions her diary at all during their analysis¹⁶⁹), Nin did feel that Allendy had stripped her of her ‘imaginary life,’ of which the diary was a fundamental part. In *Henry and June*, Nin writes ‘Allendy has deprived me of my opium; he has made me lucid and sane, and I am suffering cruelly from the loss of my imaginary life.’¹⁷⁰ Whereas Allendy deprives, Rank delivers, suggesting that Nin felt liberated by Rank’s request.¹⁷¹ Indeed, during this period (the latter months of 1933), Nin’s diary is filled with outbursts at the very thing she was writing in:

My poor diary, I am so angry with you! I hate you! The pleasure of confiding has made me artistically lazy. [...] Everybody has hated you. You have hampered me as an artist, but at the same time you kept me alive as a human being. I created you because I needed a friend. [...] So I can’t hate you, but now that I have made my peace with the world, and now that I can address it as an artist, I must divorce you from my work.¹⁷²

Once again, we read the diary as Nin’s most faithful intimate, containing, as Helen Tookey has asserted ‘the whole, the truth which cannot be told anywhere else.’¹⁷³ But it is Nin’s sense that the diary contains too much of the material of her life, material which she should be transmuting into her fiction, that makes her want to ‘divorce’ the diary from her work. Nancy Scholar writes that ‘[a] simple existence is denied her; [Nin]

¹⁶⁶ Menaker, 29.

¹⁶⁷ *Volume One*, 285.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 294.

¹⁶⁹ Another example which suggests how out of tune Allendy was with Nin’s personal narrative.

¹⁷⁰ *Henry and June*, 271.

¹⁷¹ Nin never actually took opium.

¹⁷² *Incest*, 277.

¹⁷³ Tookey, 33. Tookey goes on, quite rightly, to point out that this is not *always* how Nin views the diary: ‘at other times, [Nin] recognizes this desire for truth, like the desire for wholeness, as a fantasy.’ 33.

must always be reshaping her life to suit the more demanding requirements of art.¹⁷⁴ But as Tookey has qualified, this is not quite accurate, ‘the “experience” is *already* “shaped” by the writing.’¹⁷⁵ Here it is the diary that stands in the way of Nin shaping this experience in the way that she wants to. Rather than being a work of art in itself, Nin views the diary as leading her into bad habits: laziness, subjectivity, ‘bad English.’¹⁷⁶ All of these qualities chime with Nin’s presentation of the diary as her opium. The diary is a space for relaxation, where she can sink, languidly, into subjectivity. Following this outburst (one of many during this time), Nin congratulates herself on having put her opium down: ‘[y]esterday I wrote the first twenty pages of the June story objectified, artistic. For the first time I have become objective.’¹⁷⁷ We can connect this language of objectivity, of course, back to Nin’s self-fashioning as a writer discussed in Chapter 2. Here, the diary is coded as feminine, sentimental, and subjective, not ‘good’ art, whereas Nin positively codes her fiction as objective.

In presenting the diary as her own version of opium, Nin also inserts herself into a Romantic tradition of writers who called on both the idea and actuality of opium for creative inspiration. As Julian North identifies, Romantic writers such as Thomas De Quincey and Samuel Coleridge ‘made a significant and seductive link between opium and the creative imagination.’¹⁷⁸ According to North, this link has also been employed by critics¹⁷⁹ seeking to prove that opium furnished artists with privileged access to their unconscious minds: ‘[Hayter argues] that opium at once retrieves thoughts and memories from the depths of the mind and allows the addict to observe the mechanisms of that retrieval.’¹⁸⁰ Although North goes on to question the wisdom of Hayter’s theory, we are struck here by the parity between this depiction of the work of opium and that of psychoanalysis.

Opium is also a highly addictive sedative, a quality that Nin is keenly aware of when she compares her diary to the drug:

This is the moment when I take up the mysterious pipe and indulge in

¹⁷⁴ Nancy Scholar, *Anaïs Nin* (Boston: Twayne, 1984), 35.

¹⁷⁵ Tookey, 35.

¹⁷⁶ *Incest*, 280.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁷⁸ Julian North, ‘Opium and the Romantic Imagination: the creation of a myth,’ in *Beyond the Pleasure Dome: Writing and Addiction from the Romantics*, eds. Sue Vice, Matthew Campbell and Tim Armstrong (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 109.

¹⁷⁹ North singles out work by Alethea Hayter and Elizabeth Schneider. See ‘Opium and the Romantic Imagination.’

¹⁸⁰ North, 109.

deviations. Instead of writing a book, I lie back and I dream and I talk to myself. [...] I turn away from reality into the refracted, I turn events into vapor, into languid dreams. [...] I must relive my life in the dream.¹⁸¹

Describing her diary as opium, Nin represents it as both an addiction and an essential panacea. It does, arguably, what psychoanalysis fails to do: allows Nin to dr(e)amatise, and thus, cope with the reality of her life. Writing in the diary, she can write the pain away. It is somewhat perplexing then, given Nin's self-confessed dependence on the diary that she seems to give away her opium so easily. Rank takes her by surprise, it seems:

It was a bold stroke. It stunned me. It was a violation. A few moments ago [...] I had sat writing in it, writing of the lies I would tell Rank to interest him [...] And I had confided to the diary the lies I intended to tell. And now he wanted to take possession of all my secrets.¹⁸²

Nin's description of Rank's 'bold stroke' foreshadows a moment in the diary shortly afterwards when she will talk about how she 'cheat[s] in the game of analysis,'¹⁸³ and reminds us too of her description of going to analysis just for 'the sport' of it. This moment also recalls the less-than-bold strokes of René Allendy and the dry fingers pressed on the secrets of Nin's body. Here, Nin finds Rank's possession much more pleasurable:

Recovering from the shock, I began to feel elation, a feminine elation like that of a woman who is asked to give all by a possessive man: I want your body, your heart, your soul. Dr. Rank was demanding all in one blow. I felt an elation due to a recognition of power, of mastery.¹⁸⁴

Rank has delivered a blow, he has violated her, but as she recovers from this violation Nin begins to enjoy it, she feels elated. Nin swoons like a Mills and Boon romantic heroine confronted with the forceful male who demands everything: her body, heart and soul. The diary becomes a symbol for Nin's body which Rank has violated (pleasurably). The sexual loading of this scene is heightened by Nin's description of the diary as 'the keys [...] to the city.'¹⁸⁵ Rank, is 'clever' for having realised that 'the diary was the key,'¹⁸⁶ something that Allendy failed to realise: 'I always kept an island,

¹⁸¹ *Incest*, 366.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 295

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

inviolate, to analyze the analyst. I had never submitted.’¹⁸⁷ Rank also describes the diary as a kind of island:

“It is your last defense against analysis. It is like a traffic island you want to stand on. If I am going to help you, I do not want you to have a traffic island from which you will survey the analysis, keeping control of it. I don’t want you to analyze the analysis. Do you understand?”¹⁸⁸

Rank figures the diary as a rival to the analytic process. Describing it as a ‘traffic island’ suggests that the diary works as a vantage point, from which Nin can stand amidst the flow of the analysis (the traffic, if you will) but also apart from it, watching. This image also suggests the potential danger of analysis: no one likes the thought of stepping into traffic. We can also read the analytic process as a kind of traffic; the chaos of thoughts in motion, produced by free association, may come as a threat to the subject’s sense of integrity. Rank recognised that Nin uses the diary as a regulating force in her life; she (compulsively) recorded so as to analyse and therefore control. His tactic here is reminiscent of Forrester’s depiction of the analysis space as a place where the analysand is required to leave their rhetorical crutches at the door, so that they can step into free association.

The Sketchbook.

*All this I have had to write in retrospect. From sketchy notes. Memory.*¹⁸⁹

*Somewhere in between lies Anaïs, who wants a free life but not a shabby one.*¹⁹⁰

‘In one blow,’ Nin writes, ‘I walk deprived of the diary, which is myself. [Rank] says I have given him this self to preserve, to reintegrate and to return to me whole.’¹⁹¹ Having given the diary to Rank, Nin views herself as ‘in his hands so completely.’¹⁹² Aside from the obvious paradox that Nin appears to be writing in the diary after she has handed it over, a detail that gestures towards future acts of rebellion, Rank is described as that which has replaced the journal: ‘I can tell him everything.’¹⁹³ Yet this performance of intimacy is just that. The archived diary tells a very different story about Nin’s grand deliverance from her opium. In the archived diary, this addiction merely

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 294.

¹⁸⁹ *Volume One*, 285.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 287.

¹⁹¹ *Incest*, 297.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

goes underground, disguising itself in fragments, typed sheets and insertions. The published diary covers over these traces, this paper trail of graphomania.

In *Incest*, the entry where Nin gives up her diary to Rank is dated November 8, 1933. The next entry is dated January 14, 1934, suggesting that Nin had, indeed, not kept a diary for these two months. The corresponding archived volume of the diary also ends on November 8, 1933. But a new volume of the archived diary opens with the first *dated* entry as February 1, 1934. In other words, there is a difference of two weeks between, respectively, when *Incest* says Nin begins to write in the diary again, and when the next archived volume begins. To complicate matters further, before the first dated entry in the archived volume, there are three pages of undated material, some of which is handwritten in the diary and some on typed, inserted sheets. One of these typed sheets is the entry for January 14, 1934, which *Incest* positions as the first entry after Nin hands over the diary.

One can see why the publishers of *Incest* decided to position this entry thus, as it stages Nin's return to writing, newly cured of the diary. Nin writes:

I feel equal now to writing a sketchbook with only the human essence which is always evaporating, with the material left out of novels, with that which the woman in me sees and loves, not what the artist must wrestle with. A sketchbook without compulsion or continuity.

I will never write anything [here] which can be situated in "Alraune," "The Double," or the novel. I will not give my all to the sketchbook.¹⁹⁴

The sketchbook represents Nin's attempt to manage the ways she writes about her experience. Where previously she had given her all to her diary, now the sketchbook is a kind of remainder heap for everything that doesn't go into Nin's *fiction*. Arguably, this is a reversal of the previous flow of Nin's writing (it was the fiction that got the leftover scraps, if there were any) but not a diversion that would hold.

Despite Nin's protestations that the sketchbook was different, in *Incest*, this sketchbook entry looks and sounds, like a diary entry. The inclusion of this sketchbook passage subsumes it within the aesthetic of the diary. There is nothing visually to set it apart. Indeed, there is no sense of any difference, apart from a time-lapse, from the entry before when Nin apparently delivered the diary into Rank's hands. To all intents and purposes, this seems like the diary as usual.

The archived volume of the diary in question suggests more of a break from the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 296.

old ways of writing. As mentioned, there is the physical change from one diary to the next. Furthermore, several of the inserted entries are typewritten and on loose pieces of paper, setting them apart from the handwritten pages of the diary. This doesn't come across in the published diary, where every page is typed in the same way, thereby homogenising the visual style of the object. Indeed, the archived diaries often have much more of a sketchbook (and scrapbook) aesthetic. Most of the archived volumes contain stuck-in newspaper articles, photos, letters and other fragments of text very rarely replicated by the published diary which, although it contains some of the photos Nin inserted, has them in the standard position in the middle of the text, rather than dotted throughout. Similarly, the letters that Nin stuck in to the archived diaries¹⁹⁵ are only set apart in the published diary by a line-drop and perhaps an italicised opening ('*To Henry*,' for example). But, if one had only ever read Nin's archived diaries, one might be somewhat surprised by her announcement that she was 'now writing a sketchbook.' It could seem that she had been doing so all along.

The archived diary not only contains the January 14 'sketchbook' entry but other fragments of writing produced in this apparent lacuna between the November 8, 1933 and the first dated entry. The archived diary opens with a typed insert that reads:

I seduced the world with a sorrow laden face and a sorrow laden book. And now I am preparing to abandon this sorrow. I am coming out of the cave of my own protective books. I come out without my book. I stand without crutches.¹⁹⁶

There is inescapable irony in the fact that Nin writes 'I come out without my book' *in her book*. Although Nin presents herself as exposed to the world without her diary, I would argue instead, that she became ever more interested in this period with acts of concealment, such as this subterranean diary writing. Although Nin writes of abandoning her sorrow through the abandonment of her diary, the first (undated) handwritten page in the archived diary also provides us with a different glimpse into Nin's state of mind during this time:

I think of a Self-Portrait tonight in order to disengage the self from dissolution. But I am not interested in it, or perhaps the self is beyond resuscitation. I am spent, wasted, lost, given, empty. [...]

¹⁹⁵ Nin does some fascinating things with her letters in the archived diary, which I do not have the space to elaborate on here. In one diary, for example, she pushes folded letters in between the stuck-together pages of the diary, creating a kind of envelope effect. There is definite scope in further research on Nin's use of letters to compliment the work of the diary.

