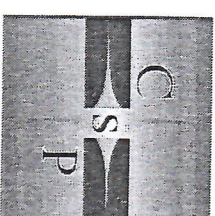


**Women in Dialogue:
(M)uses of Culture**

Edited by

**Dilek Direnç, Günseli Sönmez İşçi
and Klára Kolinská**



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⁸⁷ Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Women's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 194.

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CHAPTER FOUR

A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF THE OTHER: ANNAIS NIN, MODERNISM, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AND FEMININE SELF-DISCLOSURE

THEODORA TSIMPOUKI

We write to taste life twice,
in the moment and in retrospection

—Annaïs Nin

I

Most of her reputation during her life time, Annaïs Nin owed to her friendship with Henry Miller and her promiscuous erotic life. Although she published her first novel as early as 1936, thirty years later she was still known only to a small readership, mainly as a *coterie* writer of somewhat "esoteric" fictions. Only in 1966, at the age of sixty three, when Annaïs Nin began to publish portions of her much-ignored, lifelong diary, did her reputation begin to grow, aided perhaps by the socio-cultural changes and feminist liberation movements of the 1960s. When she died in 1977, little was known about her countless years of abortive effort to establish herself as an accomplished female writer of autobiographical fiction. To use the words of her literary agent and devoted friend, Gunther Stuhlmann, Nin was able at last "to reveal the hitherto secreted, intimate and highly articulate record of a unique as well as exemplary life" and motivated by two forces: "a strong emotional need to 'go public'" and the female writer's conviction that only "the 'truth' of lived experience, rather than invention, could provide the raw material of her fictions."¹ An examination of her diaries and the thinly disguised autobiographical novels contain a variety of responses to post-war conceptions of femininity and meanings of "modernism." Nin's challenge, in her life and work, toward socially construed gender stereotypes and her alleged

celebration of individual subjectivity, can be seen as key tenets of more recent descriptions of the "modernist" condition. In this paper, I will explore Nin's autobiographical narratives in order to map the author's affiliations with and activities within feminism and modernism. My contention is that Nin daringly defies patriarchal power even at the risk of debilitating personal fragmentation. Equally, the texts that she produces, in subtle ways, undermine her determination to achieve wholeness through the integrative force of art, on which (male) high modernism was premised. However, such ambiguity demonstrates not only the social impositions on feminine self-fashioning but also the shifting culture-aesthetic as well as ideological contexts within which Annis Nin's work was embedded. To be more precise, Nin's passionate effort to represent herself through an autobiographical text that is resistant to self-closure, exposes the bourgeois illusion of the freedom of the subject toward self-constitution, and places her (uncomfortably as I will go on to argue later) at modernism's center. Significantly, her very challenge to the traditional (male) autobiographical act as "coming-to-knowledge" of the self and her defiant departure from the western construct of the self as unified, identifiable and coterminous aligns her with the marginalized cultures of women who, to cite Shari Benstock, challenge "the white, male, heterosexual ethic underlying the Modernist aesthetic of 'impersonality'."² Before embarking on an analysis of Nin's autobiographical fictions in relation to the key tenets of the field of autobiographical theory, let us turn first to an examination of modernism's principle thematic and aesthetic preoccupation, the modernist crisis of subjectivity, and how this was met by women modernists. Numerous critics and commentators have addressed this issue of the problematization of the category of the subject in the context of the modernist condition. Eysteinsson, for instance, argues that the modernist preoccupation with human consciousness is one of the major constitutive features of the modernist paradigm, the other being the crisis of language and representation.³ In *Marxism and Modernism*, Eugene Iunn lists the demise of the integrated or unified subject as one of the most important features of modernist practices.⁴ In the same line of thought, referring to Edward Munch's painting *The Scream*, Jameson points out that the painting is "a canonical expression of the great points out that the painting is 'a canonical expression of the great modernist thematic of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation and isolation, a virtually programmatic emblem of what used to be called the age of anxiety'" (11).⁵ Similarly, Bradbury and McFarlane in their influential book entitled *Modernism*, note that modernist art is "consequent on the dis-establishing of communal reality and conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of the

wholeness of the individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues when public notions of language have been discredited and when all realities have become subjective fictions."⁶

