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Exploring Gender Roles and Sigmund Freud's Taboo in the  
Unexpurgated Diary of Anais Nin

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to explore the first unexpurgated diary of Anais Nin, titled *Henry and June: From a Journal of Love: The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin 1931–1932* and the ways in which it engages with gender roles, and themes of repression, desire, and the notion of taboo. Anais Nin was a twentieth-century diarist, essayist, and a writer of erotica and short fiction. While her fiction gained her underground recognition, it was her diaries that catapulted Anais Nin towards fame. Her infamous diaries were seen as highly controversial and yet also gained much acclaim, with Anais Nin being renowned in her later life as a feminist writer and icon for her writing.

This thesis aims to explore the ways in which Nin uses the diary as a medium to question and subvert traditional gender roles, to chronicle her exploration of the ‘self’, to use the diary as a platform for self-fashioning and self-representation, and to examine the ways in which the diary acts as a literary space for engaging with taboo topics. Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1913) will act as a theoretical framework for the analysis of this case study, and his notions of taboo, incest, and psychoanalysis will serve to inform the analysis of Anais Nin’s diary.

To give a brief overview of this thesis, Chapter One will contextualise the diary within the historical and theoretical context of this thesis. Chapter Two will focus specifically on analysing the role of the diary and diary-writing within Anais Nin’s *Henry & June*. Finally, Chapter Three will further explore themes such as the notion of taboo, gender roles, gender performativity, androgyny, and childhood trauma within the diary. Ultimately, this thesis aims to investigate the research question, in which ways does Anais Nin make use of the diary to challenge conventional gender roles, and to negotiate questions of desire, repression, and taboo?

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
 <b>Chapter One: Contextualising the Diary within Historical and Theoretical Context</b>	
1.1 “Dear Diary”: Defining the Diary Writing	
Practice.....	7
1.2 Literature Review: Contextualising The Diary Within the Academic Field.....	10
1.3 Historical Context: Modernism & Women Diarists in the early Twentieth Century.....	12
1.4 Theoretical Framework: Sigmund Freud’s Notion of ‘Taboo’.....	19
 <b>Chapter Two: Exploring the Role of the Diary within <i>Henry &amp; June</i></b>	
2.1 The Role of Diary-Writing in <i>Henry &amp; June</i> .....	28
2.2 The Diary as Disease or as Therapy.....	31
2.3 Religion & The Diary: The Diary as Confession.....	32
2.4 The Diary as a Dialogue with the Self: Nin’s Multiple Selves.....	37
 <b>Chapter Three: Exploring Freud’s Taboo, The Self, and Gender Roles within Nin’s Diary</b>	
3.1 Unearthing the Taboo of Incest.....	40
3.2 The Omnipresent Father Figure.....	42
3.3 Healing Childhood Trauma: The Woman & The Inner Child.....	47
3.4 Gender as Performance: Performativity in Nin’s Diary.....	41
3.5 Androgyny in <i>Henry &amp; June</i> : The Woman and Her Double.....	50
Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography.....	56

## Introduction

Diaries have not had the same status as the novel, or theatre pieces, or poems historically. Yet, undoubtedly, diaries have carried a unique fascination for critics and readers alike, and the diary remains a contested and interesting form of writing today. Writers such as Sylvia Plath, Anais Nin, Virginia Woolf, and Anne Frank as well as their diaries remain influential both in academia and to lay readers even today. It is no understatement to say that these writers have popularised the diary form.

Anais Nin was an influential, though somewhat niche, diarist. She was a provocative woman writer living and writing during the twentieth century within a tumultuous and changing Europe. Anais Nin was a French-born American writer with Cuban and Spanish parents. She was a writer of short stories of erotica, an essayist, a novelist, and a diarist. She led a transnational life moving between Cuba, Spain, France and America. Anais Nin was a controversial figure for much of her writing career and was heavily criticized for her work, yet due to feminist revisionism and in contemporary times Nin has been heralded as a feminist icon.

Anais Nin's diaries were originally published as the expurgated Volumes 1 till 7, meaning they were censored before publication. Later, the unexpurgated versions of her diaries were published, which were titled "A Journal of Love" and included six more volumes. While it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse all volumes of Anais Nin's diary, the first one *Henry & June* was selected as it offers a good entry point into studying the life and writing career of Anais Nin. Indeed, the notion of taboo is particularly relevant for this diary, because the *Henry & June* diary explores questions of sexual emancipation, the incest taboo, childhood trauma, lesbian desire, and polyamorous and extra-marital relationships. The diary captures Nin's early fascination with psychoanalysis, and suitably, Freud's writing on psychoanalysis, taboo,

and incest in *Totem and Taboo* will act as a theoretical framework and act as a guiding text with which to further analyse Nin's diary. The reason for which Nin's unexpurgated diary was selected as a case study was because Anais Nin has explored unconventional and taboo themes in her diary. Her work remains influential to feminist writing and thinking, and can be considered feminist literature. This thesis is interested in exploring the unique link that exists between women writers and the diary form, with a specific focus on Anais Nin and how she made use of the diary form as a medium for her writing in order to explore taboo themes. Furthermore, this thesis will explore specific themes in relation to the diary - for example, how the diary engages with gender roles, how the diary can offer a space in which to discuss taboo themes, and how the diary can serve as a platform for self-representation and as a medium for exploration of the self.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to explore the research question; in which ways does Anais Nin make use of the diary to challenge conventional gender roles, and to negotiate questions of desire, repression, and taboo?