¹⁹⁶ *Diary 45. Novel of Henry – June. Break with Father. 1934 February – July 6 [7]*, (Collection 2066: Box 16, FII).

I regretted the Journal which held my body and soul together. But it's dead.[...] I've reached the end of my resources, physically. So I think of a self-portrait because the self is missing out of this activity.¹⁹⁷

Here, Nin is writing to hold herself together. The 'Self-Portrait' is an attempt, presumably, to view herself from without so as to gain a sense of the significance of her character. But it also figures as an attempt to produce reparative art as compensation for the loss of the diary. Arguably, all of the diary is one long self-portrait suggesting that even Nin's efforts to produce art separate from the diary inevitably slipped back into the diary's habits. Whilst Nin strives to 'disengage the self from dissolution,' it is the dissolution that comes through the stronger in this passage, with Nin the artist who has given too much of her work away.¹⁹⁸ We see a crisis where Nin is unable to extricate her 'body and soul' from her diary, speaking to the diary's importance not just as a space where Nin *practiced* her acts of self-fashioning but where this very self was fashioned. Without the diary, she dissolves, unable to *create* anything personally satisfying. She considers herself to be dead and possibly 'beyond resuscitation,' despite previous hopes that Rank would (re)vive the artist in her.

As Jacques Derrida has identified, the word 'analysis' also contains within it the possibility of dissolution. Derrida writes of analysis as 'untangling, untying, detaching, freeing, even liberation - and thus also, not let us not forget, as *solution*.'¹⁹⁹ From solution one comes to dissolution:

The Greek word *analuein*, as is well known, means to unite and thus to dissolve the link. It can thus be rigorously approached, if not translated, by the Latin *solvere* (to detach, deliver, absolve, or acquit). Both *solutio* and *resolutio* have the sense of dissolution [...] and that of solution.²⁰⁰

Circuitous as this might seem, Derrida's reading of how analysis eventually slides into dissolution is, I would argue, very salient for Nin's experience of analysis. In untangling herself from the diary, she comes undone. That which was supposed to be a solution results her feeling of dissolution. All of this suggests that, for Nin, analysis was what threatened rather than strengthened her sense of self-integrity.

In the archived diary, Nin makes a final attempt to assert herself as an artist who

¹⁹⁷ *Diary 45*.

¹⁹⁸ Reading Nin's diary, one can see this is a frequent complaint: that she gives too much to others (mentally, emotionally, physically and financially) and has 'not enough' for herself.

¹⁹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

wrote fiction and (almost incidentally), kept a sketchbook, rather than as a diary-writer, addicted to her personal book. The inserted, typewritten sheet reads ‘New Sketchbook Laws:’

Never write about anything which can be immediately described and written out for either of the three books under my hand. [The novels Nin was writing at the time].

Never describe a scene which belongs to one of those books. Only miscellaneous material for reference. Long scenes to be typewritten directly. This [scrubbed out] Notebook is for personal notes on progress of work. No reference to the past. In mentioning moods, obsessions, nightmares, dreams or personal interviews, stick to facts and don’t indulge in any brooding, reminiscent or otherwise sickly. Be medical, observer, curious and without self pity or sentimentality. Be audacious and breezy about things. Write in order to put order in your head, not to pamper your insanities. Study the deep pains objectively. Go on fighting the world and don’t weep so much. Don’t look for too much companionship. Don’t be feminine. Be an artist. [...] Write sketch book only occasionally and not when in a drooping, discouraged, lonely mood. That’s whining. Don’t repeat or emphasise events, because that is neurotic unsureness about their reality.²⁰¹

This astonishing passage dramatises the extent to which the surrendering of the diary was part of a radical effort at emotional, as well as artistic discipline. Nin strives for an objective, detached vantage point onto her moods. Writing should ‘order’ rather than self-dramatise. The past should not be brooded over. Events should not be repeated or emphasised. She should not weep so much, or look for friendship, both activities that are coded as feminine. Nin orders herself not to ‘look for too much companionship,’ suggesting that she felt that her intimate relationships disrupted her ability to produce fiction.

In one sense, this is another example of the impact of modernist theories of impersonality in art on Nin. Nin folds her emotional practice and her writing practice into each other. The implication is that, by writing differently, she will feel differently. All of this has much to do with Nin’s reading of the Rankian neurotic as unable to produce art. She writes that the difference between the sketchbook and the diary is ‘subtle and difficult to seize’ but that it ‘consists chiefly of *not nurturing the neurotic plant*.’²⁰² The diary becomes the key text of Nin’s self-defined neurosis. In cutting off the diary, she hopes to cut off the overwhelming gush of emotions (suggested by what she views as her excessive weeping). As when she describes herself stepping out to

²⁰¹ *Diary 45*.

²⁰² *Incest*, 306.

face the world without her book, this is an assertion of artistic will freed from neurosis, à la Rank.

The addict, apparently, had broken her habit. Yet five months later, in the published diary at least, Nin asks ‘why has the diary come to life again?’²⁰³ But for the reader, it could seem that the diary had never died. Nin continued to write a diary, in all but name. She was unable to fully give up her opium, addicted to the diary’s facility as a space where life could be dramatized and, thus, made palatable.

Conclusion.

*There is a fissure in my vision, in my body, in my desires, a fissure for all time, and madness will always push in and out, in and out. The books are submerged, the pages wrinkled; the bed groans; each pyramided perfection is burned through by the thrust of blood.*²⁰⁴

*I have an emotional tapeworm. Never enough to eat.*²⁰⁵

When Rank cut off Nin’s diary supply, it was an attempt to wean her off the diarisation or narrativisation of experience, to encourage her to exist in the present and to channel her creative energies into producing fiction rather than the diary. But as we have seen, this would prove to be one habit that was hard to break. Although Nin persisted for several months in her sketchbook project it is clear, especially from the archived diary, that for two months her diary habit merely went underground, practised on scraps of paper and typewriters rather than in the bound-leather books she was so fond of.

Throughout *Incest*, there are numerous episodes of what I would tentatively describe as graphomania. ‘Tentatively,’ because it was not all forms of writing that had a hold over Nin. It was the kind of writing she did in her diary which is the obsession. This was writing which relieved pressure and performed madness, but also writing which resisted, escaped and compensated. Nin often talked about her diary in terms of compulsion and addiction. But it was also the method by which Nin believed she could hold back her madness:

A choice between standing in the middle of the room and breaking out into hysterical weeping – or writing. [...] A fear of the wildness of my fever and my despair, of the excessiveness of my melancholy. A fear of madness. Then I sat at

²⁰³ Ibid, 340.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 21.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 323.

the typewriter, saying to myself: Write, you weakling; write, you madwoman, write your misery out, write out your guts, spill out what is joking you, shout obscenely [...] And it is the cursed woman in me who causes the madness, the woman with her lover, her devotion, her shackles. Oh, to be free, to be masculine, and purely artist. To care only about the art.²⁰⁶

This passage is reminiscent of Nin's 'sketchbook laws,' where she avowed that she would no longer 'be feminine' and yearned for masculine objectivity. But it is also, surely, graphomania writ large (pun intended): a scene of frenzy thrashed out by the repetitive 'write...write...write...write.' Here, Nin's graphomania is a way to write out her madness, but the act of writing also *becomes* an act of madness. Elsewhere, Nin confessed 'I want to write just as a drunk wants to drink.'²⁰⁷ Yet her novel-writing did not satiate this craving:

I still need the personal expression, the direct personal expression. When I have finished writing ten pages of the very human, simple, sincere novel [...] I am not yet satisfied. [...] It seems to me that I could write my sketchbook *after* my work, with the overflow. The *personal* and feminine overfullness.²⁰⁸

As with so many moments in this chapter, Nin uses hydraulic metaphors to signify herself as excessive: overfull and overflowing. Yet, I would argue that it was not containment that she sought. Instead, there is a recognition in this passage that both experience and narrative were always potentially in excess of each other. There was always more writing to be done, and more experiences to be had.

This 'personal and feminine overfullness' that Nin attributed to herself, links graphomania with nymphomania. The desire to write, to constantly generate new associations, is matched by an equal desire in Nin's relationships. It has something to do, I would argue, with a restless need for experience born from Nin's self-fashioning as an artist, as well as a desire to perform intimacy on as many stages as possible: through sex, writing, psychoanalysis and fiction. Although it would be crude to argue that Nin viewed her relationships as so much new material for her art, Nin made art from her relationships, even whilst this art functioned as an obstacle to the same relationships. We see this especially in Nin's relationship with Otto Rank. The diary was that which both led Nin into her relationship with Rank but also led her out of it, firstly with the subterranean act of resistance I have discussed here and, ultimately, because Nin

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 308.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 72.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 298.

decided that she would rather produce her own art than work for Rank.²⁰⁹

But Nin's 'feminine overfullness' also suggests Nin's insatiability for writing and in sex, an association which she compounded:

Even when I possess *all* – love, devotion, a match, Henry, Hugh, Allendy – I still feel myself possessed by a great demon of restlessness driving me on and on. I am rushing on, I am going to cause suffering, nobody can enchain me, I am a force, and all day I feel pushed, pushed. I cover pages and pages with my fever, with this superabundance of ecstasy, and it is not enough.²¹⁰

Although Rank took the diary away, although Nin promised not to write in it, although she tries to convince herself, Rank and us that she is not writing in it when she is, Nin continues, above all, to write. And write. And write. Diary-writing became a way to throw off the chains of relationships, relationships which sought to impose patterns, which attempted to intervene in pleasurable habits, relationships which were never as good in reality as they were in writing. The best orgasms Nin had were in her diary. The best analysis took place there. It held the most satisfying stories.

Psychoanalysis provided Nin with a new stage on which to perform intimacy. To recall the quote from 'The Voice' read at the beginning of this chapter, as a psychoanalytic subject, Nin was 'like an actress who had never known how moving she had been.'²¹¹ Psychoanalysis provided Nin with a new language for her internal dramas and intimate relationships. However, it seems that she was fundamentally discomforted by the distance created in the psychoanalytic dynamic. She sought always to bring her analysts closer, seducing them perhaps, in order to create the kinds of intimacy that we associate with the sexual relationship more than the psychoanalytic relationship. Yet once Nin had brought her analysts close, she began to find them increasingly less desirable – both as men and as analysts. Once she had removed the boundaries between sexual intimacy and psychoanalytic intimacy, analysis was no longer fulfilling as a stage for her performances of self, arguably because her audience was now 'too near.' As

²⁰⁹ I have not been able to discuss this aspect of Rank and Nin's relationship in any depth here. In 1933, Nin follows Rank to New York, where he is setting up a new practice. She works, both as an analyst and as his secretary for a while. During this period, the pair were also in a sexual relationship which follows a similar pattern to Nin's relationship with Allendy: they kiss, Nin ends the analysis, the analysis continues but becomes 'mixed up' with the relationship, Nin gradually becomes disenchanted with Rank as a lover. However, this disenchantment did not extend to Rank's influence on her work. As I discussed briefly at the beginning of this chapter, Nin quoted Rank as one of her foremost, if not *the* foremost influences on her work. See *Fire* for Nin's depiction of the second stage of her relationship with Rank, and Lieberman for a reading of Rank's side of the affair. *Fire: from "A Journal of Love."* *The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin: 1934-37*, ed. Rupert Pole (Florida: Harcourt, 1992).

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

such, she retained the diary as the ideal audience for these performances of intimacy. We shall see in the final chapter how Nin would take these performances to the public, whilst still attempting to maintain her privacy. Doing so, Nin projected an image of herself as an intimate figure who appealed to women, and helped them to get in touch with themselves, all the while keeping her private self out of reach.

The art of presence: performing the diary in the 1970s.

Introduction.

*I always had the wish to commune with others.*¹

*Women have long come to “women’s culture” to experience versions of personal life that are made up by other people.*²

In the last chapter, we considered Nin’s addiction to the diary as a space where she could transmute, transform and rewrite experience in order to make it bearable. But coming to publish the diary in the mid-1960s, Nin catered to an audience made anxious by the suggestion that the diary was not a non-fictional device for recording experience. Many readers of Nin’s published, heavily-edited diary wanted to know that the things Nin said had happened in the diary had happened. They wanted to know that Nin was who they thought she was and that she would appear in public in the same way that she appeared in the diary. They wanted to be assured of the integral continuity between Nin and her diary and the authenticity of both.

