The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume One Study Guide

The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume One by Anaïs Nin

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Anais Nin, although clearly not one of the thought leaders of the 20th Century, prefigures in her diaries the advent of modern feminism while at the same time remaining very much a part of the traditional patriarchal paradigm. She is capable of describing a world where women would be treated fairly, paid fairly, and respected as individuals in their own right while depriving herself of the necessities of life to advance money to Henry Miller and other male literary friends. For a good part of her life, she supported herself by writing erotica, which receives only passing notice in her diaries. Her diaries are themselves vivid portraits of the expatriate Parisian literary life in the early- and mid-20th Century, and she demonstrates the empathy, insight and descriptive powers that could have made her a great novelist. She seems primarily a transitional figure in the evolution of women's consciousness from George Elliot to Susan Sonntag, but worthy of respect because of her facility with language as well as her premonitory abilities to see into the future.

Her diaries capture the essence of people long dead who come to life in her prose. The reader is carried along with Nin as she experiences—perhaps in what might today be called codependency—the dramatic ups and downs of her friends and acquaintances. Perhaps her limitations as a writer could be defined as results of low self-esteem, certainly not shocking among women of her generation. She seems more comfortable in the role of a nurturing, supportive maternal role to other writers, mostly men, and unsure of her own work work and importance although the diaries reveal an original and inventive mind. She displays a firm grip on the elements of writing in a letter to a poet friend where she makes a clear and persuasive argument that distinguishes poetry from prose, saying that poetry involves a "transmutation" of the physical and concrete into metaphor, imagery, the metaphysical. "Prose is pedestrian, poetry is flying. Poetry is the myth created out of human elements. The physical aspect in poetry has to be transfused with meaning."

Winter, 1939

Winter, 1939 Summary and Analysis

1. Anais Nin describes her sad departure from Paris for New York as World War II encircles France. She describes her feelings of anguish as every fiber of her being that connects her to Paris and to her friends and loved ones is severed. By the time her seaplane is airborne though, she describes a feeling of freedom and peace among the clouds, looking down on the struggles on Earth. After a refueling stop in the Azores, the seaplane once again takes off with great difficulty, loaded with refugees and fuel. Nin takes some comfort from the seemingly eternal stars and moon in the night sky. She rereads some letters from friends. In a letter from the novelist Lawrence Durrel, he describes writer Henry Miller as "pitched in too high a key, a little hysterical," and says: "There is something deeply wrong about his attitude towards the world, but I cannot say what it is."

2. February, 1940

Nin is saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Otto Rank, a psychoanalyst and friend who had been a mentor to her own psychoanalyhst. She admires his ability to go through life, trying to relieve the suffering of others while maintaining his own capacity to feel, to respond despite his own emotional pain, depression, and disappointments. She recalls that he had recently remarried and was planning to move to California with his new wife at the time of his death, in his 50s, and to resume his life as writer, playwright and poet. She asks herself whether she "see[s] enough, hear[s] enough, observe[s] enough, love[s] enough, appreciate[s] enough" of life to be as vital as Dr. Rank.

After a visit to her wealthy friends and art patrons, Brigitte and Hugh Chisholm, in their East River apartment Nin observes that their wealth and social standing seem somehow to compensate for their collection of "ugly" art objects collected with "light, snobbish playfulness." She observes that Hugh is a good poet and Brigitte a nearly-flawless beauty. At a party, Nin meets a woman named Beth who is both sensual and highly sexual. Beth speaks openly of her sexual experiences, which are extensive, but tells Nin that she's never had an orgasm and finds it difficult to talk about sex. Nin says she is "appalled" at Beth's frigidity and promiscuity and "gently" takes her by the hand and leads her to a psychoanalyst.

3. April, 1940.

Anais Nin dances until 5 a.m. at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, which she describes as "the only genuinely joyous place in New York." Gonzalo makes fun of her for flitting about from place to place while he digs daily for news to understand what is going on in the war and world. She appears "out of nowhere," Gonzalo says, then floats "off again into some other realm where you live all wrapped in clouds and mysteries." She replies that, "It isn't good to stay too long in the polluted air of history." Through a mutual friend,

Nin meets American author Sherwood Anderson ("Winesburg, Ohio"), who she describes as looking like "a doctor, a businessman, a banker." She tells Anderson that her first friend in Paris was also his translator and that she's heard so much about him she already feels that she knows him. Anderson laughs, then falls fast asleep and remains that way for the balance of the evening. Nin notes that she is in debt again and attributes it to her transplantation to New York because human beings, like plants, "wither at first at a rough change of climate." Henry Miller, she observes, has been "completely humanized" by his father's illness and approaching death. Miller has been offered $100 a month by a private collector to write erotic stories, but Miller isn't in the mood and feels that writing to order is a "castrating occupation."

May, 1940

May, 1940 Summary and Analysis

4. Anais Nin seems to be having trouble adjusting to life in America, where she observes that "machines seem to have dehumanized people." Americans lack social skills, don't know how to use courtesy to smooth the rough edges of life. People are cruel to one another under the pretense of honesty. Radio voices are "flat and toneless," white people's dancing is "a parody of Negro dances," while beauty is absent and writing in America is "flat and one-dimensional." Politics amounts to each party "hurling low-brow insults and fanatical accusations." Meanwhile, in the background, the killing continues in Europe with 500,000 people killed in just one year. At the invitation of Caresse Crosby, Nin and Henry Miller come to her home to meet two young poets from Des Moines——Lafe Youngand John Dudley. Lafe seems to disappear behind enormous dark glasses, stutters and appears nervous. John is "tall and lean, handsome with curly blond hair, brilliant blue eyes, a rich voice, sensitive hands." The two poets tell Anais they're starting a literary magazine called "Generation." The group goes to Harlem to hear a drummer John likes; he later implores her to remain in America. "We need you," he says. Unable to interest anyone in New York in their magazine, the two must return to Des Moine

5. July, 1940

Anais Nin encounters a bit of the Old South when she visits Caresse Crosby at Hampton Manor, her country estate in Bowling Green, Virginia with Henry Miller and John Payne.. She is reminded of colonial French estates when she enters the white columned mansion where black servants "glide gently about" doing their domestic chores. As she did in Paris, Caresse is a social facilitator for her coterie of artist friends. "She loved to encourage all forms of insemination among her friends," Nin observes. "She liked artistic and creative copulation in all its forms and expressions, interracial, sexual, spiritual." After the group of three arrive at Hampton Manor, later in the day Salvador Dali and his wife arrive, but retire quickly because they are tired. But the next morning at breakfast, the Dalis appear together and Nin notices they are both small in stature and "unremarkable in appearance." Before she can attempt to answer for her friends the question of whether Dali is mad as a hatter, Mrs. Dali commandeers the entire household to serve the needs of her husband, sending people off on errands in every direction while Dali sets up his studio in the large library, where he is not to be disturbed. In an effort to communicate with the Dalis, Nin prepares a Spanish dish but learns that Mrs. Dali doesn't like Spanish food. Caresse receives the bad news that her plan to start a new press has failed for lack of funding, and because none of the writers and artists had the time or the money to supply the necessary life-support system for a new press. In a moment when everyone else was out of the house, Caresse tells Anais that after her second husband committed suicide, she filled the place with guests.