## **Chapter One: Contextualising the Diary within Historical and Theoretical Context**

### **Background Information on Anais Nin**

To begin, it is interesting to explore the reception Anais Nin has received as a persona and writer and the relevance that Nin has in contemporary times. In the text "Writing an Icon: Celebrity Culture and the Invention of Anais Nin", Anita Jarczok writes that after the publication of Nin's diary in 1966 she became a role model and cultural symbol. She was invited for interviews and lectures. Young women in particular were avid fans of Nin. Her erotic fiction was published after her death in 1977 and this made her a best-selling author, it was seen as unique in that it was erotica from a female perspective. However, later on, several biographies on Nin exposed

controversial facts about her such as her affair with her father Joaquin Nin, and her having two husbands at the same time, and she became an increasingly controversial figure who lost some respect in literary and feminist circles (Jarczok 2). Nonetheless, both her persona and her writing remain (in)famous today.

In an article for *The Guardian*, Sady Doyle writes about the relevance of Nin's work particularly in contemporary times, and during the Internet era. During much of her writing career, Nin was deemed an unfashionable underground writer who received little attention from the mainstream media. Yet there has been, in contemporary times, a revival of her work in internet and pop culture, as quotes from her books and diaries began to circulate online on social media platforms such as Instagram, and celebrities such as Swedish musician Lykke Li have listed her as a "style muse" (Doyle). Thus Nin's persona and work have come back in fashion. Yet this was not always the case. For much of her life and writing career, Nin was a controversial figure because she was "a woman who wrote explicitly about sex from a female point of view. Her work included frank portrayals of illegal abortions, extramarital affairs and incest, all of which Nin wrote about without judging her female characters" (Doyle). She struggled greatly with publishing her writing; out of the nine works of fiction she wrote, four were self-published by Nin herself via a press. And only one work, a collection of short stories titled *Under A Glass Bell*, received any critical attention (Doyle).

However, her diaries were immensely popular. In 1966 *The Diary of Anais Nin* was published by Harcourt Brace. Nin's exploration of the self in her diaries was seen as unique. She became a feminist icon, a writer who spoke for the future generations of women, she spoke of topics with an attitude well ahead of her time. However, the persona of Nin remained rocky even after her death, she was criticised for her unconventional lifestyle, and her literary talent was

constantly questioned once her unexpurgated diaries and erotica were published. Her desire for human connection, came true with the rise of the Internet (Doyle). Nin's legacy continues to live on through new generations of women and readers, and the Internet.

In a similar article written by Kim Krizan for the *The Huffington Post*, they cite Anais Nin as the first true “blogger”, though her diaries were published pre-Internet era. Through her diary-writing she explored “surrealistic writing and psychoanalysis” as well as chronicling her life and affairs faithfully in her journal, which she dared to share with public readers (Krizan). Before the age of “social media”, Nin was the “high priestess of the public diary” (Krizan). While it is common to constantly chronicle and share personal experiences today in the social media age - Nin used her diaries to explore personal confession. (This notion of the diary as a space of personal confession is a deeply interesting one, which will be further explored in Chapter Three of this thesis). Her work broke through boundaries of the conscious and unconscious, fiction and nonfiction, private and public, and the diary and novel. In this sense her work was truly unique and before her time (Krizan).

While we as a society now accept self-expression, self-exposure, and self-analysis, Nin pioneered this style of writing long before the rise of Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter and other social media. Her wish for a “cafe in space” to keep in touch with others became a reality with the rise of the Internet (Krizan). In her time, Anais Nin was heavily critiqued as a self-centred narcissist and even monsterized, yet newer generations have found inspiration in her diaries, with her work appearing to be more relevant than ever.

Looking back somewhat further in time to Nin's reception in the 1970s, it is interesting to note that *The New York Times* published several articles about Anais Nin in the early 1970s. This was during the peak of Nin's international fame, after the publication of her diaries in 1966.

These articles now belong to the New York Times Archive. One in particular was interesting, written by Joyce Carol Oates in 1976. While this is evidently not a recent article, it offers a critical review of Nin's work much closer to the publication of her diaries and grants a sense of what kind of reception Nin received after publishing her diaries.

Oates writes, "Of all the forms of literature, the diary is perhaps the most seductive for both reader and writer. It is the "easiest" form— The easiest to read and to write; it is "authentic"; at its best it has an immediacy, an intensity, that draws us into the diarist's life" (Oates). Oates, like many critics at the time of Nin's diary publication, was positive about the diary as a written form and the ways it could engage readership. She also explains why Nin's diaries were being so heavily criticised by critics in that time period; her self-analysis was seen as narcissistic because society at that time "worships involvement with society and often judges people in terms of their "relatedness" to the community or the state" (Oates). Oates proposes that Nin's focus on self-analysis was not due to narcissism but was rather inspired by early "psychoanalytic" tradition. She was an early devotee of psychoanalysis and had sessions with Otto Rank - one of Freud's contemporaries (Oates).

These articles offer some insight into the reception that Nin has received, both in the 1970s and in more current times, the other articles having been written in 2014 and 2015, the time period in which Anais Nin was having a "come-back" and was in fashion again.

### **1.1. "Dear Diary": Defining the Diary Writing Practice**

Next, since this thesis is discussing the diary, it is important to define what a diary is and what the diary form actually entails. In "Letters and Diaries as Life Writing", Nassim W. Balestrini writes that the diary is a form of 'life writing'. Life writing is an umbrella term which



generally includes other forms of writing such as letters or autobiographies. Significant for this thesis is Balestrini's claim that the diary, as a life writing form, represents a space of negotiating, of constructing, and of defending subjectivity (Balestrini 140). Some of the typical features she detects in this genre include: self-reflection, seriality (multiple diary entries), chronological order of the entries, relative brevity of entries, and writing which occurs over a long period of time (Balestrini 142).

While most readers tend to ascribe monologic features to the diary, Balestrini reclaims it as a deeply dialogic genre. The diarist always entails an 'I-You' dialogue; diarists might write to themselves, to the diary itself, or to a God-like figure, for example in religious diaries (Balestrini 142). Furthermore, diarists could be writing to an imagined reader or friend. Thus, the diary is a space used for expressing and unfolding the 'self'. However, this 'self' is not static or fixed. The self depicted in a diary is partly fictional and constructed by the writer. Diaries are also defined by an element of secrecy, "the communication of the self in diaries is based on the suggestion of privacy, intimacy, and even secrecy" (Balestrini 142).