This chapter will consider the fraught nature of Nin’s public appearances. Seemingly called on by her readers to account for the diary in public and in person, in lectures and interviews, Nin defended the spontaneity, craft and honesty of the edited diary, often to inquisitive and occasionally doubting audiences. Doing so, Nin also defended her self-appointed public role as a role model for women who, she argued, were not *personally* catered for by the messages of collective political action emanating from the Women’s Liberation Movement. As an alternative, Nin offered an emphasis on the personal within feminism, the need for women to focus on themselves, to go inwards, before they could be effective collectively. Nin’s feminism relied on an essentialist account of femininity; women were nurturing, experts in intimacy and intuitive. In the edited diary, she offered an account of how she had managed to combine these traits with a professional career as a writer. As such, we could argue that Nin offered a narrative of ‘having it all’ to one version of feminism.

In her public appearances from the mid-1960s onwards, Nin presented herself as a woman who spoke with other women and *for* them, as a woman who understood

¹ Anaïs Nin, *A Woman Speaks*, ed. Evelyn Hinz (Chicago: The Swallow Press Inc., 1975), 10.

² Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, viii-ix.

women's struggles, and who had published an exemplary document of her own trajectory towards female liberation so that other women would not have to feel they were alone.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Nin depicted herself as someone her readers could be intimate with. She promoted the diary in public as an object that facilitated intimacy within individual relationships but also in a larger arena. The diary, Nin argued, was capable of generating mass-scale intimacy. In this, I will argue that Nin's rhetoric can be read as in line with Lauren Berlant's theory of the 'intimate public,' as a scene for female collective affective experience, which presumes that all women 'feel' the same.³ The seeming paradox of the phrase 'intimate public' speaks to the paradox of Nin's public performances, Nin strove to appear 'close' to her readers in public, whilst also holding them at a distance. In interviews and lectures, Nin repeated her credo that 'the personal life, deeply lived, takes you beyond the personal.'⁴ This message became an important component in Nin's explanation for the popularity of the diary. In writing her diary, she had written 'everybody's diary.'⁵

Certain readers, in return, responded to Nin with expressions of intimacy. Readers told Nin, both in letters and in person that they felt close to her, that they relied on her, that she was writing and speaking on their behalf.⁶ But readers also reacted to Nin's diary in the 1970s with a certain amount of 'apprehensiveness,'⁷ according to critic Evelyn Hinz. In *A Woman Speaks*, the edited collection of Nin's lectures from this period, Hinz suggests that, in order for readers to fully feel that they were intimate with Nin, they had to see and hear her in public. Only then would they believe that the diary was an authentic text, one they could place their faith in.

In 1966, Nin wrote that she considered the 'best and strongest' of her work to be in the diary.⁸ In her public explanations of how she had overcome severe shyness to publish the diary, Nin depicted this decision as the final stage of her liberation as a woman.⁹ But it was also essential to Nin's public account as the writer of an authentic diary that readers believed she had not originally written the diary with an audience in

³ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*, throughout.

⁴ *A Woman Speaks*, 162.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁶ I will consider such accounts of readers' responses to Nin through my reading of *A Woman Speaks*, which includes a selection of Nin's lectures and Q&A sessions from the late 1960s and 1970s.

⁷ *A Woman Speaks*, vii.

⁸ Anaïs Nin, *The Journals of Anaïs Nin, Volume VI: 1955-1966*, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann, 379.

⁹ *A Woman Speaks*, vii.

mind. As such, she described the edited diary as actually having been edited very little. Nin denied all accusations that it had been retrospectively rewritten in any way, even though the edited diary was dramatically different from the original.¹⁰ Furthermore, Nin presented the diary as an historical and cultural document that needed to be shared with the public. She wrote in her diary of the gradual realization throughout the 1960s that the diary was of historical and cultural importance:

I became aware that characters I was writing about had become influences in the present, woven into contemporary life, that returning to them was like investigating the sources of the Nile – the sources of today: [Henry] Miller and sexual revolution, Otto Rank and psychological training of welfare workers, surrealism leading to Pop Art, and [Antonin] Artaud's influence on theater.¹¹

Crucially, neither Nin's narrative of her need as an artist to share her work by publishing the diary, or the account above, mention anything of the real financial pressures that led Nin to publish the diary.¹² This is not to discount that either of these other motivations were real ones, but it does suggest that Nin did not want to be seen as financially motivated in publishing the diary, unsurprisingly, as such capitalist designs may well have jarred with the political profile of her audience, whilst also implying that Nin had published her diary for other ends than the socially and culturally motivated reasons she provided.

However, despite her feeling that the diary was of public import, Nin was afraid of the public's reaction to it, asking: '[a]s most critics had treated my novels so maliciously, what would they do with my diary?'¹³ But a more salient question that Nin couldn't ask - in public, at least - was 'what will *I* do with my diary?' Privately averse to revealing any of the intimate details of her life, past or present, to the public, yet still wanting to publish the diary, Nin was caught. How could she proceed in preparing the diary for publication in such a way that it would appear to be the original diary, without it actually being so? Furthermore, how could she appear in public lectures and in interviews as an open, honest character, one who welcomed intimacy with others,

¹⁰ The original volumes of Nin's diary are held in the Charles E. Young Library at UCLA, Los Angeles. The unexpurgated volumes of the diary were published in the 1990s and marketed as being almost exact transcripts of the original diary (with only minor editing, in the same way that Nin describes the edited diaries). However, the unexpurgated diaries also demonstrate marked differences from the original volumes, as we saw, for example in Chapter 3 when considering the different versions of the 'Father Story.'

¹¹ *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Volume VII: 1966-1974* (London: Peter Owen, 1980), 111.

¹² See Bair, Chapter 35.

¹³ *Ibid.*

without revealing any information beyond that contained in the diary?

This chapter will consider these quandaries that Nin faced on publishing the diary. I will argue that Nin practiced what she referred to in the last volume of her edited diary as ‘the art of presence,’ both to soothe audiences who were invested in the authenticity of the edited diary, and to secure her own need for privacy.¹⁴ She aimed to appear to audiences as an intimate figure, a woman whom her mostly female audiences could relate to, by perpetuating the narrative that the diary was a text that represented all women and spoke to their collective experience. Nin depicted the publication of the diary as uncovering a nexus of women throughout America who all felt the same way: like Nin. Relying on the diary’s privileged foregrounding within autobiographical studies as an unmediated, authentic space for female experience, and on the related rhetoric of the intimate public, Nin created a narrative of shared intimacy with her audiences, an intimacy, I will argue, that held only so long as her audience did not ask her any off-script questions. To fend off questions about her life beyond that detail depicted in the edited diary, Nin delivered a tightly crafted script in her public performances, one which excluded and demonized those whom might challenge her claim to authenticity, both as a diarist and as a feminist.

Describing herself as practicing ‘the art of presence,’ Nin acknowledged the performativity of her public appearances, writing: ‘Anaïs is performing yes, the art of presence, but the feeling is there intact. I have not changed, lost my responsiveness.’¹⁵ I will argue that Nin situated herself as one who could perform genuine feeling and intimacy in public whilst holding back the intimate details of her life that she did not want to reveal, such as the fact of who she was married to (and often the fact of her being married at all), the sexual nature of her relationship with Henry Miller, her many abortions, affairs and deceptions of those closest to her.¹⁶

For Nin, the fact that her intimacy towards readers was performed in public did not compromise this intimacy. For certain readers though, Nin’s ‘art of presence’ was so

¹⁴ *Volume VII*, 244.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Whilst the edited diary does not feature Nin’s husband, Hugh Guiler, in public appearances Nin would occasionally suggest that she had been married, but would not provide any more detail- such as who she had been married to. For instances where Nin implies that she was or is married, see *A Woman Speaks*, 48, 76, 84.

much artificiality. Feminist critics depicted Nin as ‘insincere,’¹⁷ ‘glittering,’¹⁸ and ‘fake.’¹⁹ Nin’s presence in public did nothing to convince her detractors of her authenticity as a public figure and feminist, or of the authenticity of the diary. Instead, Nin’s critics read her presence within the women’s liberation movement as purely based on opportunism. This chapter will conclude by reading these moments where Nin’s ‘art of presence’ was deconstructed by her critics as revealing the threat that her performances of intimacy posed to second-wave feminism.

Nin’s entrance on to the public stage was well-timed. Indeed, if it hadn’t been for the timing, there may well have been no entrance at all. Interest in Nin’s work mostly sprang up in American²⁰ universities where, as Laura Marcus describes, New Criticism’s wane had coincided with and impacted upon autobiographical studies’ rise.²¹ Autobiography was seen in certain quarters as a genre that would ‘re-humanise the discipline’ of literature in the academy, after the long and impersonal reign of New Criticism.²² This burgeoning interest in and valuing of autobiographical texts, especially ‘confessional narratives,’²³ intersected with the second-wave feminist movement.²⁴ As Rita Felski describes,²⁵ the interest in female-authored confessional texts from the 1960s onwards was ‘clearly related to the exemplary model of consciousness-raising.’²⁶ According to Felski, the confessional narrative, like the model of consciousness-raising where women would come together in groups to share personal and political issues,²⁷ made ‘public that which [had] been private, typically claiming to avoid filtering mechanisms of objectivity and detachment in its pursuit of the truth of subjective experience.’²⁸

¹⁷ Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 315.

¹⁸ Bertha Harris, ‘Who Chose These Women, and Why?’ in *The Village Voice*, November 30, 1972.

¹⁹ Felski, 315.

²⁰ I do not have the space to consider British reader-responses to Nin in this chapter, although this is a worthy area of study.

²¹ Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical discourses: theory, criticism, practice*, 184.

²² Marcus reading Stephen Shapiro.

²³ See Felski, Chapter Three: ‘On Confession,’ 86-121.

²⁴ See also “‘Images of Women’ Criticism” in Toril Moi’s *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 41-48.

²⁵ Linda Anderson also makes this point in *Women and Autobiography in the 20th Century* (Prentice Hall, 1997), 5.

²⁶ Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 87.

²⁷ For an account of the formation and work of consciousness-raising in 1960s and 70s America, see Susan Brownmiller’s *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (The Dial Press, 2000).

²⁸ Felski, 88.

Discussing the role of the confessional narrative in second-wave feminism, Felski argues that diaries were especially privileged, read as authentic texts which demonstrated women's shared experiences, whilst also giving voice to women's individual subjectivities. Felski writes:

On the one hand, the autobiographical status of the text is important in guaranteeing its truthfulness as the depiction of the life, and more important, the inner feelings of a particular individual. On the other, it is the *representative* aspects of experience [...] which are emphasized in relation to a notion of a communal female identity.²⁹

The autobiographical text was read less for its aesthetic appeal 'than for its content in relation to its similarities and differences to the reader's own life.'³⁰ Female readers, in Felski's narrative, went to autobiographical texts such as Audre Lorde's *Cancer Journals* or Kate Millet's *Flying* to find and confirm their own experiences.³¹

The diary was a 'particularly important form'³² for feminist readers because of the dailiness of its structure, which was seen to mirror the dailiness of women's lives, and the intimacy of its address which made readers feel as if they were in a privileged (but also collective) conversation with the diarist.³³ It was vital for the success of this conversation that readers did not feel they were reading a diary that was in any way literary or fictionalised:

The confessional diary [...] shores up its claims to authenticity and truthfulness by consciously distinguishing itself from the category of literature. Aesthetic criteria are rejected as irrelevant; a conscious artistic structure is in fact suspect insofar as it implies distance and control rather than an unmediated baring of the soul.³⁴

Nin's public narrative regarding the diary's literariness changed as her popularity grew. In an early interview in 1966, Nin emphasized the diary's literary qualities, telling an interviewer that 'the most interesting thing that came out [of the editing process] was the realization that the diary could be almost like a piece of fiction; it could be flowing.'³⁵ In editing the diary, she described herself as an 'artist who, by cutting [...]

²⁹ Felski, 95.

³⁰ Ibid, 93.

³¹ These are two of Felski's examples of autobiographical feminist texts. Interestingly, she does not mention Nin's diary - probably because it calls up issues of fictionality, which would not align with Felski's argument that the diary is a non-fictional text.

³² Ibid, 96.

³³ This notion of a shared female experience undergirds Nin's public narrative, as we shall see.

³⁴ Ibid, 97.