6. September, 1940

Upon her return to New York, Anais Nin learns that Life magazine sent a photographer to Hampton Manor to feature it as a real artist's retreat. Everything is fine until Caresse's "Southern gentleman husband" whom she is divorcing appears, goes on a rampage, and threatens to destroy Dali's paintings. The Dalis quickly gather his canvasses, load them in their car and drive away. Spontaneous surrealism. She muses on the question whether the artist should legitimately consider individuals as representative of all, or part, of humanity. She affirms her belief that it is only through understanding individuals can one understand mass movements such as fascism. In the midst of her heady reflections on differences between American and European culture, Nin interjects that she has found a skylight studio apartment for $60 a month that she can afford on West Thirteenth Street. She notes that she has outfitted it with inexpensive items, such as unpainted furniture and serapes. She described her studio as "A-shaped and flooded with light. The first night I moved in there was a storm. A violent thunderstorm, I felt it was a bad omen. Is the war coming here. " Nin also conveys her enthusiasm about the fact her essay, "Woman in the Myth," will be published.

7. October, 1940

Not only does Anais Nin appear in her diaries as a proto-feminist, she also is a pacifist who supports "love and creation" as antidotes to "hatred, power and fanaticism." Not only that, but she sees humans dying in the service of "systems" that benefit the already rich and powerful. She wishes to close the door on a world of hatred and violence, and cultivate a "small but loving" world based on "devotion, care, work, to fight the disease and madness of the world." After a depressing visit to novelist Kenneth Patchen and his wife, Nin writes: "I feel at times as if I were living in a Kafka nightmare of closed faces, silence, inexpressiveness. I miss the warmth and flowering which creates bridges. Patchen has nothing to say." Anais Nin is charmed and attracted by the movie actress Luise Rainer, whom she meets at a dinner party at Dorothy Norman's apartment. Her description of the actress paints a sublime portrait as Rainer enters "in a long white floating dress, her hair floating, her gestures light and graceful, flowing, too, a mobile, fluid quality and radiance. Her face is small, her eyes dark and mischievous, her neck so slender one feels immediately protective. In her acting she gives herself while remaining true to herself, and she was doing the same that evening."

December, 1940

December, 1940 Summary and Analysis

8. Henry Miller returns from his travels around the United States and tells Anais Nin he is searching for a "deeper America" than the one depicted on picture postcards and travel brochures. Because of the vastness of America, the task of the artist and writer is to "distill" its essence. She faults novelist Thomas Wolfe for describing in a torrent of words the greatness of America by "cataloguing its multitude of rivers, mountains, cities and its billion faces." She says the American writer must make the reader feel the power, energy and magnitude of the country without reverting to lists and catalogues. In America, she writes, "the mass is not yet educated and it is not led by the brains of the country but by the salesmen who are selling, not educating." Nin confesses that she is becoming physically unfit for her own struggle for survival, "always short of money and in debt." Miller is moved by her story, as he gradually awakens to the struggles of others.

Nin is bedeviled by poet Kenneth Patchen, who arrives unannounced and rings the doorbell unceasingly until she answers. Without a greeting, Patchen sits down or goes to the icebox to look for a drink. He notices that Nin is working by the half-finished page in her typewriter, but he shows no curiosity about her work. Nin says that Patchen's book, "Journal of Albion Moonlight," presents "mutilated and incomplete" human figures from a nightmare, who express themselves in "groans, cries, but they are all physical, animal." Nin the proto-feminist is put off by Patchen the proto-beatnik, who resembles physically and artistically the beat messiah, Jack Kerouac, who was to come onto the scene a decade later. Like Kerouac, Patchen is a small town poor boy who numbs himself by playing football and for whom life is evidently a brutal struggle for survival where only the strongest and most brutal endure.

9. January, 1941

Ironically, after declaring herself free of any entanglements with others' needs, Anais Nin opens this chapter with the notation that she's received $100 payment from the erotica collector which she uses to pay Helba's medical bills and Henry Miller's trip. She observes that Miller seems "frail" and unhappy as he leaves New York to continue his travels and writing. Coincidentally, she observes, she feels "mysteriously exhausted, deep down." Most modern-day psychologists and therapists would identify her fatigue as a sign of extreme, chronic codependency—-or an over-developed need to serve others in an attempt to bolster one's own self-esteem. As the patron saint of her literary friends, Nin cooks meals and gives them money. Patchen oversleeps through an appointment with his editor at Scribners; Nin takes his MS to the publisher. He asks for $10; she refuses on grounds she's just sent money to Henry Miller. She reaches another breaking point when she realizes that her nurturing of friends is eating up all her time and energy. She closes her free kitchen and returns to her own work. Henry Miller telegraphs Nin: "My father is dying. Send me $30 for the plane" She sums up their

relationship by noting that she had just mailed a carton of cigarettes for "the humble, gentle German tailor."

10. February, 1941

Nin observes with pleasure that her friend Robert is establishing himself as a poet and his readings resemble "bonfires." He writes furiously, with his hair hanging down over his eyes, and his fingers are always stained with carbon paper or typewriter ribbon. She also observes how her own writing has advanced since her earliest diaries, in which she wrote from euphoria, like that of an opium addict, but her writing has since become more focused and economical. Juxtaposed with her aesthetic concerns are financial ones; she laments that her phone bill is unpaid while a sea of economic difficulties is closing in on her. With frustration, Nin writes that everyone around her is "irresponsible, unconscious of the shipwreck." She asks herself why her friends commit acts of self-destruction then turn to her for help. Nin wonders why they are so willing to burden her but seemingly incapable of offering any support to her. Nin fears that she will be devoured by her need to rescue others. She comforts herself by noting that she's just written 30 pages of erotica. She cannot seem to get rid of the freeloader Patchen. When she does not answer her doorbell, he climbs up the fire escape and into her apartment through the transom. When she comes out of the kitchen, she finds him sitting at her desk. "Anaîs is being murdered by her children," she writes.

April, 1941

April, 1941 Summary and Analysis

11. Anais Nin goes to a play with friends, then to Harlem to hear jazz. She becomes intoxicated with the energy and various moods and modes of expression in jazz. A letter from Henry Miller in the Southwest deplores the Navajo and blacks, who he fears may someday outnumber the whites. He prefers the "rootedness" of people who remain in one place and develop character, such as Southern whites. She meets the French opera singer Collete who although beautiful, talented and wealthy, has a tragic aura about her because of a failed romance with a Spanish pianist. She lists and describes her dance partners at a Manhattan party. She also describes an evening with her friend Paul at a tavern, where he awaited "a homosexual adventure" that never materialized.

In a kaleidoscopic view of her life, Nin:

• Describes getting her friends to help her paint her entire apartment, including windows, in bright daring colors.

• Is deeply moved by Isak Dinesen's "Seven Gothis Tales.:

• Admires the work and physique of the Japanese sculptor Nogushi.

• Goes to Williamstown to care for her aging mother, who has fallen out of her car.

• Grieves the suicide of Virginia Woolf.

• Is astonished by the camera work and "emptiness" of Citizen Kane.

• Observes that America rejects all European art forms and artists in search of its own cultural identity.

• Has dinner with her friend Robert, who declares his homosexuality.

12. June, 1941

A shocking film by the surrealist Luis Bañuel at the Museum of Modern Art shows such things as footage inside Bellevue Sanitarium, lepers dying on Molochai, disintegrating flesh—with the result that people start leaving before the film is over, according to Anais. She returns to her self-pitying theme of "look what the war has done to European artists" with an observation that just as artists were beginning to mature in Europe, they were forced to move to the United States "which loves only youth and immaturity."