The diary also has several common uses. They might include "the documentation of one's everyday life, a chronology of events, a description of feelings and moods, as well as introspection and self-reflection", as well as potential sources for a future autobiography (Balestrini 142).

However, unlike the autobiography, the diary does not offer one coherent, overarching narrative. Rather, it is a "fragmented" form of self-reflection over various entries, which usually need to be read in relation to or against other entries (Balestrini 142). As will be shown in the following, the diary can be considered a conflicted form and space where different roles and possibilities of the self can be staged, negotiated, and reclaimed.

In the Introduction, titled “Diary as a Quasi-Literary Genre”, Angela R. Hooks writes that “diarykeepers find their expressive language, explore their identity, and understand themselves, their intimate relationships, and the world around them using the diary” and that the diary can function as a mixture of “private thoughts” and “public information” (Hooks x). Though now we view the diary as a private text, before the mid-nineteenth century, diaries were semi-public documents. They were passed between family members and friends. The diary-writing practice in America was first used by the clergy for spiritual purposes, and later by common people, for “people who wanted to discover who they really were, their inner lives” (xii). Interestingly, in the late twentieth century, psychological insights popularised the diary. Hooks cites Tristine Rainer, who wrote that modern psychology’s recognition of the subconscious, free experimentation in art and writing, and psychological insights and increased individuality all helped to popularise the diary form (Hooks xiv).

In a similar vein, in her essay “That Profoundly Female, and Feminist Genre: The Diary as Feminist Practice”, Cynthia Huff argues: “Diaries speak to us without the need of a mediator” and thus diaries are “accessible” and “comprehensible” (6). Due to this accessibility in its written style, there is a direct connection and a specific pact between the reader and the writer. Huff also makes an interesting point when she says that the diary has played an important role specifically for women. The diary genre is a way of connecting to a “collective yet differentiated women’s past” (6). Thus, she argues that the diary blurs the boundary between the personal and the collective. The diary is a mode of engaging with embodied and lived experiences of individuals, as well as communities of women.

It is not a coincidence that Huff’s article is titled after a quote by the American poet, essayist, and feminist Adrienne Rich; Rich has famously stated that the diary is “that profoundly

female, and feminist, genre” (Huff 6). She proposes that diaries are a feminist practice, by viewing it both as a literary and as a social practice, one that makes connections, establishes community, explores new areas of knowledge, and breaks away from traditional boundaries established by male dominated literary spaces.

This is, then, an interesting argument for exploring the link that exists between gender roles, women writers, and the diary. This topic will be explored further in the upcoming chapters.

## **1.2 Literature Review: Contextualising The Diary Within the Academic Field**

Several academics have studied and written about the diary, which is known as the research field called ‘diary studies’. The broader umbrella term is called ‘life writing’, of which diaries are one subgenre. While many academics have written about the diary, this thesis will focus more in-depth on a few selected texts in relation to the primary text of Anais Nin’s diary *Henry & June* which will act as the case study, and Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* which will act as the theoretical framework.

Several academic texts were significant for the writing of this thesis. As discussed in Chapter 1.1, N.W Balestrini offers a comprehensive and foundational text about the key elements of diary writing, and the ways in which the diary is used to explore the self, which entails the literal and also the fictionalised literary self of the writer. Her suggestion that the diary is a space of negotiating the ‘self’ and of constructing and shaping subjectivity is an idea which will be highly important later in this thesis. This idea will inform the analysis of the diary of Anais Nin and the ways in which Nin engages with the roles she plays as a woman and writer/artist, as well as the ways in which she explores the ‘self’ through psychoanalytic theory.

Writers such as Cynthia Huff and Elizabeth Podnieks have written at length about the ways in which the diary writing practice is connected to women writers. As will be discussed in the following chapter hereafter, in the article “That Profoundly Female, and Feminist Genre: The Diary as Feminist Practice” Huff has proposed the idea that the act of diary writing itself is a feminist practice. It is a mode of engaging with other forms of knowledge besides the historically male-dominated literary or academic spheres. Diaries, she argues, are a form of lived and embodied knowledge of individuals and collective groups of women. The diary, she argues, has also been a space in which women can explore their inner thoughts, dreams, and fantasies within the restrictive roles ascribed to women. Elizabeth Podnieks in the book *Daily Modernism: the literary diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anais Nin* touches upon similar themes as Huff, both write about the importance of the diary in giving women writers a chance at self-representation and self-fashioning. These texts are important for understanding the link between gender and diary writing and why it was such an influential genre for women writers.

Furthermore, Podnieks touches upon the notion of taboo and how women used the diary to avoid censorship in the publishing world. Inspired by Podnieks’s text, this thesis hopes to expand on the topic of the taboo in relation to the diary. While many writers have written about the link between women, gender roles, and the diary, I felt that there was more to be said about the use of the diary in relation to taboo. This thesis aims to also further expand on various lesser-discussed taboos, such as incest or androgyny, making use of Freudian theory in order to explore the taboo and its meanings within Anais Nin’s unexpurgated diary.

### 1.3 Historical Context: Modernism & Women Diarists in the Early Twentieth Century

The works of Elizabeth Podnieks and Marianne Devoken can offer further insight into the historical and cultural context of the diary. Devoken discusses the suffragette movement, the first wave of feminism, the rise of “The New Woman” and the effect these factors had on women writers in the twentieth century.

In her chapter “Modernism and gender”, she writes that shifting gender relations were key to the Modernist movement. The period of modernism, from 1880 till 1920, was also occurring alongside the first wave of feminism and the suffragette movement. This time period saw the birth of the so-called “The New Woman”, a woman who was educated, independent, relatively sexually liberated, and striving for a life in the public sphere rather than within the home sphere. The “New Woman” existed in opposition to the previous expectation of the Victorian “Angel in the House”. The “Angel in the House” is a term which encapsulates a specific repressive ideal of femininity, as women in the Victorian era were expected to be angelic figures presiding mainly in the home sphere. This wave of feminism also influenced literature, and writers became increasingly preoccupied with exploring gender issues in their works. Many writers created characters that embodied this “New Woman” (Devoken 174).