³⁵ Anaïs Nin, 'Interview for Sweden,' in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, ed. Wendy DuBow, 19, (originally recorded in 1966).

could obtain an emphasis on the major themes and also see what that period's drama was.³⁶ She edited the diary 'as a novelist would,' producing 'what was later described as a novel form of the diary.'³⁷

This account is much closer to the ways Nin spoke about the diary in the unexpurgated diary *Incest*, and in archived volumes of the diary. But, to the best of my knowledge, this 1966 interview was the last time that Nin would talk publicly about the diary in literary terms.³⁸ In her published account of the editing process and when subsequently asked about the diary by readers, Nin was keen to deny any literary quality, saying that the diary had 'nothing to do with literature,'³⁹ and that 'the *Diary* [took] its form from life.'⁴⁰ This was an astonishing claim, considering the amount of rewriting and embellishing of original diary passages that Nin undertook in editing the diary for publication, and the kinds of descriptions Nin had applied to the diary previously - as a space for fantasy, dreaming, and transmutation of experience.⁴¹ However it was a claim that Nin needed to make and maintain for her diary to be a success in this period, if she wanted her readers to feel that her diary could be read as an exemplary text of female experience, and if she wanted her readers to feel close to her. Any suggestion that the diary had been fictionalised would have been fatal to Nin's public figure as the writer of an authentic diary.

Despite Nin's insistence on the non-literary quality of the diary, *A Woman Speaks* features several moments where an audience member interprets the diary differently:

Q: In the process of writing your diary and in preparing it for publication have you ever edited or revised it especially to make it more trendy or stylish?

A.N: That is a question I shouldn't even be asked! If you've read it, you wouldn't ask that question! It is self-evident. It is quite evident that the diary is not an artificial creation.

Q: No, but I just thought perhaps that today you found some of the things you had said irrelevant, and that as you were writing there were perhaps some things you didn't want to be exposed.

A.N: It wouldn't be a diary then. I had to be true to things even if I didn't like what I had written or thought.⁴²

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, 20.

³⁸ In the rest of the interviews in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin* and in the lectures in *A Woman Speaks*, Nin consistently maintained that there was nothing literary about the diary.

³⁹ *A Woman Speaks*, 157.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 257.

⁴¹ See Chapter 4 for such accounts of the diary.

⁴² *A Woman Speaks*, 179.

One imagines Nin's tone to be rather outraged here. The suggestion that she may have rewritten the diary to fit with fashions of the time was unwelcome, as it spoke to the potential inauthenticity of the diary, as well as to a kind of opportunistic modishness on Nin's part. However, we can be sure that Nin substantially rewrote the diary for publication in the 1960s, both from archived documents from this period and by comparing the edited diary with the unexpurgated diary.⁴³

Writing of the editing process in the published edited diary,⁴⁴ Nin insisted that very little of the 'portraits' she had written of friends and acquaintances in the diary had to be changed for publication:

I worked very hard on obtaining permissions from the main personages in the diary, which meant showing them the manuscript and starting a correspondence. The objections were always minor details. The essence of the portraits no one objected to.⁴⁵

Yet there is strong evidence for a counter-narrative to this tale of 'minor details.' As biographer Deirdre Bair tells it, when Henry Miller saw the passages in what would become *Volume One* of the edited diary regarding his tumultuous relationship with ex-wife June he was 'shocked and demanded all sorts of excisions.'⁴⁶ The exact nature of these excisions is not clear but, by reading *Henry and June*,⁴⁷ one can surmise that Miller would have objected to much Nin's portrait of him as a cowed husband to the volatile June Miller.⁴⁸ According to Bair, Nin's brother Thorvald 'denounced Anaïs's "twisted mind,"'⁴⁹ and Eduardo Sanchez 'insisted upon being removed from the diary [...] taking no chances that Anaïs would reveal his homosexuality.'⁵⁰ This request is played out in an archive letter from Sanchez to Nin, where he writes:

As for your Diary I still insist that you do not hurt me by exposing my homosexuality. You haven't yet answered me on that point. - Besides, I don't see

⁴³ This is not to say that the published unexpurgated diary is the same as the original but it is much closer to it than the edited diary.

⁴⁴ There is no published unexpurgated equivalent of this diary, so we cannot compare this account with an original account (if one even exists). From around the beginning of the 1960s, Nin's diary become increasingly less coherent as an object. In the archives, the 'diary' from around 1960 onwards, is represented by folders of loose-leaf papers, mostly letters, dated fragments and lists of events that Nin has attended.

⁴⁵ *Volume VI*, 365.

⁴⁶ Bair, 475.

⁴⁷ The published unexpurgated diary which details Henry Miller's relationship with his wife, June.

⁴⁸ Elsewhere, Miller expressed his pleasure at reading the diary. In a letter to Nin from 1965, he writes: 'The stuff about June is dynamite. Aren't you worried she may sue for "libel and slander"? I've checked [...] places that need revision, for clarity, or what [...] Am enjoying it immensely.' Letter from Henry Miller to Anaïs Nin, 2/11/65 taken from *Diary [110] 1965 – all Jan, Feb, March (folder 1 of 5)*.

⁴⁹ Bair, 476. It is not clear from Bair's account what the specifics of Thorvald Nin's objections were.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 477.

why you cannot edit me out completely. Certainly the diary will not lose importance, since I am not Henry Miller, [Antonin] Artaud, [René] Allendy, [Conrad] Moricand, etc, etc – Am I really asking too much?⁵¹

By all accounts, one could hardly read Sanchez's letter as representing the 'minor details'⁵² that Nin described in her published account of the editing process. In a response to Sanchez, Nin writes that she 'would [never] publish anything to hurt [Sánchez]'.⁵³ Nin continues:

Nothing will be published without your full consent. There are two solutions offered: one is to leave you out altogether, the other it [sic] to change the names [...] What refers to you is all of it harmless and certainly not on homosexuality. Will you please stop worrying? I have sacrificed everything to my human relationships. Have I not? Don't confuse me with Miller and Wagner and other males please, whose ego is more important than human beings.⁵⁴

Sly dig at Miller aside, here Nin presents herself as invested more in the personal (relationships) than in the public (publishing). However, as Deirdre Bair reports it, in the edited diary, Nin was somewhat more retaliatory in her response to Sanchez. In a letter to her brother, Joaquin Nin-Culmell, Nin purportedly wrote in reference to Sanchez's resistance to being mentioned in the diary: 'Sweet revenge as I had to find someone who initiated me to psychoanalysis, to Surrealism, and to be there occasionally at discussions. I turned him [Sanchez] into a girl, Marguerite. Ha!'⁵⁵

There were others who were displeased with Nin's portraits. In an archived letter from Rebecca West to Nin, West objected to Nin's account of a meeting between the two:

You will have got my letter by now and will understand my attitude better by now. Even after your letter, which made me wish we could talk and feel grateful for having known you and anxious to see you again, I still didn't want that description of your visit to stand. It was too far from what I was feeling at the time – and I feel the reference to Miller isn't fair to me, in its brief state. Anyway I don't believe I like myself well enough to have any personal references to me published!⁵⁶

Other characters that Nin had written about in the diary demanded their excision in no uncertain terms.⁵⁷ This was despite the official story of the editing process from the

⁵¹ *Diary 110*, letter from Eduardo Sánchez to Nin, January 2, 1965.

⁵² *Volume VI*, 365.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1965 – letter from Nin to Sanchez.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Bair, 477.

⁵⁶ Letter from Rebecca West to Anaïs Nin dated November 11, 1965. West is referring to a visit made sometime in the 1930s. (Collection 2066, *Diary 36*: F1).

⁵⁷ For example 'friend', Lesley Blanch who 'threatened legal action if Anaïs even hinted at her name.' Cf. Bair, 476.

published diary:

We had remarkably few characters bowing out and very few erasures. I believe this was due to the basic motivation of my portraits. I am concerned with *understanding*, with knowing, exploring, rather than with judgments [...] If a man is big enough he can support his frailties [...] I never began with an intent to caricature, to mock, to judge or to distort. But I did not glamorize or retouch either. It was the basic intent to understand which guided the selections and made the ultimate portrait acceptable.⁵⁸

In fact, there was a chasm between the story that Nin told publicly about the types of edits she made and the reality of these edits, where men were changed into women, stories rewritten to suit Nin's purposes, and where portraits were left out or kept in despite their owners' wishes. Nin also almost entirely left her husband out of the edited published diary,⁵⁹ changed her relationship with Henry Miller from a passionate affair to a working friendship, her relationship with her father from incestuous to merely fraught, and removed any of the sex scenes that feature especially in the unexpurgated volumes of the published diary from *Henry and June* onwards.

As part of her account of the editing process, published in the edited *Volume VI* of the diary, Nin also denied that she would ever have written explicitly about her sex life:

It was not in my nature to be explicit in sexual matters because for me they were welded to feeling, to love, to all other intimacies. Explicitness destroyed the atmosphere, the secret beauty, the moonlight in which sensuality took place.⁶⁰

Anyone who has read the unexpurgated diary knows that it was absolutely in Nin's nature to be explicit in sexual matters.⁶¹ In fact, this very explicitness was used to promote the unexpurgated diaries.⁶² But here, Nin casts herself as implicitly romantic rather than explicitly sexual. By writing about the 'atmosphere' and the 'secret beauty' of her sensual encounters, Nin creates the romance-novel equivalent of dry ice around her sex life, a seductive scene to prevent deeper interpretation. This moment also resonates with the filmic fade-out moments we saw in her childhood fantasies of communion with her father in Chapter 1. Except this time, such fade-outs were intended as a decoy to distract the reader from asking difficult questions about Nin's sexual life, such as: who was Nin having sex with?

⁵⁸ *Volume VII*, 107.

⁵⁹ Nin's husband, Hugo Guiler is mentioned briefly in *Volume One* but not by name.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 380.

⁶¹ Published in the early 1990s.

⁶² See Chapter 3.

There is no sex in the edited diary primarily for this reason, I would argue. Nin's fears of exposure, her talk of 'old guilt about sensual experiences,'⁶³ and letters to Henry Miller from the 1960s,⁶⁴ all reveal that Nin wanted to keep her sex life - past and present - completely out of the public eye. As so much of the original diary (at least from 1931 onwards), featured sexually explicit material and *all* of the diary was concerned with Nin's romantic relationships, there was the danger that, in excising all the sexual and romantic content of her relationships from the diary, Nin would be left with an incoherent, impersonal and abstract text. An early prospective publisher certainly read the edited diary in this way, telling Nin's editor Gunther Stuhlmann that he did not find in the edited manuscript 'the forthrightness and the sense of the contact with real people that one expects from a journal.'⁶⁵

Nin denied that other readers would interpret the diary in this way, writing in her account of the editing process that 'there was so much richness of experience that the excisions did not matter. And people would read between the lines.'⁶⁶ Nin placed the emphasis on the reader to generate meaning 'between the lines' of the diary. They would fill in what she had cut out. In public, Nin was careful to sidestep the inevitable questions about her private life. Whilst Nin did not think that readers would miss the excised material when reading the edited diary, Henry Miller suspected that they might. In an archived letter to Nin, Miller writes:

Incidentally, you always seem to go places alone - questions will arise - were you married, a widow, or what?

All in all - what an impression I imagine reader [sic] will get - of you - of a most complicated individual - and perhaps of a "solipsist" - one about whom the world revolves. No matter how clearly you analyze people and situations, one is left mystified...⁶⁷

If readers were not necessarily 'mystified,' then they were certainly curious when they perceived the gaps in the edited diary, and were not afraid to call Nin to account for such gaps. Nin had the following dialogue with one audience member on this subject:

⁶³ *Volume VI*, 378.

⁶⁴ Bair describes how Nin was 'terrified' when Miller told her in the early 1960s that he was going to publish a selection of his letters. According to Bair, Nin 'continued to insist that Hugo [Guiler, Nin's husband] knew nothing of her affair with Henry [Miller] and would learn of it for the first time if Henry published the letters as they were originally written. She feared that Hugo would leave her.' 438.

⁶⁵ *Volume VI*, 383.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 379.

⁶⁷ Letter from Henry Miller to Anaïs Nin, dated February 17, 1965, from *Diary 110 1965 - all Jan, Feb, March (folder 1 of 5)* (Collection 2066: Box 36, F2).

Q: You say that it's when we trust others that we achieve intimacy. But if that is so why are there are so many holes in the *Diary*, things you don't talk about or leave out?