Nin describes her friendship with the Oscar-winning actress Luise Rainer, who comes to pick her up in her sports car one day by yelling up into her window, commanding her to come down and joins her. They drive to the seashore, where Rainer points to the ocean

and makes the startling observation that: "across this vast ocean is Europe." They then shared a laugh over all the "White Russians" who were now driving taxis and working as expensive prostitutes because of the war. Others wear their imperial uniforms to their jobs as doormen, and weep while they reminisce, Nin writes. She writes that Luise Rainer, alone and vulnerable, is not totally helpless because of her "steely will" buried under her child-liker behavior. Because "we" all need a rest, Nin declares, everyone goes to Provincetown, Mass., "a New England village with a Portuguese fishermen population" and an active and important theater community. There she is introduced to Tennessee Williams by Robert. She says Tennessee is "inarticulate" and his eyes never meet hers. She finds the playwright closed and lacking in warmth.

13. September, 1941

Nin visits Luise Rainer, who is sick with anemia, "fragile, lying in her ivory-white satin bed among mirrors and rows of outside bottles of perfume." Anais concludes that Rainer's marriage to playwright Cliffford Odets has "destroyed" her, even though they were married at the peak of their careers. Odets, a native New Yorker, believes they should try to "cash in" as much as possible while Luise Rainer wants for them to travel around the world and enjoy each other. While Nin is visiting Rainer, Odets comes in to check on her and the contrast between them seems striking—Odets the crude pragmatist, Rainer the idealistic artist. She sees Luise Rainer in a stage production of J.M. Barrie's "A Kiss for Cinderella," and discovers an incandescent quality to her acting that takes the roll far beyond what the playwright could have conceived. She is consumed by the intensity of puttting her emotions into the role, and thus becoming vulnerable to the public. Nin writes that her anxiety after the performance is probably because of that, but reassures Luise that connects profoundly with her audience. Nin describes this as the "miraculous openness which takes place in love and creates a current of love between audience and actor as between lover and beloved."

October, 1941

October, 1941 Summary and Analysis

14, Once again in this chapter Anais Nin reveals how her maternal care-taking side can so easily overwhelm her. The chapter opens with the arrival of her devil-may-care brother from South America for hand surgery, following a scuffle aboard an airplane transporting a "madman" to an asylum in the U.S. Her brother Thorvald suffered a broken finger and subvsequent infection, that required amputation. Upon her arrival home she receives a call from Luise Rainer who narcissistically wants to come and talk about her career, her love life and her health. "Luise and I permit a friendship or a love to possess us completely, to rule our life, and others' needs must be answered immediately," she writes in her diary. She laments that she "lost" her friend Robert because she had nothing left to give him. In another encounter with Luise Rainer, the actress tells Nin she can't see her "bad side" and that all her relationships end badly. Nin tells her that she can't see anything bad about her, that anxiety is not a character flaw. She shares more details about her marriage to Odets, that he always left her after making love, which she experienced as abandonment. Although divorced, evidently, Luise cannot separate emotionally from Odets and she asks Nin whether she is a masochist. Nin answers, essentially, yes. Nin tells her that she needs tro confront herself or she will marry another Odets and experience more misery.

Later, Anais sees the pattern of Luise's relationships: abandon, empathy, symbiosis, then a demand for the total surrender of self. If the relationship did not provide these, Luise would destroy it. "I could not give her all the time and care she wanted," Nin concludes.

15. November, 1941

Anais Nin's artistic development seems to parallel the progression of her codependency. She tells her diary she is ready for more in-depth relationships with people at the same time she writes of the inconsistencies, insensitivities selfishness of her friends. She recalls being at first mesmerized by Robert's direct, intense monologue type of speech only to realize it is really about communication but performance in which she is the audience. Luise Rainer calls to reconcile with a story about how her former husband Clifford Odets told her to go away because he can not work when she is around; Nin reminds her that Henry Miller does the same thing to his companion, June. Nin writes that Henry Miller is distressed, he runs away. Now that his daughter is ill, he feels it is a punishment and dreams of running to California. While she is out, Robert uses her phone to call a friend in Massachusetts at a time when she can't afford her phone bill. She calls him "a thoughtless child." Nin realizes that Luise wants to play a game of dramatization with her in which Anais becomes "a spiritual punching bag." She also realizes she hasn't the strength or objectivity tio play that game. Her doctor tells her she is losing weight and advises her to eat wholesome food at home, relax and stop burning the candle at both ends. Nut she persists, taking Kenneth Patchen's manuscript to

Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's and becoming involved in the middle of a tempestuous love affair between Paul and Robert.

16. December, 1941

Poetry in America is becoming as boring and lifeless as the architecture, according to Nin. Both are becoming "monotonously symmetrical" as poets seem to lack the will to transmute everyday events into myth, thus turning poetry into prose. She pats herself on the back for her book, "Winter of Artifice," in which she claims to have pared out all non-essentials and allowed drama to arise naturally from the characters without authorial intrusion. She writes a letter to her erotica client, telling him she hates him for his obsession with sex detached from affection and sensuality, for his numbness to the many hues of passion and intensity from which sex grows and flowers. Nevertheless, she continues to write 10 to 15 pages of erotica each day. She notes that a book of poetry by Kenneth Patchen is not selling, that Henry Miller is working on his American book, "The Air-Conditioned Nightmare," and that Caresse Crosby has not raised the money to continue her Black Sun Press. Nin laments that there is no "protection" for writers against someone saying they'll publish a book, keeping it for a year, then returning it. She revives the idea of starting her own press, working with Gonzalo as pressman and herself as typesetter; she borrows some money from friends to rent a loft at 144 Macdougal St. in New York and buy a used press.

January, 1942

January, 1942 Summary and Analysis

17. Against the background of World War II, Pearl Harbor, air raids, as well as contentious, hurtful relationships with "friends," Anais Nin finds serenity in working with the old press that is finally delivered to the loft. She and Gonzalo use a library book on printing to get started. Initially it takes her 90 minutes to typeset half a page of her book, "Winter of Artifice." As she learns to typeset, Gonzalo battles with the mechanical problems of the press and is finally victorious. They both live, eat, sleep and dream about the press; they literally have printer's ink in their hair, food, and clothes. Nin writes that she's jettisoned friendships that are in any way bellicose or "pugilistic," but continues to soothe Henry Miller over the failure of his "American book." She notes that she is happy working long hours at the press because it is nurturing and positive. Helba, Gonzalo's wife, stages more "scenes" which her doctor says are merely signs of her hysterical, malingering personality. As they continue to work at the press, the pace gradually accelerates until they produce four pages per day by March 4, 1942.

18. March, 1942

Anais Nin meets a young German doctor at a party who asks her if she's familiar with the Franz Kafka story about a man who invented a machine for executing criminals. Just as it is about to be used for the first time, the guilt-stricken inventor rushes into it himself and dies. Then he tells her that he is the inventor of the "fever box" which has been proven to treat certain tropical fevers effectively although it is a brutal experience. The doctor says he decided he had to experience the fever box himself to understand the suffering of his patients. Although the machine is designed only for those with otherwise incurable fevers, he undergoes the treatment which has caused him to lose 100 pounds and left him "a nervous wreck." She reports that Henry Miller is 400 pages into another novel that shows greater objectivity and more character development in his fiction and in himself.