Equally significant is the reassessment of the modernist condition of dehumanization and the demise of the integrated subject, this time from a feminist (as well as ethnic) point of view. Without, I hope, falling prey to ahistorical essentialism or reducing the complex cultural-historical differences enmeshed in each argument, I believe that feminist theoreticians and critics would more often than not agree on the realization that the losses suffered at the centers of metropolitan cultural life (represented by the white, bourgeois, male, heterosexual subject) were matched by new gains by those previously silenced and relegated to the margins: women and ethnic minorities. Most feminist arguments would contend that modernism's privileged example of conditions, the dismantling of the subject, is seen to "inscribe" in culture modes that can be considered feminine or anti-patriarchal. I take here my lead from DeKoven who claims that in addition to French theoreticians, a number of American writers and critics argue that, as far as modernist form is concerned, "disruptions of hierarchical syntax, of consistent, unitary point of view, of realist representation . . . of the bounded, coherent self" as well as [the form's] "subjectivist epistemology; its foregrounding of the pre-Oedipal or aural features of language; its formal decenterness, indeterminacy, multiplicity, and fragmentation are very much in accord with the aesthetic or Cixousian *écriture féminine*."⁷ Indeed, recent theorists have shown that hegemonic strategies for self-critique—represented by the modernist loss of faith in the individual—were not operated in isolation but were met by challenges launched from positions outside: in this case marginalized women.⁸

Extrapolated as "Modernism's Other," the female subject, as Andreas Huyssen claims, experiences its own powerlessness and difficulty in challenging the tradition of excluding women from the realm of "high art," often thought as the prerogative of men. He goes on to explain: "Given the fundamentally differing social and psychological constitution and validation of male and female subjectivity in modern bourgeois society, the difficulty of saying 'I' must of necessity be different for a woman writer, who may not find 'impassibility' and the concomitant reification of the self in the aesthetic product quite as attractive and compelling an ideal as the male writer. The male, after all, can easily deny its own subjectivity for the benefit of a higher aesthetic goal, as long as he can take it for granted on an experiential level in everyday life."⁹ Nonetheless, far from marking a decline from authorial self-reference and subjectivity, this

historical occasion becomes the source of strength for female and ethnic writers bringing their powerlessness full circle by virtue of the newfound empowerment of those on the margins. "Why is it," Nancy Hartsock famously asked, in her much-admired 1987 account of "Minority vs. Majority Theories" of modernity, that "exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of selfhood becomes 'problematic?'"¹⁰

Autobiography offers itself as the literary genre par excellence through the study of which one can find out how "resistant" the notion of the self has proven to be to strategic modernist efforts to destabilize it. Georges Gusdorf, James Olney and Philippe Lejeune, three of the most distinguished scholars of autobiography, all insist on pervasive "individuality" as an essential component of the genre, or, as Gusdorf would have it, on the "conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life" which the author considers as a precondition for autobiography.¹¹ James Olney declares in a similar vein that the autobiographer is "surrounded and isolated by his own consciousness, an awareness grown out of a unique heredity and unique experience. . . . Separate selfhood is the very motive of creation."¹² Similarly, in 1975 the French scholar Lejeune defines autobiography as follows: "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality."¹³ In order for autobiography to be a distinct genre or kind of writing, it has to be governed, according to Lejeune, by an autobiographical contract (*le pacte autobiographique*); the autobiographical text must meet the following requirements:

1. it is first-person narration whose narrator is the person writing
2. the narrator-author is doing his/her best to state the truth, he/she does not intentionally falsify the past and also refrains from consciously inventing characters or episodes
3. it is a retrospective narration

Such an essentialist approach toward selfhood, premised on the capacity for self-constitution, self-reference, autonomy, etc., seems completely untroubled by any qualms about cultural, socio-ethnic and gender constraints embedded in self-narration and the attendant myth of self-determination. Ramón Saldivar makes a similar argument on the self's history as filtered by cultural consciousness when he points out autobiography as the privileged form of storytelling for emergent racial, ethnic, and gender consciousness in the United States and elsewhere,

"because of the fundamental tie to themes of self and history, self and place" (emphasis added).¹⁴ In particular, women's autobiographies may be seen as narratives at variance with dominant ideology, as personal histories recorded among marginalized groups which do not coincide with the official prevailing History, and are written to occupy that margin as a site of intervention. American feminist critics such as Susan Stanford Friedman have argued that women who write their personal stories often construct the self as other-directed and "relational," rather than individualized, and that accepting Lejeune's definition of the genre has the practical effect of excluding such stories from the autobiographical canon and perpetuating the patriarchal relegation of women to second class status.¹⁵ It is for this reason, as Leigh Gilmore argues in *Autobiographics*, that "the subject position of the woman autobiographer so strains the discipline of autobiography studies that it has remained until recently a question beyond interpretation."¹⁶