A.N: You have forgotten that I have a right to share *my* life, but I do not have the right to impose that on people who do not wish to be shared. All that I could give you, I gave you, and if you feel that there is more left out than I gave, that is something I can't help. You have to take me as I am, and I am a person who is very concerned not to destroy others. What you call the holes in the *Diary* are there because I did not wish to be destructive of other human beings.⁶⁸

Whilst Nin excised details of her relationships because she was afraid of the impact that certain revelations would have on her private life, publicly she justified these excisions as motivated by her respect for the privacy of others. Yet in suggesting that there was something destructive about the content of the excisions, Nin rather undermined her self-image as one who had written about her friends and acquaintances with 'understanding' rather than with 'judgment.'⁶⁹ Moments such as this awkward question from an audience member threatened to deconstruct Nin's contradictory narrative about the excisions she made in the edited diary. On the one hand, Nin insisted that she had 'remarkably few characters bowing out'⁷⁰ when she was editing the diary for publication, and that people had only objected to 'minor details' in their portraits.⁷¹ On the other, she suggests here that there was something 'destructive' about the diary - that it had the potential to hurt others.⁷²

Another question that Nin had to field frequently in public was whether she had rewritten the diary in any way for publication. If, as DuBow writes, Nin constructed a public persona composed of 'both artifice and sincerity,' she intended the diary to be read as an all-natural, authentic text.⁷³ Hence, an important part of her public narrative in this period was to deny that the diary had been rewritten in any way for publication. In the Q&A section of a lecture, Nin was probed (albeit gently) regarding this denial:

Q: You speak of spontaneity, and I think that this would be absolutely necessary to get down your thoughts this way. But your books are so beautifully written that I can't help but wonder if you don't go back later and do some rewriting and polishing.

A.N: No, not in the diary. In the novels, yes.

Q: Not in the diary? Because you seem to have the precise word each time, you

⁶⁸ *A Woman Speaks*, 232.

⁶⁹ *Volume VII*, 107.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Volume VI*, 365.

⁷² *A Woman Speaks*, 232.

⁷³ Wendy M. DuBow, ix.

give the exact shade of meaning you want. It doesn't seem possible that you could do this right off without going back and polishing.

A.N: Well, I would compare that to belly dancers who begin dancing when they are three years old. Their technique becomes such a part of them that they aren't conscious of it. I think it's really the fact that I began *so soon* to tie words to experience and to think in terms of images. I think that spontaneity has entirely to do with the fact that writing became a habit.⁷⁴

Dialogues such as these occur time and again during this period, with Nin maintaining that no polishing of the diary for publication had taken place - that she was a 'natural' artist. It was essential for Nin's credibility as a woman who spoke to other women, who was an example for them and could relate to them, that readers were convinced of the uncrafted, non-fictional nature of the diary. Yet she was forever fending off accusations of artificiality, from readers wise to the literary, coherent prose of the diary.

Nin's denial that the experiences in the diary were in any way crafted after the fact demonstrates an awareness of this narrative of the diary as a confessional and authentic text. As Felski writes, the more literary the text appeared to be 'the less likely the reader is to respond to the text as the authentic self-expression of an authorial subject.'⁷⁵ For Nin to function as a public authority on being a woman in the 1970s, it was essential that readers responded to the diary as the whole (and true) story of her experience. Nin also escaped from accusations regarding the potentially literary stylishness of the diary by arguing that this was just the way she wrote, naturally. As we see in the Q&A encounter above, Nin described her style as being so well-honed because of the amount of practice she had had, having written in the diary for so long: 'I began *so soon* to tie words to experience and to think in terms of words or in terms of images [...] writing became a habit.'⁷⁶

Any style that readers picked up on in Nin's diary also became absorbed into her public image as a stylish woman, although certain critics reacted negatively to this stylishness, as we shall see towards the end of this chapter. In a piece for *Shenandoah* magazine in 1976, Lynn Luria-Sukenick sums up this anchoring of Nin's textual style to her personal style:

Nin's distilled style [in the diary] is a part of the personality being revealed by it. She has a sense of style - in dress, in personal relations, in her self-discipline - which makes transmutation of the raw into the fine a natural and constant process in her life. Stylization is not only a task of the social self, as it is for

⁷⁴A *Woman Speaks*, 171.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶A *Woman Speaks*, 171.

most people; it is, for Nin, instinctive and intimate.⁷⁷

The aesthetics of Nin's writing and her personal appearance collapse into each other. Her writing is as 'stylish' as her person, and vice-versa. Style came naturally to Nin, according to this account. In describing Nin's style as 'intimate,' Luria-Sukenick situates the aesthetic of Nin's work within the favored contemporary narrative of the diary as authentic, intimate text.

Some of the most interesting moments in Nin's public narratives from the 1960s and '70s take place when these narratives were challenged by a prurient audience member or journalist. These moments placed stress on the weak points of Nin's public narrative. Underpinning the feminist interest in autobiographical texts was a desire for authentic accounts of women's lives, lives that had been filled with struggle, personal discovery and liberation. This authenticity marked itself through writing that appeared spontaneous, non-stylised and concerned with the accessing of personal truths, rather than aesthetic window-dressing.⁷⁸ Both Nin and her readers were anxious that the diary appear to be all natural - a spontaneous, authentic and unfettered account of Nin's life, as she wrote it originally. As we recall, Nin's party line regarding the editing of her diary for publication was that she changed very little, that only 'minor details' were tweaked in a few cases. Elsewhere, she modified this account slightly to deny that *any* changes had been made: 'I have not changed anything in the Diary, only omitted, and the greater part of what was left out was repetition. Repetitions are inevitable in a diary, but they have to be eliminated.'⁷⁹ There are shades of John Ferrone's logic in *Linotte* here - that it was the editor's job to save the reader from tedious repetitions. In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin repeats this claim regarding her editing processes, saying to the audience: 'there would be fumbings, and that kind of editing I had to do for your sake.'⁸⁰

Interestingly, Nin frequently repeated herself in public in the 1970s, although she very rarely fumbled. One can attribute a certain portion of these repetitions to the tendency of journalists to ask the same questions, in the search for the same story.⁸¹ But

⁷⁷ Lynn Luria-Sukenick, 'The Diaries of Anaïs Nin' in *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin*, ed. Philip K. Jason, 175. (Originally in *Shenandoah* 17.3, Spring 1976: 96-103),

⁷⁸ Felski, 97.

⁷⁹ *Volume VII*, 109.

⁸⁰ *A Woman Speaks*, 175.

⁸¹ In a letter to Nin regarding her televised interview with Keith Berwick in 1970, Henry Miller writes of this tendency towards repetition in the interview that 'there are very few persons who can make you sing

in an introduction to an edited collection of Nin's interviews, Wendy DuBow suggests there was something particular about Nin's tendency to repeat:

Repetition is a part of any collection of interviews, [but] in Nin's case it is especially thought-provoking. 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.⁸²

With the diary, Nin claimed that readers would read between the lines. Nin's repetitiousness in interviews and lectures was part of a larger effort to form and then perpetuate a public narrative of such uniformity and coherency that no-one would read between the lines, or, worse, tug at these lines to see if they would unravel. Yet Nin's public narrative was designed to leave as little room for interpretation as possible. It was intended to hold the reader, audience member or journalist at bay whilst giving the appearance of intimacy. DuBow identifies this tension inherent in Nin's public performances of intimacy. She paints a picture of Nin, the interviewee as one who could talk whilst saying very little: '[Nin] was able to both withhold information and cooperate fully in interviews.'⁸³ We are reminded of Nin's role in the analysis room - seeming to give of herself, as when she surrendered the diary to Rank - but all the time holding herself back and apart. Undoubtedly, this tactic created an air of enigma around Nin that was very seductive to readers, as we shall see. But this was also a smokescreen, behind which Nin could vanish at any given moment.

In person, Nin gave the impression of warmth, understanding and fellow-feeling with her readers. Nin's public lectures relied on a language that assumed common beliefs, mutual desires and shared experiences with her mostly female readers and audience members. In her lectures especially, Nin relied on the language and logic of what Lauren Berlant has referred to as the 'intimate public'⁸⁴ to persuade her audiences of the authenticity and importance of the diary. Nin presented her diary as an object which brought women together, revealing to these women that they were already more intimate with each other than they thought. Explaining the logic of the intimate public, Berlant writes:

What makes a public sphere intimate is an expectation that the consumers of its

a new tune.' *Volume VII*, 174.

⁸² DuBow, xviii.

⁸³ DuBow, ix.

⁸⁴ Berlant, *The Female Complaint*.

particular stuff *already* share a worldview and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience. [...] [The intimate public] flourishes as a porous, affective scene of identification among strangers that promises a certain experience of belonging and provides a complex of consolation, confirmation, discipline, and discussion about how to live as an *x*.⁸⁵

The discussion between Nin and her readers, generated by lectures and the diary, revolved around how to live ‘as a woman.’ Unsurprisingly, Nin’s life was held up as exemplary, with editor Evelyn Hinz describing Nin’s lectures as ‘ultimately important for their demonstration of what it means to be a woman.’⁸⁶ For her audiences, Nin exemplified sexual and artistic liberation. Nin’s narrative of what it meant ‘to be a woman’ was undeniably essentialist. In her lectures, Nin spoke of how women had an inbuilt ‘sense of the personal’ that had imbued her with a ‘very great humanism’ she could take into the wider world.⁸⁷ Women were body and feelings, men intellect and abstraction: ‘the feminine point of view doesn’t go through the rationalization that the man’s intellect puts his feelings through. Woman thinks emotionally; her vision is based on intuition.’⁸⁸ Nin encouraged her audiences to celebrate these attributes, and to focus on satisfaction and knowledge in their personal lives before they worked for mass change:

We have to work above all on this psychological freedom of accepting and understanding what one is as a woman, so that the impetus for change and the influence of culture come from within, from a very deep source.⁸⁹

Throughout her lectures and interviews from this period, Nin stressed that women’s liberation could only happen one woman at a time. Women needed to ‘learn to think alone’ before they considered thinking as a group.⁹⁰ As such, Nin offered an alternative narrative to that of collective action for her feminist readers.

As we have seen, *pace* the logic of the intimate public, Nin believed that women had access to a collective affective experience. Within this intimate public, she presented herself as both an exemplar for other women to learn from, and as an intimate comrade. But whilst her public narrative included this message of collectivity, Nin sets her sights in *A Woman Speaks* and in her essay ‘Notes on Feminism’ on the personal and psychological, rather than the political landscapes of feminism.

⁸⁵ Ibid, viii.

⁸⁶ *A Woman Speaks*, xii.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 41.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 81.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 46.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 73.

In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin argues for the diary as the place where ‘women’s sense of freedom has to begin.’⁹¹ By looking inwards and reforming her ‘emotional attitudes and beliefs,’ woman would be able ‘to act more effectively,’ to take ‘responsibility for [her] situation’ rather than putting the blame ‘on society or man.’⁹² In a lecture from *A Woman Speaks*, Nin said that ‘the lasting revolution comes from deep changes in ourselves which influence our collective life.’⁹³ Personal resolution would result in collective revolution, but the resolution had to come first: ‘[e]ach woman has to consider her own problems before she can act effectively within her radius; otherwise she is merely adding the burden of her problems to the collective overburdened majority.’⁹⁴

Nin did not believe in slogans (which she described as ‘untrue generalizations’) or in one-size-fits-all solutions to socio-political problems.⁹⁵ She called for a pacifist response to these problems, writing that ‘the trouble with anger is that it makes us overstate our case and prevents us from reaching awareness.’⁹⁶ She closes her ‘Notes on Feminism’ by saying that she sees a ‘great deal of negativity in the Women’s Liberation Movement.’⁹⁷ In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin reiterated this uneasiness with movements, stating that she was ‘not going to be told how to be liberated’ by other women - a somewhat galling statement, bearing in mind her conviction that her diary had played a crucial role in other women’s liberation.⁹⁸

As such, Nin was an unlikely and contentious figurehead for second-wave feminists. She certainly did not have a universal appeal, despite her narrative that she spoke for every woman.⁹⁹ Wendy DuBow writes that ‘Nin [did] not claim to be a member of the women’s liberation movement ’but that she ‘accept[ed] the role of mentor that [was] imposed upon her.’¹⁰⁰ Certainly, it is true that Nin distanced herself publicly from what she called, variously ‘radical,’¹⁰¹ ‘angry,’¹⁰² and ‘dogmatic’¹⁰³

⁹¹ ‘Notes on Feminism,’ in *In Favour of the Sensitive Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1992) 23.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 25.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 26.

⁹⁸ *A Woman Speaks*, 31.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 88.

¹⁰⁰ DuBow, xiii.

¹⁰¹ *A Woman Speaks*, 77.

¹⁰² Ibid.

feminists. She also emphasized the work of the individual over that of the collective. But arguably, the role of ‘mentor’ to other women was one that Nin actively cultivated, rather than had ‘imposed’ on her.