19. April, 1942

Nin struggles with the duties of typesetter, among them the best way to break a word between lines. For example, her division of the word "lo-ve" is later to become the favorite of the "faultfinders" who read her book. "I weave the pattern of letters of metal proclaiming that the most important of all achievements is to be a human being," Nin writes. As she typesets her book, making changes and tightening the language, she begins to see her father in a different light—that of friend, scholar and wit rather than parent. Although she views him as a failed father, she now sees him in a broader light and laments the fact they could not be friends, playmates, pals while he was still alive. She reflects on how she tries in her book to sharpen the reader's perceptions, and to enter marginal regions of human life available to those of great sensitivity. As she looks at her broken nails and ink-strained hands, Nin reflects that she may not be able to

survive the violence and lack of refinement in America. As the printing of "Winter of Artifice" is completed, Nin becomes aware once again of the madness and brutality of war and rededicates herself to her art. The completed book receives high praise from some reviewers, including a teacher of graphic arts at New York University. The poet William Carlos Williams, however, skewers it as biography in the guise of fiction in "New Directions." She notes proudly that, without any advertising, the entire first edition of 300 books sells out.

Summer, 1942

Summer, 1942 Summary and Analysis

20. Summer, 1942

After starting on a book of poems at the press, Nin, Gonzalo and his wife Helba take a vacation from the stifling August heat of New York and return to Provincetown, Mass. She hopes that Gonzalo now has marketable skills that he can use to support himself, and reports that she has turned all profits from the press to him so that he will feel "independent" and soon earn enough to live on. She reprints two letters from Henry Miller in which he declares that life in New York has become "intolerable" for him. Despite the fact Miller has written 10 books, he still cannot support himself. The "underground success" of her novel continues despite the fact it is largely ignored by the mainstream press. A disappointed Nin writes that she had hopes the press would solve, rather than worsen, her financial difficulties. As she treads the five flights of stairs leaving the press each day, her life seems like more and more of a struggle against impossible odds. Besides finding more commercial work for the press, Nin frets over the fact Gonzalo needs new glasses, Helba's doctor bill is overdue, Miller has to see the ear doctor and needs $18 for new glasses, "I have no one to pray to, no one to turn to, I am a failure," she writes.

21. October, 1942

Anais Nin devotes most of this chapter, or lengthy diary entry, to a description of Frances Brown—a young artist who is in a hip cast when she meets her. Nin's physical description is elaborate and sensual to the extent that the reader may sense a sexual attraction. In writing about the former dancer, Nin transmutes her physical and spiritual qualities into a kind of generic goddess, or an idealized woman who might inspire other women to work for their own liberation. Frances has brilliant, enormous, "fairy-tale" eyes that seem to illuminate darkness and to retreat whenever she is confronted with ugliness or brutality. Frances gave up dancing a few years earlier because of tuberculosis,but replaced it with sculpture and drawings. Nin says they meet on a level of communication based on symbolism. As compared with Helba, for instance, Frances transmutes her afflictions into art and compassion, "a shining individuality." Nin wonders how Frances retains her sensitivity and gentleness through a childhood of poverty and abuse. Instead, Frances remains steadfast in her desire to create a different world. Anais and Francis share a love of T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets." Nin admires the fact Frances is a self-made woman and artist who rises through her intelligence and tenacity above poverty, disease and obscurity. The two discuss women's desire for "an impossible bond" with men. Anais notes the disparity between women and wives who devote themselves to their husbands' careers, while men often don 't reciprocate and feel threatened that women even want a career. In counterpoint to the hustle of war with its loud noises and quiet fears,

22. Winter, 1942

As Anais Nin draws closer to a distillation of her feminist worldview through her female friends, she also slides into a complete nervous breakdown. First she records in her diary the struggles of other women—Olga, the Russian communist poet whose individuality is stifled by her guilty attachment to the collective good, the Persian artist Moira who succumbs to her husband's need to control her femininity, her own struggles with poverty and obscurity. "The high cost of living [in New York] gives us not a moment of pleasure or relaxation," she writes. In her efforts to keep the press in operation, Nin contracts with Caresse Crosby to reprint a book of poetry with illustrations first published by her now-defunctg Black Sun Pess. This business leads only to frustration and grief. She describes her final breakdown as a weakness so profound she can't climb her stairs, followed by three days of weeping during which she feels "broken for good, physically and spiritually." Finally, she sees the psychoanalyst Martha Jaeger who tells her she has taken on too much, driven herself too hard, and needs to rest and take time to relax. On the subway home, Nin falls asleep. Jaeger tells her that it is her maternal, nurturing instinct that has driven her to a breakdown, as she washes her husband's shirt. "And this touches me, the world of woman," Nin writes. Gonzalo isn't able to work as much at the press because Helba keeps him constantly busy with her histrionics, and Nin faces the reality that she can't do everything by herself.

January, 1943

January, 1943 Summary and Analysis

23. As she slowly recuperates, Anais begins to fantasize about what she wants in her life and about the person she wants to be. Lying in bed, she imagines that she is missing out on life and becomes restless. At polite social gatherings, she yearns for great primitive fiestas, Mayan rituals, Tahiti. "I am like a winged creature who is too rarely allowed to use its wings," she writes. Nin compares herself to yeast, effectuating changes in its matrix without being recognized; she strikes a note of self-pity when she muses that perhaps only after her death will the importance of her life and work be recognized as having "dispersed the drug of clairvoyance." Psychoanalysis reveals to her the schism between her true self as projected in her work and the self she projects to others to please them. She reflects on the difference between relationships formed out of emotional need and those based on deep wants; the former may preclude the realization of the latter, she says. She feels that her personal growth as a woman comes largely through working with a female analyst, through her feminine intuition.

24. March, 1943

At the Brooklyn home of a mutual friend, Anais Nin meets American novelist Carson McCullers ("The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter"), but is not impressed. She describes McCullers as "a girl so tall and so lanky I first thought it was a boy. Her hair was short, she wore a cyclist's cap, tennis shoes, pants. She came in and pushed through the group like a bull with its head down." Nin says she was offended by McCullers' demeanor, and says her work is "overpraised." She observes that narcissism is rampant in America where everyone seems to be the hero of their own story, while in Europe the self is never spoken of publicly but sublimated to the other. Nin records a diminishing of her suffering that seems to coincide with less conscious awareness of herself. She concludes that her ego has died and released her from suffering. "It is the ego that suffers, that is vulnerable," she writes. Nin gives a party for her friends, including the golden-tressed Catherine, an assertive, energetic English beauty who is married to John, a quiet, faithful man with a sad presentation. Catherine, according to Nin, is one of the few genuine cases of nymphomania she's known. Catherine is from a wealthy British family who became a "sexual hysteric" after breaking away from her family. And yet, her husband is always there for her, never judging or condemning her. When they are together, Nin senses the "seduction" that passes between them, with Catherine the more masculine personality and John the more feminine.