Furthermore, women writers were equally influential, comparable to their male counterparts, in shaping the stylistic characteristics of modernism. In *Marxism and Modernism*, for example, Eugene Lunin makes the point that the characteristics of modernism include: self-consciousness, self-reflexiveness, juxtaposition, montage, paradox, uncertainty, and ambiguity. While there are many other elements in modernist writing, these can be seen as some key aesthetic preoccupations. Many women writers, including Anais Nin, engaged with these modernist techniques and are deemed key figures of the modernist movement, alongside their

male counterparts (Devoken 175). The time period in which Modernism flourished sought to overthrow the Victorian ideal of femininity, which was a “closeted, domesticated, desexualized, disenfranchised femininity” (Devoken 177). Thus, the “New Woman” grew in opposition to the previous Victorian ideal.

In addition, Devoken cites Sigmund Freud as a quintessential modernist gender theorist. Much of Freud’s writing on psychoanalysis was inspired by his work with his female patients, and his research into female “hysteria”. Yet Devoken points out several critiques on Freud’s psychoanalysis. For example, in Freud’s Oedipal nuclear family dynamic the son is the protagonist, the father is the antagonist, and the mother a passive object of their conflicting desire. Furthermore, Freud characterised women as “castrated” - defined by the “absence” and “lack” of male genitals. They were thus conceived of in negative terms of lack. The work of Freud, and more specifically his concept of psychoanalysis and the taboo, will be further discussed in the “Theoretical overview” section of this thesis. However, Devoken already points out some crucial critiques on Freud’s theories in relation to women which are important to keep in mind especially when discussing modernist women writers and feminist literature.

In the text *Daily Modernism: The Literary Diaries of Virginia Woolf, Antonia White, Elizabeth Smart, and Anais Nin*, Elizabeth Podnieks gives further insight into the history of diary writing in relation to women writers. Podnieks writes that the feminization of diary-keeping is due to the fact that in the nineteenth century there was a great divide between the public and home sphere. Women were deemed connected to the home sphere; to the family, the sexual, the emotional and the private, whereas men were encouraged to act in the public sphere (Podnieks 45). The reason why diary writing became so prevalent for women was because it was something that could be done within the home environment. Citing Thomas Mallon, Podnieks deliberates

that keeping a diary and writing at home were encouraged in women, whereas other forms of writing that held more literary status, such as writing plays, were discouraged in women writers (47). There was a divide in the kinds of writings that men and women took part in. Historically, more women were illiterate than men, and literate women mainly wrote letters and kept diaries. They were associated with the private and not intended for publication to an audience (Podnieks 48). Furthermore, the diary was associated with emotion, personal reflection, and with inner life. Women turned to the diary form in order to express their sense of “self” within the bounds of the home sphere and the societal expectations of feminine conduct (Podnieks 51).

In the text “Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre” Valerie Raoul cites Dale Spender who wrote in *Man-Made Language* that in the nineteenth century women were discouraged from writing for the public. They were encouraged to engage in “private writing” which was seen as “an accomplishment and recreation” as long as it didn’t interfere with the business of being a woman” (194). Interestingly, more girls write in diaries than boys, however more diaries of men have been published than those of women (Begos 69-74). Girls were often given diaries during their adolescence, however keeping a diary once married was seen as self-indulgent, a waste of time (which should be spent helping others or in the house) and as a source of secrecy which was viewed with suspicion (Raoul 58). All of these cultural and historical barriers made diary writing difficult for women. In this sense, the diary was particularly important to women writers as it offered a medium through which to express themselves and a platform for self-representation and self-fashioning.

To briefly return to Huff, she writes diaries were also important to women writers because “diaries functioned as a place where women could bring together their physical and mental life” (11). This might also explain why the diary form was so beneficial to women

writers, because it allowed women to chronicle their inner lives and to write their innermost thoughts, offering a bridge between their lived experiences and their inner thoughts, dreams or fantasies. Similarly, Podnieks cites Blodgett who notes that the *act* of diary writing allowed for women to express and maintain their sense of self as autonomous and significant beings (53).

However, it should be noted that there are some critiques to the diary writing tradition. Class and race were important factors that limited accessibility to writing and to the diary tradition. The tradition of diary-writing was mostly practised by white, upper-class women who were literate and also had the time and space to keep diaries, as is the case with Nin (Podnieks 51). Thus it should be noted that not all women storytellers and their embodied experiences are told through written language and that the diary form is not the only mode of knowledge to be engaged with. Furthermore, even the diary is not an all-encompassing medium for all women writers, as even so there were barriers to the accessibility to the diary writing tradition.

But Podnieks also alerts us to another interesting aspect; she cites Susan Stanford Friedman who wrote that “exile” and leaving home were crucial to women artists in the modernist period. Modernist women artists, particularly in cultural cities such as Paris and London, were increasingly trying to break through stifling conventional lives and were engaging in non-monogamous, non-marital, or queer relationships and escaping the gender expectations in the home sphere. Friedman calls this the “flight from femininity” and notes the importance of breaking away from the gendered expectation of being “the angel in the house” for modernist women artists (Podnieks 74). Interestingly, Anais Nin was also an expatriate who wrote in foreign places, “exiled” in this sense. One could argue that women writers, such as Nin, were “exiled” (to use Friedman’s term) due to their gender.



“Feminine” texts such as diaries were historically marginalised from the academic and critical sphere (72). The diary genre has remained gendered, as it is associated with ‘women’s literature’ and has arguably received less critical attention than genres such as the autobiography, which is a more male-dominated genre. Despite their prominent and controversial writing careers, women artists were still relegated to the outskirts of the artistic and intellectual field in a patriarchal society (Podnieks 75). However, feminist revisionism has reclaimed critical attention for the diary genre and the women writers who have largely contributed to the genre.