In addition to literary, cultural, moral and philosophical problems, the autobiographical tradition, as outlined by Gusdorf's "exclusionary methods,"¹⁷ assumes an unmediated account of the experience of a particular subject or group. Writing on Afro-American Women, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese reminds us that the (apparent) "coherence of such a tradition consists as much in unfolding strategies of representation as in experience itself."¹⁸ In other words, not only the experiential immediacy of autobiographical writing but the modes of representation, textual and extra-textual, remain connected to race, nation, class, gender and sexuality, and ought to be taken into serious account.¹⁹ Thus, attempting here a conclusion to my theoretical remarks, I would argue that in its encounter with the powerful modernist formulations about the demise of the integrated subject, the female autobiographical writer makes concrete efforts to problematize self-representation, to render her otherness in ways that differ from the singular, monolith and often reductive representations impinged upon her by the hegemonic culture. While male literary renderings of women habitually vacillate between the alien, mysterious, fantasized source of inspiration (seductress-goddess, sexual object, liberated woman) and the coherent, fully interpretable other (submissive wife, maid, angel or "mom"), women autobiographers undertake the task of making public those representations which were frequently and predictably denied internal complexity or contradictoriness of their own. Serving as the real-life counterpart to rarefied images of difference, Anais Nin provides us with a perfect example of a woman who refused to occupy the pre-emptive space of simplified hegemonic otherness. Instead, she is forced to make way for complexity and radical alterity by devising a

totally new, idiosyncratic, more ambitious and far-reaching reinvention of self-writing: this she does by a constant variation of her own image in her autobiographical texts, by self-representation in a continuous state of being and becoming.

II

"There is no separation between my life and my craft, my work. The form of art is the form of art of my life, and my life is the form of the art. I refuse artificial patterns."²⁰ Anais was eleven years old, when, by her own account, "I walked into the labyrinth of my diary."²¹ According to the adult Anais, her writing of the diary began onboard the Montserrat, the ship which was carrying her mother, two brothers and herself from Spain to New York (1914). The autobiography began "as the diary of a journey, a record for my father."²² It was really a letter to her absent father, the faithful daughter's way of wooing back Joaquín Nin, who had abandoned the family in search for erotic adventures. From its beginnings, the diary fascinated her; in it, she was the center of her own universe, even as it continued to function as a document of personal history. However, the personal record of daily life went hand in hand with the mythologizing of the self, despite the diary's assumed intimate, authentic, true and confessional qualities. Faced with a new culture and a new language (her native language was French), Anais experienced the need to multiply her selves, creating a mediated self, a self-conscious literary persona, or as she calls it in her diary, a "double person in me: Miss Nin and Linotte."²³ "Miss Nin" was her public persona, whereas Linotte, "the impossible" one, was her hidden self, which, as Deidre Bair claims, eventually became her true identity and certainly the dominating part of her adult life. Telling the truth in her diary is an issue much debated among Nin's biographers. Bair insists that despite her mother's admonitions ("go tell those lies to your diary" [*Early Diary* 2, p. 127]), Nin deliberately blurred facts and fiction, a tendency which became compulsive as the years went by. Bair is at times sufficiently put off by Nin's self-fabrications that she attempts to demean the Diary by dubbing it a "liary." Conversely, another Nin scholar, Suzanne Nalbantian, in her book, *Aesthetic Autobiography*, coins the expression "mythification of selfhood" to capture the variability and elusiveness of Nin's self-disclosure. Nalbantian also quotes Nin on the relationship between "self" and "myth": "My self is like the self of Proust. It is an instrument to connect 'life' and 'myth.'²⁴ To be sure, time and again, Nin attempted to disguise or conceal the truth by keeping two journals simultaneously before she was ready to put the "real" one under