25. May, 1943

Nin describes the modern illness of anxiety (or, "schadenfreude") as "insidious, elusive" and arousing no pity or compassion. One could be walking down a pleasant street on a sunny day without a care in the world, when suddenly the wind causes a cloud of dust to rise and with it the nameless fears and anxieties of others—the sailors who go down

with their ship, the rape and mutilation victims, the concentrator camp prisoners although one has not personally endured such horrors. Strangely, anxiety is solitary and unmoving to others. "Anxiety is a woman screaming without a voice, out of a nightmare," Nin writes. Her description leaves no doubt that Nin herself suffers from anxiety attacks, and she wonders whether it is a result of suppressed identification with others whose fates we read and hear about every day in the mass media. Anxiety is difficult to explain to those who do not experience it, she says. Everyone can identify with pain, illness, poverty and hunger but who can understand the anxiety that strikes her on a beautiful, sunny day while walking down the street?

June, 1943

June, 1943 Summary and Analysis

26. A group of friends, including Nin, go to the home of George Davis to "serenade" Richard Wright, the black author of "Native Son" and "Black Boy." They presented singing, drumming and dancing with an international flavor for the man she describes as "handsome, quiet, simple [with] beautiful, modulated speech." Albert Mangones, a 26-year-old artist from Haiti seems to represent the tranquility and peace of the island; he and his friend Jean Brierre must return to Haiti or face conscription, Nin writes. She likes the bit of transplanted Caribbean culture she experiences through Jean and Albert. Jean comes to visit her and see the press; he presents her with a poem and tells her of his imprisonment in a Haitian jail for "revolutionary activities." Albert, on the other hand, is tranquil, gentle and vibrant like the island of Haiti, she writes. She notes how much she enjoys the evening because of the responsiveness and spirit of the group. She sees the Haitian way of life as filled with joy and a kind of fragrance of the soul that heals bitterness. They are strangers to anxiety and "flesh poisoned by sorrow [with] sex pure and strong." She credits psychoanalysis with allowing her to see the light within herself, and thus to see light everywhere else. "When you possess light within, then you see it externally. It must have been there on other summer mornings, but I did not receive it," she writes. Nin also catalogues the comings and goings of her friends and acquaintances. She concludes with the observation that psychoanalysis is the new religion for the 20th Century: "Analysis rescues the romantic."

27. July, 1943

Nin continues her rhapsody about the American "Negro," writing that she would love to devote her entire life to the recognition of the quality of blacks, although she laments that her political skills and will are lacking. She sees the struggle between blacks and whites not primarily as an economic one, but rather a reflection of the white man's need to control his primitive, atavistic self. To that extent, she says, the black represents a dark side of the white race that it wants to control. At the same time, Nin ob serves that Gonzalo is "terrified" by the changes in women's status catalyzed by the war. If a woman is a soldier, executive, or riveter it is hard for Gonzalo to imagine kissing her, Nin says. She tells him that women are far more dangerous when they must be unfulfilled artists, ineffective mothers or power-seekers who seek their own satisfaction by manipulating others.

28. Fall, 1943

Anais Nin contemplates resuming her fiction writing, with a specific focus on leaving herself as an objectified character, entirely out of the picture (or, story). In that fashion, she contemplates creating an entirely human world where characters are neither enlarged nor diminished but presented in their true, human dimensions. She hopes through her skills as a writer to "poeticize" her characters, raising them to the level of

myth. She realizes that whenever she writes about a character to which she is is not elated, that character comes off the page as one-dimensional. Nin writes that psychoanalysis has helped her to see that all of her enemies are within herself, and arise when she idealizes and dreams about other people and situations. Many of her friends, she writes, represent her "dark Anais," that she needs to unearth and claim as her own truth and not transfer it to others. She also realizes that her stereotypical way of seeing the world—that all joy is in southern France or all music in blacks—ignores the fact that these things also exist within herself. If she is to create the world she wants in fiction, Nin writes, she must create it from within herself.

October, 1943

October, 1943 Summary and Analysis

29. When the son of a black friend, Millicent, is shot in a gang war Nin goes to the hospital in Harlem and is turned away because they do not want "white blood." She returns to her ruminations about art and reality, dreaming and loneliness. She draws a distinction between her "adult fairytales" and herself, emphasizing that she is not the same person as when she wrote them and is not contained within them. "The whole duality lies between what is dreamt and what is actualized," she writes. "The dreaming gives anxiety because it is lonely, ghostly, evanescent, unstable, fluid but above all because it is lonely." Nin realizes that the writer and artist can do nothing more about the human condition with all its suffering than describe it. However, by connecting herself and her work to all of mankind, she believes she can transcend the merely personal, anecdotal description of reality. The failure of the surrealists, she writes, is in the fact they can not or will not see the connectedness of their experience with others' and that they assume they and their experiences are unique. They locate themselves within the subconscious and do not relate it to action.

30. January, 1944

After spending New Year's Eve at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, Nin again returns to her rhapsodic musings about "the Negro," whom she admires for suffering humiliation and abuse without becoming spiritually deformed; she admires the physical movements and natural grace of blacks. She decides that neurosis is rampant in America because of its scientific war on poverty, which creates a new wasteland of the imagination and soul. But primitive people are born into a "natural paradise," which Americans have tried to re-manufacture. Nin expresses her joy at publication of her book of stories, "Under a Glass Bell," and it draws praise from fellow write4rs and friends for the writing but also for the workmanship in production. The initial run of 300 books is selling briskly, although it does not help with her financial situation and she laments the fact she had to bo0rrow money to publish it. She and Gonzalo relocate the press to Greenwish Village where they can operate both a commercial press and an engraving press. New Yorker critic Edmund Wilson praises her work as "half short stories, half dreams [that] mix a sometimes exquisite poetry with a homely realistic observation."

31. April, 1944

Nin exults in the apparent success of her book, while noting that it seems like being "discovered" all over again. In addition to the review of "Under a Glass Bell" by Edmund Wilson, there is another review in "Town and Country" magazine, and she receives congratulatory phone calls and letters. She goes to the window and reflects that she has been cured of the obsession to take responsibility for the lives of other people and declares herself ready to "accept a quiet happiness, the absence of fever." The old temptations of romanticism, music, adventure are now tempered. "For the first time, my

body and soul are together," she writes, "and the sound of a window closing, a door closing, is no more alarming than the wings of an icon closing over a figure praying."

The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume One

Summary and Analysis

Characters

Luise Rainer

Rainer is an Oscar-winning movie actress who befriends Nin in New York. She takes the writer on outings to the seashore in her sports car, and to jazz joints in Harlem. Rainer is divorced from the playwright Clifford Odets, whom Nin describes as pragmatic and perfunctory compared with the mercurial actress, whom she at first finds enchanting. Rainer is Dresden-doll beautiful, capricious and willful. The two go to parties together, to Harlem nightclubs, and to the seashore in Rainer's snazzy convertible. For a while, Nin feels she has found her true soul mate. Rainer, who is also undergoing psychoanalysis, wants to talk incessantly about it with Nin, which means that the actress wants to talk about herself and her own problems. Sometimes, it is hard for the writer to tell when the actress has slipped into another character or personality. Gradually, it begins to dawn on Nin that Rainer is a total narcissist who uses others only as ego props, Rainer continues to maintain a needy, dependent relationship with her former husband—just like the one she has with Nin, who finally backs away from her because it becomes increasingly difficult for her to feed Rainer's ego and to get nothing from her in return.