It does not come as a surprise then that women often turned to the diary as a space in which they could express themselves in a way that a patriarchal society did not perhaps allow in public. Thus, the diary space is not by definition a more feminine space; yet it remains a more “meaningful site” for women than for men (Podnieks 6). It allowed for women to express themselves within culturally scripted roles while also being able to express their subversive desires and experiences (6).

Furthermore, while women writers in the twentieth century did have access to the literary marketplace, they were still heavily censored on taboo topics, particularly any topic relating to sexuality. Such censorship made publication for some women writers particularly tortuous. Women writers often needed to print via a private press or use coded language to discuss taboo topics such as abortions, lesbianism, or sexual themes. Podnieks argues that sexuality is an important subject matter for women’s diaries in the twentieth century. Many diaries at the time explored notions of lesbian desire but also “masturbatory fantasies, adulterous passions, incest, and bad mothering” (Podnieks 6). These heavily censored topics were considered “radical or taboo subject matter” (6). The diary offered a form in which women could express these topics more freely, particularly with the intention of publishing them later.

The “private-diary-as-public-text”, as Podnieks calls it, was the perfect vehicle for women writers to express such taboo topics with less censorship (7). It was not until the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that feminist revisionism in literature shed a renewed light on the diaries of women writers (Podnieks 4). This feminist revisionism was able to re-claim the diary writing practice and bring re-newed attention to the women writers, such as Nin, who influenced the genre so heavily.

For example, as cited on the Anais Nin Foundation webpage, it was not until her sixties and seventies that Anais Nin found herself in the position of being “an international feminist icon” (Anais Nin Foundation). However, throughout her life and writing career she had suffered “many frustrations in the publishing world” (Anais Nin Foundation). and even needed to buy her own printing press to publish and print her own books. Thus, the historical context is highly relevant to the work of women writers, particularly in relation to modernism. As readers and scholars, we tend to take their feminist icon status for granted, yet throughout their writing careers much of their work was viewed as taboo and controversial, and was heavily censored.

In fact, Anais Nin discussed these very topics in a speech titled “The New Woman” for Ramparts Report, a weekly news program sponsored by Ramparts Magazine. In the speech, Nin discusses her vision of “The New Woman” and her hopes for the women of the future. This interview was based on a speech she gave in April 1974 in San Francisco for the ‘Celebration of Women in the Arts, Female of the Species’ event.

Within this interview recording, to paraphrase, Nin says that the need for women to write stems from the desire to create a world in which one can live, a world free from one’s parents, free from war, free from oppressive politics. Writing is an ability to recreate ones self. In this

sense, writing is a way to transcend life and to expand our worlds when we feel strangled or constricted; writing is a necessity.

Nin says that historically women have been too busy being muses rather than artists. In her first diary she writes she wishes to be the wife of the genius or artist. Yet she realised that ultimately this is something she needed to become herself. The difference, she states, is that culture demands men to give their maximum talent into the world. They are pushed and encouraged to become great. Yet for women, as in Nin's family, they are expected to marry, to be a wife, and to have children. Yet Nin notes this is not the inclination for all women.

It is this inner child-like creativity and fantasy which Nin encourages women to engage with. Nin proposes that one does not need any one particular skill in order to escape the constrictions of suburban life in a conventional marriage. Rather it is about faith. It is about the necessity to be a writer - even if no one is listening. Thus, her vision of "The New Woman" is a woman who is free from the guilt of creating. It is a woman in harmony with her own strength. Nin says that it is necessary for women not to live vicariously through men but to achieve their desires themselves. The modern woman is sure, confident, and is able to ask for space for herself - for example, a room for one's self in which to write or make art. Nin proposes that women do not need to write about war or large things, and can write about the personal and the intimate. This is equally important, she says. We, as women, will find strength if we admit our own androgyny, and our many personalities and sides to be fulfilled (Nin).

With this knowledge in mind about the role of the New Woman and changing gender roles during modernism, this thesis turns to the next sub-chapter.

#### **1.4 Theoretical Framework: Sigmund Freud's Notion of the 'Taboo'**

Having mentioned Freud and psychoanalysis in the previous sub-chapter, it is now important to further delve into this topic. Both Freud and his psychoanalytic method are importantly linked to modernism and the twentieth century. Psychoanalysis is defined by the Britannica dictionary as a practice to treat mental disorders by focusing on unconscious mental processes.

Freud incorporated the technique of free association of ideas within his psychoanalytic practice. With this technique, his patients were encouraged to voice thoughts and associations without focusing on relevance or propriety. This free-association technique allowed for the exploration of dreams and slips of the tongue. This was a technique that allowed him to explore sites of repression, as well as the unconscious mind (Britannica dictionary).

This thesis concerns itself with the question to which extent the diary can serve a similar purpose, as a Freudian free association technique which allows the diarist to write freely and to work with free association of thoughts as she 'spills' out onto the pages material which is repressed or tabooed. The diary could serve as a space in which to explore inner desires, the meaning of dreams, fantasies, and the psyche. The diary can act as a space free of censorship or public scrutiny and thus be a place of healing and of experimentation, but paradoxically, also of re-inscribed and repeated censorship. If the diary represented an important space to women writers struggling within the restraints of a patriarchal society, we cannot exclude the possibility that the diary repeats forms of repression and internalised censorship.