Nin presented herself as a mouthpiece for other women, saying in one lecture that it was her ‘job to speak for women’ as a public figure.¹⁰⁴ Nin attributed her ability to function as a spokeswoman for other women to the idea that all women’s stories were, essentially, the same story: ‘I say the story of one woman is no different than the story of a million women. I mean, the woman speaks - that’s all. One talks or paints for the others that can’t.’¹⁰⁵ Thus, in having written *her* story, Nin had written every woman’s story. Reinforcing this message, Nin described receiving letters from readers, telling her “‘You are writing MY diary, MY life.’”¹⁰⁶ The same intimate work of apostrophe¹⁰⁷ took place in reverse in Nin’s lectures, where she said such things to her readers as ‘I know that you think that you discovered *me* when I published the *Diary*, but actually I discovered *you*.’¹⁰⁸ With such statements, Nin made herself accountable for uncovering a network of shared female experience, facilitated by the diary: ‘I discovered literally thousands of women and became aware that this was [...] a marvellous moment for all women.’¹⁰⁹

According to Berlant, this notion of a shared female experience that Nin called upon relies on a number of assumptions:

This “women’s culture” is distinguished by a view that people marked by femininity already have something in common and are in need of a conversation that feels intimate, revelatory, and a relief even when it is mediated by commodities, even when it is written by strangers [...] and even when its particular stories are about women who seem, on the face of it vastly different from each other and from any particular reader.¹¹⁰

Nin worked hard not to appear as a stranger to her audience. However, accounts by Evelyn Hinz which suggested that readers needed proof that Nin was who she said she was, and audience questions which probed Nin’s life narrative both suggest that there

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 94.

¹⁰⁶ Anaïs Nin quoted by Susan Stocking, ‘Personas Unmasked in Visit with Anaïs Nin,’ in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, ed. Wendy DuBow, 101, (originally printed in *The Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1971).

¹⁰⁷ In her article “‘Why Should I Not Speak to You?’ The Rhetoric of Intimacy,’ Maureen McLane writes that ‘intimacy happens if apostrophe works.’ *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant, 436.

¹⁰⁸ *A Woman Speaks*, 148.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ *The Female Complaint*, viii-ix.

was something strange about Nin for her public. This strangeness, I will argue, often threatened to deconstruct Nin's performances of intimacy.¹¹¹

In keeping with the rhetoric of the intimate public, Nin depicted her decision to publish the diary as motivated by the possibility of making friends, saying in a 1971 interview "I had to ask myself, will it make more friends to publish the diary? I decided it would."¹¹² In the same interview, Nin admits to her surprise that 'so many people felt an affinity' with the diary:

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 if the personal life is lived deeply enough, it becomes really everybody's life.¹¹³

Actually, there was a great deal in the diary that could mark Nin's life out as different. None of her young readers could lay claim to having lived in 1930s Left Bank Paris. The Nin of the published diary was always going to be different from her readers in the 1970s, a fact which anxiously underpins Hinz's introduction to *A Woman Speaks*.

The differences between Nin and her readers, most of whom were female university students, ran along several lines.¹¹⁴ Of special concern to journalists was the issue of Nin's age. Aged 63 when the first volume of the diary was published in 1966, she was at least double the age of her audience, which was composed largely of women in their twenties and thirties. Journalist Beverly Stephen mused about the oddness of this age difference, asking in 1971: 'Who would have guessed that many new feminists would find a heroine in a softly-spoken 68-year-old?'¹¹⁵ Stephen explained the 'logic of it' as lying 'in the kind of timeless and universal perceptions Anaïs Nin brought to her writing,'¹¹⁶ a logic that Nin would also mobilise to distract attention both from her age and that of the diary.¹¹⁷

Nin and several journalists also emphasized the youthfulness of her appearance as a way to place her on a par with her young readers. In a self-aggrandizing passage

¹¹¹ Editor to the collection of Nin's interviews and lectures, *A Woman Speaks*.

¹¹² Stocking, 101.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ According to Bair's biography, Hinz's introduction to *A Woman Speaks* and DuBow's introduction in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*.

¹¹⁵ Beverly Stephen, 'A Heroine for Feminists,' in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, (originally printed in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, December 6, 1971). 116.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Although bearing in mind how much of the diary was rewritten for publication in the 1960s, one could make the case that it was very much a document of this decade, rather than from the 1930s.

from the last volume of the diary, Nin writes:

Nature was kind to me. First of all, sensual love can continue as long as emotional love is alive. In my case my body was never distorted [...] I have kept my weight at 120 pounds and wear the same size dress I wore at sixteen [...] The only signs of age which were ugly were wrinkles on the throat [...] My forehead is smooth. My legs are slim, and I can wear miniskirts [...] my breasts are like a young girl's, the nipples pink.¹¹⁸

Nin could do all the things that 'young people do,' have sex, wear miniskirts and 'arouse desire.'¹¹⁹ 'Age,' she writes, 'is not so definable.'¹²⁰ Yet other witnesses to Nin's youthfulness depicted it as almost grotesque, as if Nin were a 1970s Dorian Gray. One journalist writes:

[Nin] sits erect in her chair, hands folded in her lap like a well-behaved child, 20-year-old legs crossed at the ankles. [...] In 1970, Anaïs Nin is the same size and shape as during her years in Paris in the '30s. Her face is *sui generis*: immense, round, aquamarine eyes, almost unreal, like the glass eyes of a doll [...] Age - but nowhere near the chronological years - shows only in her face. Her hands, like her legs, are so youthful it's almost eerie - as if she'd made an illicit bargain in time.¹²¹

Nin is, variously, a child, a doll, a 20 year old, in her thirties and an 'eerie' ghost from the past in this passage, which speaks to the difficulty of placing Nin in time. Although Nin presented the diary and herself as timeless (or, at least, of an indefinable age), here Nin suffers from an excess of timeliness. She is all ages and none - a time-traveler from an unknown location. This anxiety about Nin's origins troubles the introduction to *A Woman Speaks*, as we shall see in a moment.

Other differences between Nin and her readership were either played up as part of an exotic image (such as her accent and Continental background), or discounted by Nin herself. In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin downplays the facts that marked her out as different from her readers:

It didn't matter if I came from another culture, it didn't matter if you had a different type of father. The facts didn't matter at all. What mattered was this quest for the self, this emotional evolution, the overcoming of obstacles, the fears that we shared.¹²²

We are returned here to Felski's work on the feminist confessional, as well as to Berlant's logic of the intimate public. In order to make her readers feel that they were

¹¹⁸ *Volume VII*, 276-77.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Susan Edmiston, 'Portrait of Anaïs Nin,' in *Conversations with Anaïs Nin*, ed. Wendy DuBow, 43. (Originally from *Mademoiselle* October 1970, 134-35, 222-25).

¹²² *A Woman Speaks*, 150.

intimate with her, Nin had to go beyond the personal and towards the collective in her rhetoric. She had to present herself as an everywoman, able to speak *to* every woman.¹²³

In *A Woman Speaks*, editor Evelyn Hinz quotes Nin as saying during a lecture “‘I didn’t know at first why you wanted to see me [...] I felt everything was in the work and I didn’t know why we needed to talk together.’”¹²⁴ Hinz presented Nin as a reluctant speaker: ‘concerned that the desire to see and hear her might reflect a spurious curiosity about her personal life,’ which, of course, it did - although such curiosity was arguably very justified, bearing in mind readers’ investment in both the diary and Nin’s authenticity.

However, when Nin realised that audiences needed to see her in person as proof of this authenticity, she decided to make an appearance:

As [Nin] gradually came to understand, the need [to see her in person] reflected an apprehensiveness about the reality of the life portrayed in the *Diary*, a concern that possibly the woman with whose struggles one had identified and in whose convictions one wanted to share was not real but a fictional creation, a fear lest this apparently painstaking record of an individual’s search for viable truths might be discovered to be partially or totally a masterful fabrication. The need to see her, the writer of the *Diary*, was a need to be reassured that such a life was possible because such a person was real.¹²⁵

There was something about Nin’s diary that made readers apprehensive, both about Nin’s life and their own. If readers identified with Nin’s diary to the extent that Hinz suggests here, then they were afraid that they might have placed their faith in a false idol. Nin’s writing was not enough to prove her authenticity. As post-structuralist theorists such as Jacques Derrida have argued, writing suggests absence and Nin’s readers needed to feel that she was present.¹²⁶ They also needed to know that she was telling the truth. As Christopher Norris identifies, reading Derrida, speech has been commonly considered as more ‘truthful’ than writing:

It is because spoken words are thought of as symbolizing ideas “directly” - without the further passage through a supplementary medium of written signs - that speech can be safely maintained within the zone of a privileged relation to truth.¹²⁷

¹²³ Although many women were not listening, as we shall see.

¹²⁴ *A Woman Speaks*, viii.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Cf. Jacques Derrida: ‘every sign [...] presupposes a certain absence.’ *Limited Inc* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1977), 7. Also, James K.A. Smith on Derrida: ‘with writing comes the advent of mediation (interpretation, the play of meaning, and the conflict of interpretations) which comes as a threat to the unity of self-presence and speech.’ *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory* (New York and London: Continuum, 2005), 39.

¹²⁷ Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 65.

Readers needed Nin to speak to them in person to confirm that her diary was telling the truth about her life, to prove, as Nin says “‘that there was an integrity between the writer and the *Diary*. [Readers] needed to know that. They needed to hear my voice. They needed for me to be there.’”¹²⁸ Voice, as Norris writes, works as a ‘metaphor of truth and authenticity [...] In speaking one is able to experience (supposedly) an intimate link between sound and sense.’¹²⁹ Neither Nin’s voice nor presence disappointed, according to Hinz. She reassured the audience on all levels that there was ‘a continuity’ between her textual self and her physical presence:

A perfect correlation between the kind of woman which the *Diary* leads one to expect and the woman who rises to her feet or walks to the center of the stage in response to the words of the Master of Ceremonies.¹³⁰

Hinz explains this correlation as ‘not a question of likeness to photographs one may have seen but rather of correspondence between [Nin’s] appearance and gestures and the style and substance of her writing.’¹³¹ Hinz reads appearance and gestures as those signs which cannot be faked.¹³² Nin’s physicality lined up with her textuality, proving the authenticity of both.¹³³

The Nin who appeared in person matched every reader’s vision of her in the diary, according to Hinz. Indeed, it was as if Nin had ‘[stepped] out from *between* its pages.’¹³⁴ Hinz’s formulation speaks to the youthfulness of Nin’s physical appearance, as well as to the desire, in Nin’s public narrative, to deny that there was a difference between Nin-of-the-diary and Nin-in-person. But Hinz’s comment also suggests the idea that every reader imagined Nin in the same way, that there was no room for individual interpretation of Nin as a figure. Actually, there was a great deal of difference in the way women read Anaïs Nin.

If Nin spoke ‘as a woman,’ then not everybody wanted to listen. Although

¹²⁸ *A Woman Speaks*, ix.

¹²⁹ Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction. Theory and Practice*. (London: Methuen, 1982), 28.

¹³⁰ *A Woman Speaks*, ix.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² One could make a very strong case for the fact that both gestures and appearance can be contrived, of course.

¹³³ This alignment of Nin’s physicality with her textuality also anticipates the influence of the theory of *l’écriture féminine* on later readings of Nin’s work. *A Woman Speaks* was published in the same year as Hélène Cixous’ ‘Le Rire de la Méduse’ which was translated into English as ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ a year later. However, as Tookey points out, whilst there are many moments in *A Woman Speaks* and in Nin’s work more generally that invite comparisons with the theories of *l’écriture féminine*, Nin was read from within the context of an American feminist movement ‘much more focused on political and social change.’ Tookey, 170.

¹³⁴ *A Woman Speaks*, x.

transcripts of Nin's lectures present her as largely in intimate harmony with her audience, there were moments where she was challenged on her claim to spokeswoman status. In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin incorporated these moments into her narrative of the intimate public, marking out her critics as 'dogmatic,' 'angry,'¹³⁵ and 'hostile,'¹³⁶ in order to draw her audience closer. In a lecture entitled 'Women Reconstructing the World,'¹³⁷ Nin describes an encounter with a 'terribly angry, terribly hostile' woman who accused Nin of not understanding the extent of male resistance to feminism.¹³⁸ Recounting this meeting, Nin says to her audience: '[n]ow I looked at this woman. If she entered this room, you and I would both feel that we didn't want to help her to do anything.'¹³⁹ Rallying her intimate public behind her, Nin rejected women who sought to challenge her, whilst still managing to maintain that all women were one: 'somehow part of yourself turning against you seems very hard to take.'¹⁴⁰ These 'dogmatic feminist women' were Nin's threatening others, preventing her from making her presence felt in all corners of the feminist movement:

I don't want [...] the dogmatic feminist women, to alienate me. Because I can be useful. This is really a plea. I don't want to be alienated by a magazine that says if you're not a lesbian you're not a feminist, or that you're not a feminist if you don't use their particular language, or that you're not a feminist if you don't adopt all of [Kate] Millett's book.¹⁴¹

Through the 1970s, Nin gathered many opponents. According to biographer Deirdre Bair, women at Smith College 'hooted and hissed' after Nin refused to talk about 'some of the choices she wrote of in the diary, most particularly her relationship to Henry [Miller] as his helpmate.'¹⁴² Nin said that she wanted to give the world "'one perfect life,"'¹⁴³ (her own) - a statement out of kilter both with her self-presentation elsewhere as a woman who had struggled so others did not have to, and with her emphasis on the spontaneity and un-crafted nature of the diary.¹⁴⁴ Referring to the Smith College event in her published diary, Nin wrote only that 'Smith was the only college I could not

¹³⁵ Ibid. 76

¹³⁶ Ibid. 53.