Henry Miller

Henry Miller, before becoming famous as the author of "Tropic of Cancer, "Capricorn." and other erotically-charged novels, is a jittery writer, unsure of himself, when he encounters Anais Nin. They form a friendship that lasts throughout their lifetimes, with Nin at first the nurturing, giving partner in the relationship. Miller also serves to help Nin get connected and established within the American literary world. She supports him, emotionally and financially, through his early days even at the cost of ignoring her own work and becoming "overburdened" with her sense of responsibility for him. In psychoanalysis, Nin realizes that she values Henry Miller's work more than her own because he is a man and she a mere woman. Anais Nin, like a good mother, faithfully records Miller's progress in growing up from a manchild to a man, which begins with the illness and death of his parents, This serves as the needle that breaks the bubble of self-involvement in which Miller has lived most of his life. Perhaps because Miller continues to show signs of progress, Nin's relationship with him continues even though he continue to demonstrate signs of immature parasitism.

Alfred Steiglitz

Nin meets the famous photographer at a part in New York, and he asks to photograph her wisp-like beauty. She then feels that she is accepted into the inner circle of elite artists in New York.

Caresse Crosby

A southern socialite, Caresse Crosby in part of the literary/artistic circle of friends Anais Nin meets upon her arrival in New York, through Henry Miller. Crosby entertains Henry Miller, Anais Nin and Salvador Dali at her country estate in Bowling Green, Virginia. She seems to play the role of a modern-day patron of the arts, much as European royalty once did. She is the maternal, all-nurturing figure of the traditional woman in society.

Edmund Wilson

Edmund Wilson is a very influential literary critic at "The New Yorker" magazine who gives a favorable review to Nin's self-published book, "Under a Glass Bell."

Salvador Dali

Dali is the Spanish surrealist painter who is a friend of Anais Nin and Caresse Crosby. Dali and his wife visit Crosby's Virginia estate in 1940, where they are introduced to Anais Nin. No matter what kind of palace intrigue swirls around him, Dali is quite happy when painting and singing in the library at Hampton Manor. Mr. and Mrs. Dali beat a hasty retreat late one night when Caresse Crosby's drunken ex-husband roars into the house. They run downstairs, quickly load all of his canvasses into their car, and drive off.

Martha Jaeger

Martha Jaeger is the psychoanalyst with whom Anais Nin works, and through whom she sees that her pattern of inappropriate nurturing is causing her to become sick herself.

Robert Duncan

"A strikingly beautiful boy," as Anais Nin describes him, is part of the artistic coterie that surrounds the French writer. There is no small evidence in her diaries that she is physically attracted to him. The painter eventually declares his homosexuality after several histrionic affairs with both sexes. Nin gradually tires of his friendship because it is one-sided and based primarily on his own immature ego needs.

Gonzalo

Although Nin does not give Gonzalo's last name, the reader concludes that he is so central to her life that ne needs no further identification. Gonzalo is one of her old friends from Europe, who also emigrates to New York after Nin with his wife, Helba. Gonzalo remains a true friend to Anais, helping her to establish a small press in New York where he works long hours. Helba, Gonzalo's emotionally needy wife, begins to

throw obstacles in his path that restrict his ability to continue with the press and probably satisfy her urge to control.

Kenneth Patchen

Patchen is a young American writer recommended by Henry Miller, who becomes a part of Nin's circle of acquaintances. However, when Nin meets Patchen she is completely put off by his lack of social skills, his inertia, and general dullness of mind. Nin also meets his wife, also again finds her as uninteresting as her husband. Although a real friendship between Nin and Patchen never develops, he continues to ask her for money, comes to her apartment and feeds himself directly from her refrigerator. Patchen, in Nin's eyes, becomes a monster.

Objects/Places

Paris

The City of Light is Anais Nin's home before she becomes expatriated in the United States. Her longing for Paris suffuses the diary, as she describes turning a corner in New York and expecting to see her favorite boulangerie or expresso stand. Whenever she finds Americans crude and boorish (which is often), she becomes homesick for Paris and her way of life there. Nin often compares her life in Paris with her life in New York, and decides that Peris is better suited to her sensibilities.

House of Incest

"House of Incest" is Anais Nin's first somewhat commercially successful novel, that brings with it not only notoriety but an introduction to other writers and artists both in the United States and in Europe.

Greenwich Village

Greenwich Village, famous for its artistic and intellectual life, is where Anais Nin decides to live in New York City. It is closer to the bohemian, artistic way of life she knew in Paris than any other part of New York, and she seems to fit in well. She expresses her love for the cultural ferment in the Village in her diary, as well as her excitement at "discovering" American jazz, its practitioners and argot.

Bowling Green, Virginia

Anais Nin is the guest of her friend Caresse Crosby in her Southern estate, where she is joined by Salvador Dali and his wife.She describes the suffocatingly hot days with the constant roar of cicadas in the trees, the elegant classical beauty of the estate, and the cool respite of summer evenings when a soft breeze once again renders the Southern summer tolerable.

Printing press

Anais Nin, with the support and involvement of her friend Gonzalo, purchases an old but servceable printing press to publish her own novel and the works of others. Nin slowly teaches herself to set type, making editorial changes and corrections as she does so. Gonzalo sweats and slaves over the mechanical challenges of operating the press. Both are covereed most of the time in printer's ink, and both work long hours to get out the first copies of her novel, "Winter of Artifice." She seeks financial backers after running out of money, and the novelist Lawrence Durrell offers his monetary support.

Winter of Artifice

"Winter of artifice" is Anais Nin's first self-published novel printed on her own printing press, which she purchases and installs in New York. The initial run of 300 copies receives wide praise and is quickly sold out.

Under a Glass Bell

"Under a Glass Bell" is Anais Nin's second work of fiction to be published by her own press, with the untiring labors of her friend Gonzalo. The collection is semi-surrealistic stories is well-received and well-reviewed in "The New Yorker."

The Savoy Ballroom

The Savoy Ballroom is a jazz and dance club in Harlem where Anais Nin and her friends forgo New Year's Eve. Nin is quite open about her love for "Negroes" and sees them as healthier specimens than most American whites.

Psychoanalysis

Anais Nin describes psychoanalysis as the new religion for the 20th Century, and credits her analyst Martha Jaeger with opening her eyes to many of her issues and helping her to find solutions from within herself.

Provincetown, Mass.

Provincetown is where Nin and her friends go to escape the summer heat of New York City. It has a thriving theater and literary community, as well as great beaches and New England charm. There she meets playwright Tennessee Williams.

Themes

Evolution of Women's Consciousness

"The drama of woman's development is very painful, for in each case the man seems to punish all growth," Anais Nin observes on p. 234. "So the woman intent on growth chooses a yielding, passive man who will not interfere with this growth, with her evolution. But in the end, his weakness destroys her." On p. 255, "I feel them seeking to speak through me, these women who have taken longer to speak than man because what stirred in them were states which are not articulate in the language of man but perhaps in the language of music if this music could be frozen in the air to catch the words it forms." It is perhaps because of her status as an outsider and a woman whose work is devalued that Anais Nin seems to gravitate toward "Negroes" and Harlem, with its jazz clubs and passionate commitment to the moment.

In "Winter, 1942" Nin observes that a woman in society of that time who is married to an artist must continue to nurture him forever, because "the artist-child never grows up, never grows stronger. And the woman finally collapses under the burden." She says this is an evolutionary stage in which women want to use their energies for their own development and to other form of creation than biological motherhood. But, she says, woman needs man's blessing and help to move to the next evolutionary stage in her liberation. Nin credits the nurturing woman who is her psychoanalyst with helping her to raise her consciousness as a woman.