lock and key. An early instance of the fragile connection between "life" and "myth" is when Nin took up Spanish dance lessons and became enamoured with her teacher (by then she was already married to Hugo Guiller). On that occasion she invented a heroine, called Imagy, whose life was to be the subject of her second journal that would record the imaginary events she created. Eventually, this kind of "double writing" imitating her "double life" merged into one journal, the "real" one, in which she represented herself as being split into two women: one who was "kind, loyal, pure, thoughtful", the other, who was "restless and impure, acting strangely, loosened, wandering, seeking life and tasting all of it without fear, without convictions, restraint, principle, a demon."²⁵ During their first years of marriage, Anais and Hugo kept a common diary, although she continued writing her private diary as well. When in 1932, Anais became entangled in a passionate relationship with Henry Miller, and had to write about it in a journal to which Hugo would not have access, she once again resorted to her usual ploy of keeping two diaries, one "real" and green the other "imaginary" and red. Still, the issue of lying loomed large throughout the short time she wrote in the red. Her lies, she confided to her diary, were not harmful because "even when I lie, I lie only mensonge vital, the lies which give life," that "improve reality."²⁶ Later in her life, in 1947, when she met Rupert Pole and eventually married him even while she remained married to Hugo, the necessity to commute between California and New York, in order to meet the demands of both her husbands, raised the problem of where to store her written journals and how to keep the diary's integrity from being jeopardized by the lies and invented stories she had to devise to maintain what she called, her "trapeze" act. For this reason, in each domicile she kept a "Pandora's Box," a locked metal box in Sierra Madre, and a locked closet in New York in which she deposited the diary, whereas in order to keep track of her lies she created a "Lie Box," that is, a packet of file cards on which she meticulously copied semi-encoded names, dates, and cryptic descriptions of her experiences.²⁷

Another aspect of Nin's diary is the autobiographer's early awareness of the desire to turn the journal into fiction, and, in later life, her desperate efforts to find eager publishers to have it printed. Whether her fictional writing is partly autobiographical or her autobiographical writing partly (or entirely) fictional is an issue that has troubled Nin's scholars. As far as the creation of her fiction is concerned, her habitual technique was to lift passages from the diary with which she would then mould characters, detached enough from their real-life antecedents so as to remain unrecognizable. Nevertheless, she was well aware of the limitations and

dangers of this technique. The limitations have to do with her inability to distance herself from her diary and to transfer her formidable talents to more formal genres that would be better received by the general public. Neither her friend, Henry Miller, who saw in her need to retain the diary an evasion and denial of art itself, nor Otto Rank, her psychoanalyst, who insisted that she break from the "opium-diary habit" managed to persuade her to keep away from her "inexorable necessity."²⁸ In a diary entry written in 1927, Nin seems quite aware of the drawbacks of her first-person introspections when she writes: "I realize I am too personal – that all of my writing springs from my self. As soon as I write objectively, as soon as I talk in the 'third person', my work freezes. My 'third person' is ridiculous."²⁹ The dangers in publishing such thinly disguised fictions involved disclosing secret parts of her life which she was not ready to make public. This is why Nin resented reviews of her work which presented it as "veiled autobiography" even though the constellation of characters she created was always based on her personal experiences and, as she repeatedly admitted, everything she wrote "originated" in the diary and was transposed from her life.

The danger became even more tangible when it came to the publication of the diary itself. Even at an early stage of its composition, Nin spent an enormous amount of time going back to her recordings, copying, correcting, revising, editing and reshaping her written life – even reinventing her past. Having the diaries printed was very costly since, at least in the beginning of her writing career, it was Hugo who paid for his wife's self publication. Nin's method of preparing her diaries for publication was first removing the passages she thought publishable, and then having them typed and made available to selected readers, while all the time insisting that they were transcribed *mot-à-mot* from the originals. With the first publication of her diary *Anais* was faced with the immense difficulty of seeking legal permission from every person she wrote about or having to eliminate their portraits altogether. Despite the anxiety the editing process caused her, she was finally ready "to face the world," as she told herself, "not with a work of art, separate from myself, but with myself, my body, my voice, my thoughts, my feelings. Expose them."³⁰ To publish her work was a lifelong desire that she would seek to fulfill at all costs. Her letter to Dorothy Parker confides as much: "For me, not being printed means solitude, no contact with the world. Always I'm aware that I cannot talk. I talk in writing. I am truly mute without writing. In writing I can touch people, so when I am not printed I feel as if my very being were entombed, my existence denied. This is not merely an egotistic pain. It is for me an act of love that is rejected."³¹