However, from a feminist lens psychoanalysis can also be seen as problematic. Psychoanalysis is "often rejected by feminism" and yet it remains important and controversial in debates about sexual identity, repression, and memory (Brooks 2). Brooks, for instance, notes

that some of the largest critiques on Freud have come from feminist thinkers, who feel that Freud's definition of sexuality is too heteronormative and too narrow. And in certain fields of psychoanalysis homosexuality has historically been viewed as a "deviance" to be cured – which is highly problematic in today's political and cultural climate. Yet Brooks argues that nonetheless Freud's work on human sexuality has been complex and remains influential (5). Brooks writes that psychoanalysis is based on "the unconscious, the importance of infantile sexuality, the workings of psychic retroaction, the vast role of fantasy and fiction in our self-conceptions as human beings" (10). This quote in particular is incredibly linked to the art of diary writing, in that the diary acts as a form of expressing the 'self' and is connected to self-conception, self-fashioning and self-representation. As Balestrini had mentioned, however, this 'self' can also be connected to fantasy and fiction which are part of self-fashioning. Terms such as 'repression' and the 'unconscious' play an important role when discussing the diary, particularly in relation to women writing within a historically patriarchal literary field. These key terms will be discussed in relation to the taboo in the following section.

Secondly, it is important to discuss the concept of the taboo. The notion of the taboo was also coined by Sigmund Freud. He published his famous work *Totem and Taboo* in 1913. The text includes four chapters, titled "The Savage's Dread of Incest", "Taboo and the Ambivalence of Emotions", "Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thought", and "The Infantile Recurrence of Totemism". The second chapter offers further insight into the meaning of the "taboo".

It should be briefly noted that there are some critiques to be made of Freud's book and the chapters analysed within before delving into the material. His use of terms such as "primitive races" and "savages" are no longer politically correct in contemporary times. Freud makes use of

the word “savage” or “savages” consistently and depicts the figure of the “savage” as an “Other” in contrast to the Western “civilised man”. The depiction of certain traditions in tribes in Africa and Australia surrounding their understanding of the taboo are depicted in a Eurocentric way. Freud also compares the “neurotic” to the “savage” (for example, this can be seen on page 30). These factors are, of course, problematic. The upcoming analysis does not make use of these words and attempts to explain the concept of the “taboo” in an objective way as much as possible.

To begin, ‘Taboo’ is a Polynesian word, yet the Ancient Romans had a word with a similar meaning called ‘sacer’, and the Hebrews called it ‘Kodaush’. The meaning of the taboo was spread across numerous societies in America, Africa (Madagascar), and North and Central Asia. The taboo can signify two things; the “sacred”, or that which is “uncanny, dangerous, forbidden, and unclean” (Freud 14). The taboo is the opposite of what is considered ordinary or generally accessible. Freud notes that the taboo is different from religious or moral prohibitions. Freud cites the article ‘Taboo’ in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* written by the anthropologist Northcote W. Thomas. Within the Britannica article the taboo is linked to the notion of punishment. Initially, the punishment was from the gods for engaging in a taboo act, but later it was enforced by society onto the wrongdoer. By committing a taboo, the person themselves becomes taboo. The taboo is thus associated with punishment and restriction.

Furthermore, the taboo was initially seen as something transmissible between object to person, or between people (Freud 15). The belief was that the taboo is transmissible and contagious. The taboo has historically included persons who have prominence such as kings, priests and newborns. The taboo also included physical states such as menstruation, puberty and birth. And it included anything relating to illness or death. To summarise in brief, the taboo

includes all that is sacred, out of the ordinary, dangerous, unclean, or mysterious (Freud 15). Originally, the taboo was associated with the fear of the demonic.

Freud cites W. Wundt who notes that there is no race or culture which has entirely escaped the concept of the taboo. The taboo is interwoven in our customs, our traditions, and our laws (Freud 16). Wundt writes that the taboo includes the double meaning of the sacred and the unclean. In either case, the taboo refers to something which is not to be touched, evoking a “dread of contact” (Freud 17). Thus, the taboo has a multi-faceted meaning and is linked to both awe and aversion.

Freud links his concept of the taboo to psychoanalysis. He explains that psychoanalysis centres on the unconscious part of an individual’s psychic life. He writes that people create taboo prohibitions for themselves, which he calls “compulsion neurotics” (18). Freud links compulsion prohibition in individuals to the taboo in that both evoke fear of punishment. Fear of an external punishment is secondary as an internal certainty (a conscience) exists creating fear of repercussions if engaging in taboo acts. Both in the taboo and neurotic prohibition there is the fear of touching or coming into contact with someone or something. This includes mental or physical contact (Freud 18).

The persistence of taboo signifies “the original pleasure to do the forbidden” (20). To paraphrase in short, Freud writes that the taboo evokes an unconscious desire to derive pleasure from engaging in taboo acts; however the fear of committing a taboo overrides the desire to do so. In summation, “the basis of taboo is a forbidden action for which there exists a strong inclination in the unconscious” (Freud 20). Those who have committed a taboo thus become taboo and become dangerously contagious as they may inspire imitation in others by tempting others to do the same. Therefore, the taboo is also a social danger. It could inspire similar actions

in others and dismantle the rules of society. The role of touch is significant, as “to touch is the beginning of every act of possession, of every attempt to make use of a person or thing” (Freud 21). The act of touch is associated with the transmission of the taboo. The taboo is linked to the strongest and most repressed desires of mankind and the power attributed to the taboo is linked to the ability to lead mankind into temptation or to be contagious.

The notion of the taboo is also linked to the notion of a “conscience”, as those who committed a taboo may feel guilt for doing so. A guilty conscience is the “inner condemnation of such acts” (Freud 34). The taboo highlights the ambivalence of the human condition in which desire resides in the unconscious mind and contrasts the conscience. Because the taboo is linked to prohibition the taboo is linked to the desire to do that which is forbidden (34).