The basis of Nin's approach/avoidance relationship with the actress Luize Rainer probably reflects her own evolution in this regard. At first, Nin is attracted to the beautiful, energetic and alluring actress who seems possessed of a higher level of consciousness and independence than most of her female friends. But gradually Nin realizes that Rainer is a highly dependent personality who manipulates and creates "crises" to win some kind of bogus loyalty (control) over others. The fact that Rainer professes to abhor her ex-husband Clifford Odets and yet is still tied to him in an unhealthy codependency may also reflect Nin's own struggles with codependency back to the writer. In terms of women's liberation (before it had that moniker). Nin admires black women, such as her housekeeper, for their strength of character and their emotional honesty and finds, ironically, a kindred soul in the wealthy southerner Caresse Crosby who has sacrificed none of her integrity through marriage and divorce and who is dedicated to the arts and assisting artists. But generally finding little support for her nascent feminism, Nin spends a great deal of time suffering through bouts of depression and withdrawal.

Contrasts Between Europe and America

By comparison with Europe and Paris, her native city, Anais Nin finds America a cultural wasteland where writers and artists receive neither support nor respect. Her

unsuccessful struggles to find an American publisher drive her to go further into debt to purchase an old printing press, where she produces her own fiction, as well as the work of other writers. Americans, she finds, are always ready to talk about themselves, in a superficial way, because they are the heroes of their own stories, while Europeans seem more interested in other people and a bit more sure of themselves. Even though she calls herself a "bohemian," Nin is shocked to meet an attractive American blonde at a cocktail party who speaks openly of her many sexual adventures and who can't wait to get in bed with the next man. She tells this woman she is a nymphomaniac, and refers to her psychoanalyst for treatment. The writer Kenneth Patchen, a shambling, inert, inarticulate hulk of an American man, offends Nin by his patronizing attitude towards women and by his crude mannerisms.

Codependency

Anais Nin struggles throughout the diary with her own codependency, her tendency to "fix" and "rescue" other people who have immaturely failed to resolve their own emotional conflicts. This behavior takes the form of loaning money to friends she can't afford, listening to and tolerating the narcissistic monologues of friends, feeling crises in others' lives as crises in her own. Nin seems aware of this behavior, often admonishing herself in the diaries to stop overdoing for others (nowadays referred to as "enabling") because she knows it leaves her exhausted and depressed. However, she evidently lacks the tools to change the behavior, despite her involvement with psychoanalysis. If her perhaps unwitting description of this dysfunctional behavior is clinically striking, it is also emblematic of how difficult it is to make changes in one's own behavior and patterns of thinking. She seems as helplessly bound to her codependent behavior as her friends are to their own addictive, dependent behavior. At the core of this enabling is low self-esteem and a passive desire to live her own life through the turmoil and struggles of others.

Style

Perspective

Since she is a recently-arrived immigrant from France in America, Anais Nin writes from that perspective. Many of her notations compare Europe with America culturally, physically, spiritually and socially. Although America excites her with a kind of raw, pulsing energy Nin seems to long for the slower pace, refinement and social order of Europe even as those elements are being blasted into history by World War II. Since Nin is herself a player in her diaries, it is logical to consider her perspective on herself, which is shifting. For example, in moments of great lucidity she is capable of writing a forthright psychoanalytical portrait of herself and others in a kind of enlightened detachment. She understands her own and other's motives perhaps a little too clearly. She is aware that she needs to stop mothering and financing immature artists like Henry Miller, Kenneth Patchen and others. Yet, after making that penetrating analysis, she almost immediately reverts to her previous behavior of rescuing her friends, which leaves her continually broke and exhausted. Her perspective on herself and on her friends, many of them immigrants from a war-torn Europe, is that they should all help each other to survive. Still, it is Anais Nin herself who assumes the role of martyr in trying to help everyone when they hardly lift a finger for her. Her low self-esteem is evident and painful to witness in action.

Tone

Stylistically, the tone of Anais Nin's diary is a warm kind of detachment much like an anthropologist's study of a remote and hitherto-unknown society. The freshness of her vision and skill at setting it down give the diary the immediacy of discovery so the reader is swept along by her series of new experiences. This sense of discovery, rather than a plot, is what carries the reader along through the sometimes-trivial, often-enlightening encounters she has with both American artists and expatriate Europeans. In some ways, the diary reads like a postcard from a friend visiting another country, with its "Oh, guess what I saw..." tone. She is wowed by movie stars, famous artists and writers, and the gargantuan size of America. But at the same time, Nin remains true to her artistic vision that it is only through the experiences and mind of one person, in this case the author, that one can capture the essence of a society and its values. Always, for her, the litmus test for any of her experiences in America is comparison with her friends and acquaintances in Paris. Often, because of this comparison, Nin seems to feel America is too crude, too raw and her diary reflects her sense of disappointment.

Structure

The only real structure to the diary is the inevitable one—chronology. Perhaps because she is a newcomer to America, one might compare her work structurally with the diaries

of Lewis and Clark on their westward expedition of discovery. The sense of life unfolding in a rich but seemingly disorganized series of daily events is common to both. The texture of Anais Nin's diary may proceed from the incidental, to the philosophical, to the absurd and to the comical in a single entry. In that sense, the structure reflects the movement of her mind rather than adherence to any preconceived strictures of dramatic tension or plot resolution. The structure resembles "headlines" employed by John Dos Passos in his novel, "1919," in which the narrative follows a jagged course in synchronicity with the times, and "headlines" seemingly ripped from the morning newspaper continually interrupt the flow of events so that the reader experiences a sense of urgency, where a true dramatic tension is impossible because of the nature of a diary.

Quotes

"I left Paris in a muted way like the inside of a cathedral, full of shadowy niches, black corners, twinkling oil lamps. In the half-mist hanging over it, violet, blue and green lights looked like stained-glass windows all wet and alive with candlelight. I could not have recognized the faces of those I was leaving. My bags were carried by a soldier whose shoes were too big for him. I suffered deeply from the wrench of separation. I felt every cell and cord which tied me to France snapping in me, the parting from a pattern of life I loved, from intimacy with a people and a city. I was parting from a rhythm rooted very deeply in me, from mysterious, enveloped nights, from an obsession with war which gave a bitter and vivid taste to all our living, from the sound of anti-aircraft guns, of airplanes passing, of sirens lamenting like foghorms on stormy nights at sea. I could not believe that there could be, anywhere in the world, space and air where the nightmare of war did not exist." (Chapter 1, pg. 1)

"Beth appeared sensuous in every strand of her shining hair, in the pink lobe of her ears, a flesh made for nudity as naturally as a fruit. I could only imagine her in a bedroom, about to undress, or already undressed. This image of her fruitlike skin not made for clothes may have been partly created by her recurrent talk: 'At that time I was sleeping around with everyone, or with everybody.' So I assumed she lived, breathed, existed in a constant atmosphere of erotic pleasures. It would have taken the mostr expert accounting to keep track of all her sexual activity. She deceived me. I knew no woman as easily persuaded to go to bed who had obtained so little from her play-acting. This woman who could undress at the request of any man, made love with anyone, go to orgies, act as a call girl in a professional house, this Beth told me she found it actually difficult to talk about sex." (Chapter 2, pg. 24)

"The truth is I am escaping discussions because I no longer believe Marxism is a solution to the miseries of the world. Because it does not cure man of violence. And it is only a solution to material needs. In the process, as in the process of American pragmatism, all other values are destroyed. Both countries exclude spiritual needs. America is in even greater danger because of its cult of toughness, its hatred of sensitivity, and someday it may have to pay a terrible price for this, because atrophy of feeling creates criminals." (Chapter 3, pg. 28)