What becomes obvious from the above citations is that from its conception, Nin's diary breaks with Lejeune's famous "pact," in which the autobiographer enters into a commitment with the reader as to the individuality, truth, reliability and authenticity of the information recorded.³² The "pact" that Nin's persona outlines in the diary is less a proposed agreement with the reader than a set of rules to repudiate in order to achieve a continuous destabilization of a fixed hypothesis of womanhood. Her quest for an artistic persona that lies beyond a desire of male mimicry brings her by necessity into juxtaposition and conflict with the masculine economy of representation, which leaves women in a state of mute frustration, denying them the right to self-constitution and self-representation. In her feminist theory of autobiography, Susan Stanford Friedman cites *Anais* Nin as one of her paradigmatic literary women who constitute their autobiographical selves not as isolated individuals but as referential and relational. Of particular interest to my argument is Friedman's use of the feminist theory of Sheila Rowbotham who argues that the development of woman's consciousness relies not in her self-perception but in stock cultural representations of her. Like Lacan, Rowbotham uses the metaphor of the mirror to suggest that the reflecting surface into which a woman stares to form an identity is that of a person whose identity has been defined by the dominant male culture.³³ Nin became aware of patriarchal inscriptions upon female identity at an early stage in her life, from her father's abusive practices (his pederastic and scopophilic obsessions but also ritual "spanking") to his imminent desertion for which she deemed herself responsible. This may be why she so desperately seeks her "real" authentic self, not the one which is constructed by the hegemonic masculine order, not the one which might have signified the otherness in femininity but a continuous variation of self-representation that resists closure. Transformation, animation, motion, fusion, absorption, incompleteness, perpetual growth, these are the ideals Nin aspired to throughout her life and artfully formulated in her autobiographical fictions. Interestingly, the trajectory of these ideals as they materialize in her writings is not linear, progressive or cumulative. Nin's life and creative endeavors seem to oscillate between a resignation of her private life into domestic discourse (represented by her autobiographical writing) and her struggle to enter male public artistic discourse (represented by her fictional and critical writing). Though there is no clear-cut demarcation between these two positions, it seems fair to argue that Nin's fear of anticipated erasure by the male dominated artistic world led her to rely uncomfortably on the prescribed gender roles of wife, mistress, mother, sister and, ultimately, muse while simultaneously

revolving against these coded forms, and seeking to forge an identity as a woman writer in a male dominated society. Time and again, in her journals she complains about having to play the role of handmaiden to literary men and provider of their food and drink. Though she is flattered by her influence on Miller and her position next to him as "critic, companion and guide," she is also greatly disturbed by his appropriation (and plagiarism) of her written material. Miller was one of the many male artists who benefited from Nin's patronage, granting him a monthly allowance in order to guarantee his unfettered devotion to art.

Although Nin did not bear children of her own – she considered motherhood a vocation, to be freely chosen and not to be imposed upon women –, she found herself entangled many times during her adult life in relationships with "weak" men who needed mothering. Fearing the impediment of her artistic or psychic development by dominating men (enacting the parental image), she feels more comfortable with malleable individuals whom she can mother or otherwise control. Aware of the perversity of this female penchant toward "the weak child man," afraid of becoming the "sublimated mother of the artist, the poet, the primitive ...the weakest [men] in the world,"³⁴ she nevertheless continues to ally herself with men who do not openly threaten to silence her creative voice. Philip Jason makes a similar point about Nin's fictional male personae, though he attributes this predilection to the author's limited vision of maleness and lack of sympathetic imagination toward them. The critic goes on to argue that "fearing tyrants, fearing to displease stronger and more judgmental personalities," Nin's surrogates tend to establish erotic relationships with homosexual men, irresponsible artists or versions of adolescent adults.³⁵ Nin's "repetitive psycho-stereotyping" of her male characters reflects to a large extent her real life involvements with men who need her financial support and/or emotional help and devotion, which is another indication of her deep-rooted insecurities about her own artistic calling.

Her continuous but mostly frustrated endeavors to find her artist's voice provided one of the two main reasons she turned to therapy, the other being the traumatic wound of Daddy's desertion and her thwarted efforts to establish physical and emotional independence from her father. Her rapport with her two male psychoanalysts, Dr René Allendy and Dr. Otto Rank, disillusioned her when she realized they needed her care as much as everyone else since both succumbed to her seductiveness and both formed with her an erotic relationship. Anais Nin critic Valerie Harris, claims that "neither accepted her love for Miller nor did much to raise her esteem as a writer. Rather then evoking her soul, they tried to

would her according to their wills."³⁶ Anais wrote once, "Allendy had not taken my literary-creative side seriously,³⁷ and I have resented his simplification of my nature to pure woman."³⁷ Although her intimacy with Rank proved in many ways positive, her relation to psychoanalysis both as an analysant and later as an analyst left Nin disappointed as she was able to discern the discipline's coercive strategies toward femininity. She also developed the view that analysis was too dry, too clinical, and fatal to the imagination. Nevertheless, the fact that she managed to appropriate in her autobiographical fictions a number of psychoanalytic techniques, like the exploration of the unconscious, the interpretation of dreams, the use of analytic voice, shows Nin's versatile ability to evolve as a creative artist.