¹³⁷ *A Woman Speaks*, 35-78.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 54.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 77. Nin is referring to Millett's *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

¹⁴² Bair, 493.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Nin's public narrative contains these messianic qualities on occasion.

warm and bring to life.’¹⁴⁵

A 1972 review by Bertha Harris of an event which Nin headlined, depicted her as all style and no (feminist) substance.¹⁴⁶ Harris also registered the overt performativity of Nin’s public presence: ‘Anaïs Nin showed her nipples and the rest of her beautiful shape through a clinging silver dress, held a mask in front of her face, lowered it, and began to read from her diaries. When she finished, she withdrew, glittering.’¹⁴⁷ Whilst Harris recognised Nin’s seductive qualities, her ability to ‘glitter,’ she was less impressed with the content of Nin’s performance, writing that the ‘sight of Anaïs Nin [...] was the end to any aesthetic or feminist shape in the whole show.’¹⁴⁸ Any interest in Nin stopped at her physical presence, with Harris writing that Nin ‘seeks to be a feminist’ but speaks ‘primarily on the thinkings and doings of men.’¹⁴⁹ The review suggested that Nin was merely playing the role of feminist.

Nin’s artful presence invited questions about her feminist credentials in other quarters. Influential life-writing theorist Estelle C. Jelinek was especially doubtful about the authenticity of Nin’s feminism. Jelinek presented Nin as having blinded fans with her physical appearance, dazzling them to the point where they could not see the insincerity of her claims to feminism. Jelinek initially situates herself as one of the uninitiated; having not read Nin herself, she had heard her name ‘put forth [...] in the women’s liberation movement.’¹⁵⁰ When Jelinek’s friends could not explain *why* they ‘adored’¹⁵¹ Nin (anticipating the blind devotion Jelinek would later identify in Nin’s readership), Jelinek decided to read Nin for herself.

Jelinek found the novels ‘impressionistic [and] repetitious.’¹⁵² Reading the diary, she was ‘bored by [Nin’s] vanity and her endless descriptions of adoring and adored men.’¹⁵³ Nevertheless, holding out for the possibility of the ‘real’¹⁵⁴ Nin, much like audiences in *A Woman Speaks*, Jelinek decided to attend a celebratory event at Berkeley.

¹⁴⁵ *Volume VII*, 228.

¹⁴⁶ The review is placed, fittingly, over an advert for a performance of Oscar Wilde’s play *Salome*.

¹⁴⁷ Bertha Harris, ‘Who Chose These Women, and Why?’ in *The Village Voice*, November 30, 1972.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Who Chose These Women, and Why?’

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Estelle C. Jelinek, ‘Anaïs Nin: A Critical Evaluation,’ in *Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry and Prose*, ed. Cheryl L. Brown and Karen Olson (New Jersey and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1978), 312.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

‘I [was] convinced that I could not help but be turned on by her if only I saw her “in the flesh,”’ writes Jelinek, affirming the narrative of Nin’s arousing and seductive presence which would draw readers closer even if they were initially resistant to her appeal.¹⁵⁵ This moment recalls the framing narrative of *A Woman Speaks*, Hinz’s notion that, on its own, Nin’s diary was not enough for readers. Readers needed to see Nin in the flesh to be convinced both that she was real, and here, for Jelinek, to be convinced that she was a feminist.

The only thing aroused in Jelinek on seeing Nin was her own anger. Jelinek depicts Nin’s fans as blinded by ‘her performance,’¹⁵⁶ unable to see that Nin ‘holds views that are anathema [...] to the women’s liberation movement.’¹⁵⁷ Jelinek took particular exception with Nin’s ‘sexist notions,’¹⁵⁸ which read women as essentially intimate, personal and intuitive:

Where usually men have used the traits she celebrates against women, Nin puts women on a pedestal because they (seemingly) possess these traits, as though they were innate in women and absent in men. I don’t find it all justifiable to call women better than men because their thinking is intuitive and not logical [...] This kind of sexism makes logical women “masculine” and intuitive men “feminine,” women who do not want to have children “unnatural,” men who are compassionate and sensitive “effeminate.”¹⁵⁹

There was nothing in Nin’s philosophy, in her diaries or in her novels that could provide a ‘model’ for feminists, according to Jelinek.¹⁶⁰ Whilst fans of Nin had taken her to be a role model, Nin was actually just ‘playing roles.’¹⁶¹ This time, it was the role of the feminist, part of an opportunistic attempt to ally herself with the movement, in order ‘to sell her books.’¹⁶²

Unlike Evelyn Hinz, who read the continuity between Nin-in-the-diary and Nin-in-person as proof of her authenticity, Jelinek drew the opposite conclusion. Nin was as ‘fake’ in person, as she was in the diary. Writing that ‘the theatrical effect is dominant’¹⁶³ in Nin’s public performance, Jelinek then refers to *Volume One*, where Nin writes ‘I begin to imagine that I am also a fake -- that maybe all my journals, books, and

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 313.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 314.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 315.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 315.

¹⁶² Ibid, 323.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

personality are fakes.’¹⁶⁴ Jelinek suggested that readers should take Nin at her own word(s). Here, Nin’s diary continued to be a source for meaning about Nin herself, but the opposite meaning to that generated in *A Woman Speaks*. In *A Woman Speaks*, Nin’s appearance in person confirmed the authenticity of her textual self. In Jelinek’s piece, Nin’s text and appearance both confirmed her inauthenticity.

Jelinek’s ‘Critical Evaluation of Anaïs Nin’ suggests that women had not been critical enough of Nin, by far. Jelinek argued that fans of Nin were too close to her to *properly see her*, they were ‘blinded,’ ‘nearsighted,’¹⁶⁵ and failed to notice the insincerity underlying Nin’s ‘seductive’ appearance.¹⁶⁶ Readers were too close to Nin to be able to see her clearly. Jelinek also argues that readers’ lack of critical objectivity when it came to Nin had to do with the extent to which they intimately identified themselves with her: ‘[s]ome women’s reactions to my ideas on Nin’s sexism are quite dramatic, as though I were, by attacking Nin, attacking their own femininity.’¹⁶⁷

If Nin was cut, her readers would bleed. Jelinek’s comment speaks to the power of Nin’s intimate public to make female readers feel like they were part of a collective narrative of which Nin was the writer. Her feminism was their feminism; in her diary she had written *their* lives. Readers’ symbiotic attachment to Nin tells us something about a desire in the second-wave movement for narratives of female intimacy and similarity. It also suggests that there was a need for figureheads, for women to look up to, but that these figureheads needed to appear accessible. One needed to feel one could get close to them.

Conclusion.

*And so on this note of timelessness and mutual understanding I think I will say goodnight.*¹⁶⁸

Gaining an actual reading public in the late 1960s, Nin sought to turn her unknown readers into known quantities. She answered all of her fan-mail, at length. She spent the majority of the early 1970s on a lecture tour around American universities. At these lectures, or so the story goes, she made every audience member feel as if she was

¹⁶⁴ *Volume One*, 205.

¹⁶⁵ Jelinek, 323.

¹⁶⁶ ‘In [Robert] Snyder’s film [*Anaïs Observed*] we see her posing seductively in a field.’ Jelinek, 313.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 318.

¹⁶⁸ *A Woman Speaks*, 262.

speaking specifically to them and *for* them.

Yet Nin did not want her readers to read her too closely in person, or to read between the lines of her published, heavily-edited diary. Her public image, of which the edited diary was an integral part, was crafted to give little away about the realities of Nin's life: the husband, the other husband, the affairs, the bisexuality, the abortions and the financial dependency, that we now know about from having read the unexpurgated diary and the biographies. Nin's intimate relationships may have been intimated, at times, in the edited diary, but they were never spelled out.

The fact of these intimations left readers wanting more. They needed to see Nin in person, to hear her speak, and to somehow gain confirmation that she was the same woman as in the diary - despite the fact that this woman, if she had even existed, would have been from the 1930s. There is an uncanniness about descriptions of Nin's public appearances from the 1970s; she is both of the moment and from the past. Readers' feeling that they could be intimate with Nin always threatened to be undermined by the fact of Nin's many differences. Not only was Nin radically different from her readers, she was radically different from the version of herself that she presented in public and in the edited diary. The Nin of the edited diary was a fiction, constructed from the original diary (in itself, another fiction), a rewrite designed so that Nin could publish the diary without losing her privacy.

Nin took a huge risk by speaking in public. Whilst she had edited the diary carefully in order to reveal very little about the life behind it (both past and present), speaking in public meant having to confront the unknown reader. Nin could not control how she was read in this space, although *A Woman Speaks* and Nin's interviews from this period suggest that she was very rarely asked questions that she could not field. Something about Nin seduced her readers and interviewers into forgetting to ask the difficult questions that both the edited diary and her public narrative invited. Jelinek ascribed this to 'blindness'- Nin led female readers away from their own feminism, without them seeing it.¹⁶⁹

Writing in the winter of 1971, two years before she would stop the diary altogether, Nin mused on her newfound fame:

Anais, what have you become? Where are you? Have you become a teacher, a guru? Just speaking the accumulated experience because so many needed an end

¹⁶⁹ Jelinek, 319.

to loneliness, a new faith, a rediscovery of human values. Lending my presence because so many wanted to ascertain that I am real, ascertain if I had the voice of my words, the body of my words, the face of my words.¹⁷⁰

Practicing this ‘art of presence,’ Nin performed as part of an intimate public with her readers. Yet, as ever, Nin’s performances of presence simultaneously gestured towards her absence from these performances. Hinz described Nin as emerging from the diary, only to ‘withdraw [back] into its pages, leaving her audience with the *Diary* in place of her physical presence.’¹⁷¹ Nin warned her readers: ‘I hope you will find everything in the work because there will come a day when I will not be present.’¹⁷² Denied intimacy with the real Nin, readers were left with the diary’s intimate performances.

¹⁷⁰ *Volume VII*, 224.

¹⁷¹ *A Woman Speaks*, xi.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 224.

Conclusion: touching stories.

Close-reading the unexpurgated diaries of Anaïs Nin can be uncomfortable. Nin's choice of language holds her reader at a distance; her fondness for words such as 'ensorcell' and 'lancinations' send us out of the diary and into the dictionary. For Elizabeth Hardwick, Nin's prose is 'mercilessly pretentious.'¹ Exemplifying critical responses to Nin's style of writing, such criticisms resist engagement with its difficulty and unfamiliarity. I have argued for a reconsideration of the textuality of Nin's writing that recognises it as seductive - as that which plays with and resists meaning. My reading of the 'Father Story' broached the seductiveness of Nin's writing as that which flickers, dazzles and leads the reader away from definitive interpretation. It is this quality in Nin's writing that has generated so much anxiety in critical responses to her work, and the same quality which makes Nin's writing so productive. In reading Nin, meaning shifts and eludes us, forcing us to rethink our investment in generating interpretation from narrative.

This thesis has attended in new ways to Nin's writing, handling the strangeness, unfamiliarity and exoticism of its texture, and attending to the manner in which this writing both invites and resists an intimate reading. In Nin's diary, French and Spanish phrases go untranslated or have an editor's note '[sic]' suggesting that Nin mishandled language, that she was somehow not in control of it. Such moments recall John Ferrone's description of Nin's 'outbursts,' figuring Nin as an excessively touchy writer, one whose sudden and unpredictable outpourings of feeling might be off-putting for the reader.