"I am in debt again. Something has happened to all of us who have been uprooted. Human beings wither at first like plants at a rough change of climate. We look for places to sit where one is not rushed out, told to drink our coffee and leave as others are waiting for the table. We found an Italian expresso place on Macdougal Street with only eight or 10 small tables, where Italians linger and play chess, and there we are allowed to sit and talk over a coffee. The war news is so terrible that it causes a kind of catalepsy. To revive, I plunge into writing." (Chapter 3, pg. 32)

"Caresse [Crosby] invited me to her home in Bowling Green, Virginia. I flew to Richmond [and] drove through soft rolling hills, rich covered fields, past small lakes, trees draped with moss, profusion of ferns, flower bushes, trailing vines. The car

continued along a circular driveway and there stood Hampton Manor, a Southern version of the enchanted house of Le Grand Meaulnes—white, classical, serene, symmetrical with its tall graceful columns, its terraces of tiles and the noble proportions of doors and windows. Weeping willows arched over it, moss grew like soft carpets at its feet, trailing vine embraced it. The rooms were high-ceilinged, large, harmonious, uncluttered, with shining parquet floors. Outside in the twilight, whipporwills, other bird calls, a concert of crickets buzzing with delight at the heat, at the waves of heat rising from the perfumed ground." (Chapter 5, pg. 38)

"Rhythm is what I most like about America. The language of jazz musicians has savor, color, vibrancy. The reflectiveness, reverie, of Europe is not possible because of the tempo. This tempo prevents experience from seeping in, penetrating. I respond to intensity, but I also like reflection to follow action, for then understanding is born, and understanding prepares me for the next day's events." (Chapter 6, pg. 45)

"My lack of faith in the men who lead us is that they do not recognize the irrational in men, they have no insight and whoever does not recognize the personal, individual drama of man cannot lead them. Psychology has ceased to be for me a mere therapy for neurotic moments. It is not only the neurotic who lives by irrational impulses rooted deeply in his experience, but everyone. The masses are merely an accumulation of such blind impulses. In fact, most of the time the leaders have been those who symbolized nonrational emotions for the masses and therefore their negative, or destructive tendencies. If people knew more about psychology they would have recognized in Hitler a psychotic killer. Nations are neurotic, and leaders can be psychotic. (Chapter 6, pg. 46)

"What a writer must ask himself today is which of the two roles is he best equipped to fill. Is he a breadwinner and a revolutionary in the world of action,or is he a breadwinner and a revolutionary in the world of the spirit? The man of spirit is needed to recreate in terms of art a world erected by the materialists. If this alchemy is destroyed, then the meaning of everything we achieve will be destroyed, too, because it is the artist who gives the meaning, as well as the religious man." (Chapter 7, pg. 52)

"Some jazz [is] flamboyant, some creating tensions not by increased loudness but by the subtlety of its gradations. Some jazz is like velvet, some like silk, some like electric shocks, some like seduction, some like a drug. How could one not love the people who created such a music, in which the rhythm of the heart and of the body is so human and the voice so warm, emotions so deep. Charlie Parker, Fats Waller, Dukc Ellington, Benny Goodman, Cootie Williams, Benny Carter, Teddy Hill, Chick Webb, Mary Lou Williams, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton." (Chapter , pg. 106)

As I talked to [psychoanalyst Martha Jaeger], abandoned myself to her care, I felt less hurt and less confused. It was as if I had been given absolution and the permission to rest, relax and give up my burdens. She was amazed at all I had taken on. The second time when I left her, I fell asleep in the subway and at home I slept, slept as if for the first time. I thought of nothing. I gave up all my cares and responsibilities. The third time she explained the urge that had driven me into this superhuman effort: 'You attempted to

take care of everyone. You attempted the infinite with a finite human body.' I crumbled because of the immensity of the burden. I have had all my relationships with men, of all kinds. Now my drama is that of the woman in relation to herself—her conflict between selfishness and individuality, and how to manifest the cosmic consciousness. How necessary is this periodic removal of guilt. It plays the role of the old confession and absolution. Psychoanalysis is our only way of gaining wisdom because we no longer have religion." Chapter , pg .240-241)

"What I consider my weaknesses are feminine traits: incapacity to destroy, ineffectualness in battle. I represent, for other women too, the one who wanted to create with, by and through her femininity. I am a good [psychoanalysis] subject because I have lived out everything, and because contrary to most creative women of our time I have not imitated, or become, man. It is the creative self which rescue me. Constitutionally, I am more or less doomed to suffer and I have had little relief from anxiety and doubts. But I am learning the difference between guilt suffering and real suffering due to normal, inevitable causes (illness, war, separation). I have learned the difference between human tragedies and those caused by a guilt-ridden soul seeking atonement." (Chapter , pg. 265)

""You are walking into a summer day. You are crossing a street, The automobile does not strike you down. It is not you who are inside the ambulance being taken to St. Vincent's Hospital. But as you cross the street the wind lifts the dirt and before it touches your face you feel as if all these horrors had happened to you, you feel the nameless anxiety, the shrinking of the heart, the asphyxiation, the suffocation of pain, the horror of the soul being stabbed. Everybody understands hunger, physical pain, illness, poverty, slavery. But no one understands that this moment at which I crossed the street is more annihilating than a concrete catastrophe. Could it come from a participation, an empathy with what is happening to others?" (Chapter , pg. 277)

"Gonzalo is terrified by women's new roles. Imagine kissing a corporal, a sniper, a captain, a welder! Imagine that! Impossible to regard them tenderly as women. Man's fear! But I say to Gonzalo (thinking of Helba): 'Women are much more dangerous as thwarted wills, unfulfilled artists, frustrated mothers, perverted power-seekers, who seek to dominate in directly, via man. Women of yesterday and their negative wills! Their will bending children, husbands, servants, gardeners, Trying to fulfill themselves through others.'" (Chapter , pg. 291)

"For the first time I have conquered restlessness, my imagination does not wander to all the far places and toward all the far strangers, questing, expecting what? For the first time my body and soul are together, and the sound of a window closing, a door closing, is no more alarming than the wings of an icon closing over a figure praying. I can bear to listen to music; it is not a provocation to more adventures, a pursuit of ghosts, a tracking down of mirages, an embracing of the void. This is no mere interlude to an unceasing hunger and curiosity but a possession of the present and near I have neglected. Let distant ecstasies and imaginings no longer lure me on." (Chapter , pg. 314)

Topics for Discussion

How does Anais Nin adapt to her new home in America after fleeing Paris because of World War II?

What is her opinion of Henry Miller's work at the beginning of the book, as compared with her opinion after undergoing psychoanalysis?

What does Anais Nin do to help raise cash for herself in her struggles in New York?

How does Anais Nin view American culture, compared with that of Europe and Paris?

What is the primary social difference that Nin perceives between Americans and Europeans?

How does Anais Nin cope with her problems of finding a publisher in America?

When does Anais Nin first begin to connect her own financial problems with her drive to take care of all her friends?

What is Anais Nin's opinion of Kenneth Patchen, as a person and as a writer?

What is the one cultural bright spot in America that Anais Nin discovers?

Does Nin ever overcome her financial problems in this diary?