It is crucial, though, to remember that despite her doubts and repeated frustrations, Nin never abandoned hope of establishing herself as a writer with a distinct feminine voice. An example of this is seen in her first application for a Guggenheim Fellowship (1945) in which she states her aim to "convert and transpose" the diary of 65 volumes into a full, long novel, that would contribute greatly, she explains, to "woman's psychology." Her main female character, she contends, would become aware of the evolution of woman in her own terms, not as an imitator of man. Nin goes on to argue that hers will be a pioneering example of "feminine writing" (a phrase used by W. C. Williams in his review of *Winter of Artifice*). Even before the Guggenheim application, in an earlier attempt to formulate her own theory of writing, she claims that "it is the woman who has to speak" through her art. "And it is not only the woman Anais who has to speak, but I who have to speak for many women. As I discover myself, I feel I am merely one of many, a symbol. I begin to understand June, Jeanne, and many others.... The mute ones of the past, the inarticulate, who took refuge behind wordless intuitions."³⁸ In an insightful entry in her diary, she admits as much when she writes: "there is something in my work which irritates men critics. Is it the idea of woman trying to find herself and not accepting objective patterns but seeking through the unconscious for the truth?"³⁹ Indeed, Nin's positioning herself as an autobiographical subject forces her to face previously constructed paradigms that do not "fit" her, and to create a proto-text of what Donna Stanton defined in *The Female Autograph* as "autogynography."⁴⁰ At the same time, as a writer and a public figure, Nin knew that such a position within the cultural context carried the potential of disrupting the "cultural rules of female propriety by confusing social relations and provide subjectivities."⁴¹

III

My argument throughout this paper has been that Nin was uncomfortably situated between modernism and feminism, her fluctuating position being disclosed in every single page of her autobiographical and fictional oeuvre. Due to lack of space I will only briefly refer to two more examples that belong to her first writings of the early 1930s: the short story "Birth" (later incorporated in *Under a Glass Bell*) and "Winter of Artifice" (the central piece of the homonymous collection). Both texts manifest Nin's ambivalent attitude toward the female artistic process. Written in the first person singular, the heroine of "Birth" describes the experience of giving birth to a stillborn child. As is habitually the case with Nin, the story is based on personal experience (she delivered a stillborn girl in 1934, which she insisted was Miller's). Bair claims that the account of the birth in the diary "almost defies interpretation" and that Nin seems to have considered her pregnancy "nothing more than an experience she could write about."⁴² Nin confessed her decision to abort the child to her analyst insisting that she could not afford to complicate her life more because "I am a mistress, I have already too many children . . . Too much work to do, too many to serve."⁴³ Similarly, she recorded in her diary that she regarded herself as "a man's woman and not a mother; not a mother to children but to men."⁴⁴ Although, as in real life, in "Birth," the child is born dead—(her "first dead creation" as she called it)—the story's visceral linguistic register, its poetic style, its symbolism and imagery make it a "unique contribution of the female poetic language."⁴⁵

My second and final example comes from Nin's meticulous recordings of her incestuous relationship with her father in her private journal which was posthumously published under the title, *Incest: A Journal of Love*.⁴⁶ Anais continued to rehearse the narcissistic wound of parental desertion in the disguised forms of her fiction: *House of Incest* and "Winter of Artifice" are two highly experimental narratives that depict fictionalized accounts of Anais' troubled relationship with Joaquín Nin. What is important for the argument of this paper is that in all renderings of this admittedly painful experience, the autobiographical self or artistic persona is not described as the victim but is the agent of her own incest narrative. In both the autobiographical text and the fictions, Nin and her surrogates hope to re-enact the infantile abandonment by seducing the man who haunts their imagination and then by abandoning the amorous partner, to free themselves from his "phantasmatic control."⁴⁷ The demystification of the mythicized figure of the absent father/God, the rejection of her father's law, his sexuality and his phallus, open up a process of healing and

reparation. Nin's unnamed heroine at the end of "Winter of Artifice" has been "ostensibly liberated into an adult agency and mature creativity"; "The little girl in her was dead . . . The woman was saved. And with the little girl died the need of a father."⁴⁸ In real life Nin achieves her absolution through positioning herself as a subject of her own making, that is through the creation of autobiographical fiction and the recuperative process of "scriptotherapy" it entails. The ultimate rejection of the name-of-the-father results in the writing of the name-of-the-daughter.⁴⁹