Yet it is the touchiness of Nin's diary, both in the texture of its writing and in its narratives that stages intimacy, performing the indivisibility of proximity and distance. Intimacy relies on there being just the 'right' amount of touching; too little and we are distant, too much and we become irritated by the other, touchy. The pleasures of intimacy play out in Nin's diary as this oscillation between types of contact and distance, a *fort-da* game which Nin relies on both to confirm her ability to touch others, to make them have feelings for her, and to resist the obligation to others that such feelings might entail. Nin's diary performs her desire to touch others on her own terms,

¹ Review by Elizabeth Hardwick in *The Partisan Review*, quoted by Nin in *Volume Five: 1947-55* (New York and London: HBJ, 1974), 32.

to affect whilst often holding herself apart and at a distance. Her writing stages this tension between contact and distance that, as McLane argues, characterises intimacy:

Intimacy appears to be an affair (or a technology, or a discourse) of near and knowing bodies. Inasmuch as this intimacy might speak, its utterances would be elemental, economical, pure; the language of the body brought to rare and perfect speech. Yet one of the more remarkable and telling features (of intimacy) is its profoundly romantic interest in linguistic profusion and the disjunctions between and within bodies and languages.²

Nin's diary performs the impossibility of ever bringing the language of the body to 'rare and perfect speech,' although she remained compelled by the possibility of doing so. Like her childhood correspondence with her father, Nin's relationship with D.H. Lawrence revealed itself to be, as Lauren Berlant writes of intimacy itself, 'a relation associated with tacit fantasies.'³ In fact, Nin characterises all of her intimate relationships through this tacitness of 'elemental, economical (and) pure' utterances, even whilst she writes profusely about this very tacitness.⁴ Her diary performs this 'profoundly romantic interest in linguistic profusion' through its preoccupation with the potential for language to produce and perform intimacy.

Nin frequently characterises intimacy as tacit whilst writing profusely about this very tacitness. Others have been made nervous by Nin's linguistic profusion, the overflow of her writing, its excessiveness, and its outbursts. Ferrone's response to these outbursts, alongside Joaquin Nin-Culmell's desire to present Nin as an inviolable subject, gestures to a larger critical anxiety about the kinds of subjectivity intimated by Nin's diary. I have shown how these anxieties feed into wider questions within life-writing about the possibilities and problems of writing the self. My reading of *Linotte* revealed the disjunctures between Nin-Culmell's depiction of Nin as an inviolable subject, and her own fashioning as a self-in-relation within the diary. To read Nin as an intimate subject, as I have here, is not to insist on her inviolability, but to recognise her as an interembodied subject, preoccupied with fantasies of touching, communion and contact with others. As such, this thesis represents a reconsideration of Nin's diary as part of the critical turn in life-writing and intimacy studies towards the skin, intersubjectivity and interembodiment.

² McLane, 435.

³ Lauren Berlant, Introduction to *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant, 7.

⁴ For example, in Nin's depiction of her first meeting with Otto Rank she writes that the two 'understood each other in half-phrases,' discussed in Chapter 4.

'Excessive' is a phrase which continues to attach itself to Nin and her work.⁵ Especially in critical accounts from the 1970s and 1990s, what was deemed to be the excessive style of Nin's writing - her fondness for metaphor, hyberbole and ornate language - was alighted upon as evidence of her inauthenticity, as a modernist,⁶ a feminist and latterly as one who was 'authorised' to write about incest. In fact, it is the very excessiveness of Nin's writing, both in its sheer volume and tone that makes it such a worthwhile object of study. Nin pushes writing to its limits in her attempts to handle every nuance of her experience, which is also excessive – a life lived beyond convention.

In critical responses to Nin within the fields of modernism, feminism, and life-writing, she functions as a figure who exceeds and therefore disrupts theoretical boundaries. Critical responses speak to a feeling that Nin is an 'embarrassment,'⁷ a point picked up on by Violet R. Lang who writes in her 1948 review of *Under a Glass Bell* that Nin's subjective style of writing is 'embarrassing'⁸ for readers accustomed to an objective style.⁹ In situating Nin as a modernist writer, I argued for a return to the under-theorised connection between high modernist notions of impersonality and modernist life-writing, one which accounted for the contiguity of subjectivity and objectivity in Nin's writing. To rethink this connection is to revise our notions of what a modernist writer 'looks like,' in a manner that more fully apprehends the multiplicitous nature of modernist lives and art.

Variously, Nin has been judged as too subjective to be a modernist, too much of an essentialist to be a feminist, and too concerned with the fictional to be a life-writer. As such, each of these critical narratives has largely distanced themselves from thinking about Nin, from handling her work and from touching her stories. Yet it is the very fact that Nin exceeds these narratives that makes her such a worthwhile touchstone for thinking these narratives through. Rather than be irritated by the diary, I have shown

⁵ See Tookey, Christmass, and Evans for readings of excessiveness in Nin's oeuvre.

⁶ As I argued in Chapter 2, it is time that Nin's writing was revalued for the very aspects that have been traditionally used to distinguish it from the work of other modernist writers; namely, its interest in objectivity that comes from subjectivity.

⁷ Violet R. Lang, 'Review of *Under a Glass Bell*,' in *The Critical Response to Anaïs Nin*, ed. Phillip K. Jason, 78. Originally in *Chicago Review* 2.4 (Spring 1948): 162-63.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ In Lang's review, Nin is embarrassing because of the way that her writing interpellates the reader, bringing them to self-recognition. Lang's review suggests the inverse response to readers' positive identifications with Nin in the 1970s, where Nin was an everywoman who spoke to every woman. Embarrassment, we can theorise, abuts identification in responses to Nin's work.

how it irritates generic boundaries and rubs at the sore spots in the narratives of modernism, psychoanalysis, life-writing and feminism. Nin never fails to irritate these narratives; whether by rubbing modernist objectivity up the wrong way such that it appears as subjectivity, tearing down the analyst's screen of professional neutrality, carving her diary into new and different shapes to fit her simultaneous desire for privacy and publicity, or unveiling herself as a feminist only to disappear behind a series of increasingly artificial disguises. Failing to read Nin closely, we fail to interrogate what it means to be a modernist, an analyst, a life-writer or a feminist. This thesis has demonstrated how Nin's diary moves through and transforms these categories, moving our thinking within them.

Nin's diary problematises the issue of critical reading. If, as a reader, we attempt to produce an objectively definitive reading of the diary, we risk presenting it as an unproblematic account, a 'true-life' testimony. If we read the diary too closely, we risk being caught in its contradictions, subterfuges and sticky subjects. This thesis has aimed to mediate between close reading and more 'distant' theorising of Nin's diary, with a view to Patricia Waugh's insight that both modes of reading are illusory claims to knowledge:

The concept of a theoretically definitive reading is as illusory as that of an unmediated close reading. One is a fantasy of distance, the other of intimacy – two seemingly different ways of knowing.¹⁰

We cannot read Nin without the barrier to intimacy that preconceptions, theoretical groundings, and vested critical interests produce. If intimacy 'reveals itself to be [...] a figure of speech: apostrophe, or the figure of address,'¹¹ as Maureen McLane has argued, then there are bound to be moments reading Nin's diary when intimacy fails, when I do not feel that Nin 'speaks' to me, or for me.¹² Announcing her intimacy with her readers in the 1970s, Nin was forced to confront the possibility that there might be an audience she could not seduce, that would not applaud her performances. It is these points at which intimacy becomes less (or more) than tacit, when it becomes 'problematic.'¹³ I have attended to such moments in Nin's diary - when prayers go unanswered, where deaths are not felt, where a longed-for communion remains

¹⁰ Patricia Waugh, *Literary theory and criticism: an Oxford guide* (Oxford: OUP, 2006) 10.

¹¹ McLane, 436.

¹² Such moments of failed apostrophe were considered in Chapter 5.

¹³ Berlant, *Intimacy*, 7.

unrealised, veiled and unsatisfying, where audiences do not respond – to show these disjunctions between bodies and languages that tell us intimacy is not easy.

Reading the diary we are made aware of the contemporary cultural desire to put intimacy into language, to represent it, to dramatise its conflicts and to handle it through a variety of discourses; in self-help literature, in talk-shows, and in therapy. As a resource for thinking about the production and proliferation of these discourses, Nin's diary is highly valuable. The unreliability of Nin's diary as a truth narrative speaks to a wider contemporary anxiety about the reliability of true-life accounts. The recent rash of so-called 'false memoirs,'¹⁴ the furore over super-injunctions, and the anxious fascination with issues of truth, proof and accountability that stick to rape and child abuse stories,¹⁵ are all narratives that perform the difficulty of discerning the 'real event' from, as Freud writes, 'fiction that has been cathected with affect.'¹⁶ The ways in which Nin's diary plays with her reality, performs it, fictionalises it, and denies the reader's investment in the real event, allows us to think about the proximity of fact and fiction within life-stories.

If intimacy relies on the presumption, at least, of an 'authentic' interaction then Nin cannot be trusted, a fact that makes her an uncomfortable read for those invested in intimacy as an experience of authenticity. However, if, as this thesis has called for, we allow ourselves to delight in Nin's performances of intimacy, which are often underpinned by acts of duplicity, self-mythologisation and errant desires, we open ourselves up to a new kind of pleasurable reading that does not hold on so tightly to the difference between fact and fiction, life-writing and literature.

By touching on the discomfort that Nin's writing produces when we read it closely, I have read Nin's diary as a text that frustrates an intimate reading as much as it invites it. Although I am the first to theorise Nin's performances of intimacy as such, recent critical studies of Nin have touched upon several of the concerns of this thesis, namely the seductiveness of Nin's writing, the problematics and moments of disruption within her performances of sexuality and femininity, and the diary's indebtedness to

¹⁴ For example, James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* and Margaret Jones' *Love and Consequences*, are both texts that presented themselves as true-life memoirs and were revealed to be at least partially fictionalised.

¹⁵ I am thinking particularly here of Andrew Jarecki's 2003 documentary, *Capturing the Friedmans* which won critical acclaim for its portrayal of a family torn apart by mass allegations of child abuse, and recent high profile rape cases where both the reliability of the accuser and accused have been called into question, namely the cases of Dominique Strauss-Kahn in America and Joerg Kachelmann in Germany.

¹⁶ Cf. Freud's letter to Fleiss.

fictionalising and fictionality.¹⁷ Helen Tookey's work has been particularly insightful in attending to the preoccupation in Nin's writing with images and acts of revelation and concealment. Notably, Tookey theorises the veil as a figure that invites the 'questions of illusion and reality, surface and depth'¹⁸ at work in Nin's writing.

Whilst Tookey moves around issues of intimacy in Nin's oeuvre, particularly in her reading of the veil, she does not theorise intimacy explicitly. This thesis extends this theorising, whilst recognising that recent critical work on Nin has allowed us to think differently about the kinds of proximities and distances that the diary generates. By drawing particularly on the insightful and energised work taking place in intimacy and life-writing studies, this thesis represents a contribution to these fields as well as a revision of Nin's diary that more fully appreciates its contribution to our thinking within them.

In the introduction to this thesis, I read the labyrinth as a metaphor for the diary, symbolising that which allowed Nin to return to her experiences, with the sense that 'their meaning, their color, and their fleshiness of touch could only happen the second time.'¹⁹ For Nin, the labyrinth suggested the possibility of movement, intimate textuality and self-recognition through the diary. However, when critic Nancy Scholar handles this image of the diary-labyrinth, its meaning transforms:

Nin draws us into the labyrinth of her life-book, leading us on with a seductive wave of her scarf, but the closer we get to her down those winding passageways, the further she seems.²⁰

Scholar's reading stages the frustration of the reader who tries to get close to Nin, who feels that she is getting closer, only for Nin to elude the reader's grasp. Here, the labyrinth performs the difficulty of Nin's writing, its 'winding passageways,' and the frustration of thwarted intimacy. Whilst Nin felt that her diary would bring her closer to her experiences, allowing her to fully feel them, Scholar is keenly aware of her distance from Nin when reading the diary, even whilst she recognises the diary's ability to perform closeness.

A passage from Nin's 1944 short story 'Hejda' mobilises this sense of the labyrinth as that which simultaneously leads one towards and away from intimacy. Of

¹⁷ Work by Elizabeth Podnieks and Helen Tookey has been particularly useful in aiding my thinking about intimacy in Nin's diary.

¹⁸ Tookey, 104.

¹⁹ 'The Paper Womb.'

²⁰ Scholar, 40.

the eponymous heroine, Nin writes:

Her speech revealed and opened no doors. It was labyrinthian. She merely threw off enough words to invite one into the passageway but no sooner had one started to walk towards the unfinished phrase than one met an impasse, a curve, a barrier. She retreated behind half admissions, half promises, insinuations.²¹

Thinking about intimacy, according to McLane, we are always thinking about ‘disjunctures,’ distances between bodies, feelings, and words. Whilst we can enter willingly into the labyrinth of Nin’s diary, move through it, be moved by it and mobilise it, the nature of Nin’s performances of intimacy are such that we will always meet with disjunctures, curves that lead us down other passageways, barriers to closeness. In this sense, when reading Nin, intimacy is always at an impasse.

²¹ ‘Hejda’, 72.

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