Freud also discusses the incest taboo in *Totem and Taboo* in Chapter One. Within the chapter, Freud discusses certain native tribes in Australia as a case study for exploring the incest taboo. He analyses their traditions surrounding the incest taboo. He notes that these ‘septs’ or ‘clans’ in Australia are divided by ‘totems’, each clan being named after a natural force (such as wind or water), or an animal totem, and that as part of their society they “take the most painful rigour in guarding against incestuous sexual relations” (Freud 7). None of the members of the same totem are allowed to have sexual relations or marry one another. This he defines as “exogamy” (8). This is an interesting example Freud chooses, because incest in these tribes does not only mean sexual intercourse with one’s own blood-related family, but rather all members in the same clan are viewed as close family. The punishment for marriage or sexual intercourse within the clan is punishable by death (8). He compares the laws and traditions surrounding the incest taboo in various societies and communities across the world to further explore how various cultures, and ultimately how we as humans, deal with the incest taboo.



Another example given by Freud about incest laws, in the Western world, is that of the efforts of the Catholic Church to ban not only marriages between siblings, but also marriage between cousins as they were considered 'spiritual kin' (10). In several communities, for example on The Solomon Islands, incest refers to not only blood relations, but those who are your family via marriage. For example, a close relationship between a man and his mother-in-law is seen as taboo and prohibited and they must avoid one another (11). Freud speculates that in many cultures in Europe and America that the relationship between mother-in-law and son-in-law are 'ambivalent', both tender and hostile, although there are no such laws of avoidance (12). Freud explains that different cultures have varying intensity in their laws against incest, for example in certain African and Australian communities incest is punishable by death, which is more severe law than in most of central Europe - however he notes that the fear of incest and the taboo surrounding it, as well as the laws and traditions to try to prevent it, exists in communities worldwide.

Freud explains where this fear of incest stems from by explaining that incestuous feelings are part of 'psychic infantilism', as Freud believed boys to have incestuous feelings for 'forbidden objects' such as their mothers or sisters in childhood. Incestuous feelings in adulthood are a return to this childlike state, through 'inhibited development' or 'regression' (13). These incestuous desires are active in the unconscious psychic life (13). Freud speculated that incestuous longings for parents is at the center of neurosis (13). He notes in his text that Otto Rank, one of his colleagues, also wrote extensively on the subject of incest. It is interesting to note that Otto Rank was also Anais Nin's psychoanalyst and lover. To summarise, Freud suggests that incestuous desires are subdued once a child matures into adulthood and these incestuous feelings are succumbed to repression. Once the incestuous desires are repressed, they come to

exist in the unconscious mind, and ultimately inspire a deep aversion to incest due to fear or shame of childhood incestuous feelings (13).

While it is impossible to summarise the entirety of Freud's book *Totem and Taboo* within several pages, the Introduction, Chapter One, and Chapter Two offer the reader a foundational basis as to what psychoanalysis is as well as the notion of the "taboo". It also offers a link between how taboo works in general and specific taboos for example in relation to the "incest" taboo. Freud's writings on psychoanalysis and the taboo will serve as the theoretical framework for this thesis and will be used to further analyse the diary of Anais Nin, who touches upon many of these taboo themes including the incest taboo. It is to the work of this writer that the next chapters turn.

Primarily, it is important to grant the reader some information about the author Anais Nin. According to the Anais Nin Foundation webpage, Anais Nin is defined as a "20th century diarist", who began her life-long work of writing and diary-keeping at the age of eleven in 1914. She continued writing until her death in 1977. Nin focused her diary on her inner life and her diaries chronicle her struggle to find fulfilment within a culture that was "painfully restrictive" for women (Anais Nin Foundation).

Anais Nin was born in France in 1903. Her parents were artists, who were born in Cuba and their family lived mainly in Paris and Spain. Nin's father, composer Joaquin Nin, left the family during Nin's childhood. This forced Nin's family to have to move to America for a new life. Her first written work was a letter addressed to her father, written aboard the ship to America. It was never sent, however it was the beginning of her writing career and her life-long diary. Nin lived in New York City with her family, learned English, and read widely. She worked as an artist's model to support her mother financially. At the age of twenty, Nin married a banker

named Hugh Guiler. They moved to Paris. Nin had a love for reading and continued her diary-writing on a near daily basis.

In 1931, she met American novelist Henry Miller and his wife June. This was an influential period in Nin's life in which she mingled with artists and attempted to break away from conventional gender roles in her life. She was an early devotee of psychoanalysis and worked with Otto Rank, who was one of Freud's colleagues.

Nin wrote diaries, as well as fiction. Only in 1966, however, did Nin publish the first series of her diary, *The Diary of Anais Nin* Volumes 1-7. These were the expurgated versions of her diaries. They were an immediate success. Nin became an "international feminist icon" in her sixties and seventies, as her personal work became influential and popular, especially among women.

Before her death, Nin published the erotica short stories she had written in the 1940s, her childhood diary *Linotte*, and three volumes of her early diaries titled *The Early Diary of Anais Nin*. Nin asked Rupert Pole to publish her unexpurgated diaries as well, of which there were six, including *Henry & June* (Anais Nin Foundation). *Henry & June* was also made into a feature film in 1990 starring Fred Ward, Uma Thurman, and Maria de Medeiros.

The "Editor's Preface" for *Henry & June* was written by one of Nin's husbands, Rupert Pole. Pole writes that Nin wrote fiction and in her diaries simultaneously, playing the contrasting roles of "Anais the diarist" and "Anais the novelist", though she wrote in her diary in 1933 that "I am more loyal to my journal" (5). Anais Nin wanted to fictionalise and publish her diaries. However, to protect the feelings and privacy of her first husband and the people she wrote about, Nin continued to publish her fiction. Her fiction only brought her underground recognition however (Pole 5). Nin later published her heavily edited diaries while omitting personal details

for privacy reasons. Her unexpurgated diaries were only published later, which she asked Rupert Pole to publish.

*Henry & June* focuses on the time period between October 1931 till October 1932. Material was gathered from her journals 32-26. In 1932 she had one of her most productive periods as a writer, writing six journals in that year, as well as experimenting with erotic writing. Her writing was influenced by “Henry Miller’s style and vocabulary” (Pole 6). Yet it also proved an important time period in discovering her own voice as a writer.