I will conclude by saying that in my view it is the multi-layered fictionality of Nin's vast autobiographic oeuvre that is perhaps the most significant dimension of its originality. The *Diary of Anais Nin* stands outside and beyond the literary form which seems most germane to it—the autobiography—because it sets itself objectives and aims which are not intrinsically literary ones. Nin's autobiographical texts defy traditional male definitions of autobiography because rather than recording the story of a stable, fixed, self-contained and self-referential subject, they constitute a process of continuous revision of self-fashioning. In this way Nin's writings are revisionist in that they deconstruct centrist cultural and literary paradigms in the very act of attempting a representational shift from object to subject – a shift which defies confinement of oneself to authoritative versions of the self but instead attempts to construe the female "I" as a complex web of selves in flux and permutation.

Notes

- 1 Anais Nin, "Forward," *Cities of the Interior*. (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1991), vii.
- 2 Shari Bensstock, ed. "Authorizing the Autobiographical," *The Private Self*. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 21.
- 3 Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 11.
- 4 Eugene Lun, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 34-7.
- 5 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 11. Jameson has also stated "Not only is the bourgeois subject a thing of the past, it [he?] is also a myth: it never really existed in the first place; there have never existed autonomous subjects of that type. Rather this construct is merely a philosophical and cultural mystification" *qtd.* in Patricia Waugh, ed. *Postmodernism: A Reader*. (London: Arnold-Hodder & Sloughton, 1992), 1-2.

- ⁶ Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism. A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*. (London: Penguin Books 1991), 27.
- ⁷ Marianne Dekoven, *Rich and Strange. Gender, History, Modernism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 8.
- ⁸ Alice Gambrell, in *Women Intellectuals. Modernism, and Difference: Transatlantic Culture, 1919-1945*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), makes a similar point speaking about women of the interwar period who were involved in multiple affiliations (anthropology, psychoanalysis, Surrealism), 30.
- ⁹ *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture and Postmodernism*. (London: Macmillan, 1986), 46-7. Huyssen's reference is to Flaubert's famed "impassibilité" of *Madame Bovary*'s style.
- ¹⁰ Nancy Hartsock, "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Theories," *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* in eds. Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 28.
- ¹¹ George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" in ed. James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 229.
- ¹² James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 22-3. Olney also writes apropos the terms compounding the word "autobiography": "What I propose is that the term *bios* simultaneously incorporates the two foregoing senses: it is both the course of a life seen as a process rather than a stable entity and the unique psychic configuration that it this life and no other." "The ontology of autobiography," in ed. James Olney, *Autobiography. Essays Theoretical and Critical*, 241.
- ¹³ *On Autobiography*, Ed Paul John Eakin. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 120.
- ¹⁴ Ramón Saldivar, "Ideologies of the Self: Chicano Autobiography," *Diatrics*. Autumn 1985, 25.
- ¹⁵ Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves," *The Private Self* in ed. Shari Benstock. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 34-62.
- ¹⁶ Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 20.
- ¹⁷ Shari Benstock, "Authorizing the Autobiographical," *The Private Self*. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 15.
- ¹⁸ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Writings of Afro-American Women," *The Private Self*. Ed. Shari Benstock. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 65.
- ¹⁹ Critics who maintain a poststructuralist line that views representations of selfhood with scepticism regard the first person "I" of the autobiographical narrative not only as a political and philosophical delusion but as a linguistic one too. Louis Renza, for example, argues: "For some years now, the first person pronoun has been in disarray as a transparent signifier of an authorial signified. Instead of referring to the writing self, the 'I' (a word authorizing and authenticating the discourse of fictional as well as autobiographical narrative self-references) places this self 'under erasure' as a rhetorical-linguistic shifter, figure, or trope. Struck down by this smallest of pronouns, self-reference thus becomes another illusion of self-presence: of the writer's or even narrative persona's autonomous self-identity," Book Review, *Comparative Literature* 39.2 (Spring 1987): 172-3.
- ²⁰ April 1946, *The Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. IV, 1944-1947* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 142.
- ²¹ Qtd in Deide Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*. London: Bloomsbury, 1995, 28.
- ²² *The Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. I, 1931-1934*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), viii.
- ²³ Rupert Pole, ed. *Linotte: the Early Diary of Anais Nin, 1914-1920*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 2-30.
- ²⁴ Suzanne Nalbanian, *Aesthetic Autobiography. From Life to Art in Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994), 172.
- ²⁵ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 83-84.
- ²⁶ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 133.
- ²⁷ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 360.
- ²⁸ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 189.
- ²⁹ *The Early Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. 4, 1927-1931*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 13.
- ³⁰ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 471.
- ³¹ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 266.
- ³² Lejeune's "Le Pacte Autobiographique" is founded on the assumption of complete identity between the "subject of enunciation" and the person whose name figures as author on the title page of the book, as well as the assumption that the narrator-author is doing his or her best to state the truth.
- ³³ Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves," *The Private Self*. Ed. Shari Benstock. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 38.
- ³⁴ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 283.
- ³⁵ Philip Jason, "The Men in Nin's (Characters') Lives," *Anais Nin: Literary Perspectives*. Ed. Suzanne Nalbanian. London: Macmillan Press, 1997, 149.
- ³⁶ Valerie Harris, "Anais and Her Analysts, Rank and Allendy," *Anais Nin: Literary Perspectives*. Ed. Suzanne Nalbanian. London: Macmillan Press, 1997, 115.
- ³⁷ *Henry and June*. (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1986), 266.
- ³⁸ *The Diary of Anais Nin: Vol. I, 1931-1934*, 289.
- ³⁹ Bair, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 463.
- ⁴⁰ Donna C. Stanton. *The Female Autograph. Theory and Practice of Autobiography from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

⁴¹ Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 16.

⁴² Bait, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 200, 202.

⁴³ Bait, *Anais Nin, A Biography*, 199.

⁴⁴ August 1934, *The Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. I, 1931-1934*, 346.

⁴⁵ Lajos Elkan, "Birth and the Linguistics of Gender: Masculine/Feminine." *Anais Nin: Literary Perspectives*. Ed. Suzanne Nalbantian. (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 154.

⁴⁶ One of the four volumes of *The Unexpurgated Diary of Anais Nin*, ed. Rupert Pole. Together with *Fire, Nearer the Moon* and *Henry and June*, they focus on intimate relationships covering the years 1931-1939.

⁴⁷ For an insightful account of Nin's incestuous affair with her father see Suzette Henke, "Anais Nin's Journal of Love: Father-Loss and Incestuous Desire" in *Anais Nin: Literary Perspectives*. Subsequent quotations are from page 132.

⁴⁸ "Winter of Artifice" in *Winter of Artifice* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1948), p. 122.

⁴⁹ Interestingly, Nin reaffirms her technique of aesthetic lying, not only in juxtaposition to real life events but also in relation to her psychoanalyst's concept of truth: "the veil was sundered, and soon after, I covered the truth again. Eddies of illusion engulf reality again. I have accepted a self which is unlimited. What I imagine is as true as what is." March 1933 in *The Diary of Anais Nin, Vol. I, 1931-1934*, p. 272.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSATLANTIC CROSSROADS: BRAZILIAN FEMINISMS IN THE POST-WAR ERA PEGGY SHARPE

The early decades of the twentieth century in Brazil constituted fertile ground for many of the political, social and aesthetic ideas originating in Europe and North America that made their way into the Brazilian cultural environment through the nation's strong cultural and economic ties with Portugal, France, Italy, Spain and, increasingly, with the United States. Although somewhat peripheral in their impact, Brazilian women did participate in this cultural field that coincided with the post-abolitionist era (1888) and the early decades of the new Republic (1889). In 1910, Berta Lutz, Leolinda Daltro and the poet Gilka Machado created the *Partido Republicano Feminino* [Women's Republican Party], which tried to influence public opinion concerning the need for women's suffrage. Soon joined by a circle of creative writers and professional journalists, these early activists argued for the inclusion of women in the political arena and the professional world. The same year that the first Brazilian Communist Party was created (1922), a group of Brazilian intellectuals calling for aesthetic renewal in the arts organized the week of Modern Art in São Paulo, and the newly created *Federação Brasileira para o Progresso Feminino* [Brazilian Federation for the Progress of Women], with Berta Lutz at the helm, sponsored the first international women's conference ever held on Brazilian soil at which the North-American feminist Carrie Chapman Catt was invited to speak.

Amidst this environment of widespread social and cultural renewal, Brazilian intellectuals were also interested in how knowledge of heredity could be used to jumpstart social progress, improve the human race, and even preserve the "purity" of certain groups.¹ The first eugenic society in Brazil was founded in 1918, seven years before the first international