This second chapter will be focusing on a close reading analysis of *Henry & June*. This chapter will be divided into several sub-sections, with each sub-section focusing on a key theme within the diary. Anais Nin’s diary has proven to be a fruitful case study, and the sub-sections try to cover all the nuances of the diary and its various themes. These sub-sections will include Nin’s exploration of the taboo, her exploration of the incest taboo, and the various functions of the diary: as a confessional space, as a space of healing trauma (that can be likened to psychoanalytic therapy), and as a feminist counter-space that engages with polyamory, lesbian desire, and seeking to find fulfilment by achieving creative and sexual liberation. The first subsection will focus on Nin’s reflections on diary-writing within *Henry & June*, for example Nin’s discussions of the diary as both a disease and as a healing space (similar to psychoanalytic therapy). This chapter will make use of Freud’s notions of ‘psychoanalytic theory’, ‘taboo’, and ‘incest’ as a theoretical framework in order to explore the ways in which Nin’s diary engages with these themes.

## Chapter Two: Exploring the Role of the Diary within *Henry & June*

### 2.1 The Role of Diary-Writing in *Henry & June*

To begin, it is important to discuss the role of the diary in Nin's *Henry & June*. This first section of analysis will begin with a more general and stylistic overview of the *Henry & June* diary, and the later subsections will dive further into analysing key themes and the diary content. The layout of the diary itself is set up true to the diary format, with the sections being divided as months from October 1931 till October 1932. Throughout the entries, Nin also draws inspiration from an epistolary format as she shares thoughts from her letters in her diary. Nin writes extensive letters to her love interests Henry and June, her husband Hugo, and her cousin and lover Eduardo. She confides both within her letters and her diary about her thoughts and emotions. As Balestrini wrote in her text about the format of the diary, the diary has a sense of secrecy and confidentiality. The reader feels that they are reading something personal and intended for Nin or those closest to her, which draws readers into her inner world - it is not as formal or objectively detached as a biography would be. Nin uses the diary form to question and challenge the roles she plays in her life and the gendered expectations on her - questioning her beliefs about her beauty and body, about her sexuality, about finding self-fulfilment and a sense of self as both a woman and writer.

Her diaries became immensely popular and struck a chord with many women struggling with the same issues and frustrations, such as sexual frustration or discontentment in a hetero-normative, monogamous marriage. She admits her lies, her sins, and her devious actions. But she is also reflective as to why she did those things and the deeper meanings behind them. Nin appears to confide in her diary more than to any of the other people in her life. Nin seems to share her private life with her diary as she would to a confidante. Within the diary she embraces

self reflection and unfiltered expression, whereas in her everyday life she notes that she feels that as a woman she is performing various roles for the sake of others.

The diary covers all aspects of Nin's life, as she ponders about her role as a writer, as a woman, and as a lover, as she continues seeking creative fulfilment in her writing, and sensual fulfilment in her sexual and romantic life. Throughout the diary she is questioning and subverting the gender roles that are expected of her and she explores other sides to herself, besides the conventional women gender roles that she feels trapped within. Throughout the entries, the reader sees her personal evolution over the course of one year.

The reader seems to know more about Nin and her secrets than the other people in her life, as she evades certain truths throughout the text. She carries on various relationships at the same time, several of them in secret. However, the reader becomes aware that Nin herself is not an entirely reliable narrator. Nin admits to the imagined reader that she is embellishing the truth or fictionalising parts of her diary. Thus the boundary between literary novel, and the private diary are increasingly blurred.

Nin draws awareness to this in a meta way. Nin leaves hints for the reader throughout the diary that her diary is a mixing of her reality and fiction. Nin writes, "I sit down before a letter or journal with a desire for honesty, but perhaps in the end I am the biggest liar of them all" (42). Nin writes that the reason her journal is not accurate is because despite the attempt for honesty or authenticity, she writes it with the attempt to achieve beauty in her writing, for example, "The journal is therefore a lie. What is left out of the journal is also left out of my mind. At the moment of writing I rush for beauty. I disperse the rest" (Nin 88). While Nin admits that what she writes in her diary may not always be the exact truth and that she has a "vice for embellishment" (Nin 154), one can see Nin using her diary as a platform for self-fashioning and

self-representation, she is able to shape her literary depiction of herself and can also explore in her diary writing various fantasies of the self and of others.

The diary acts as a space in which she can define herself, a place of self-representation. Nin seems to define herself often within the roles she plays and the relationships she has to other people - the wife of Hugo, the lover of Henry Miller, the cousin of Eduardo, the opposite and yet also the kindred spirit of June. A woman. A writer. Through writing about her self-exploration, Nin is slowly able to come to grips with her fragmented sense of self and to find a more unified whole between her various roles and selves. Within her diary she allows herself to question and negotiate the gendered roles she plays, such as that of the docile house wife to her husband or her desire to explore her more masculine and androgynous self with her lesbian love interest June. She also uses her diary as an outlet for her emotions, and to openly explore taboo themes such as incest, childhood trauma, overcoming insecurities, and the self.

The interesting thing about Nin's diary is that it is a deeply personal piece of writing, however similarly to what Cynthia Huff wrote, Nin's diary can be seen as a feminist practice or a feminist counter-space. Her diary is not only catering to her own experiences, but it is comparable to what Cynthia Huff wrote about the diary being a feminist practice and a form of sharing embodied experience and being an exchange of collective women's experience. Anais Nin's diary de-stigmatizes feelings and taboos for other readers. Through the diary form, readers are able to engage with these topics through first person narration, and in this sense to begin reflecting upon and accepting their own traumas and relationships to their own sense of self. One could say that Nin's diary is a feminist counter-space, offering to share the experience of Nin's own healing journey with readers and to open up a literary space of reflection on women's issues and taboo topics. As Huff has written, the diary can be a form of sharing one's personal and

embodied experiences, however the diary can also be a feminist space in which the collective experiences of women can be shared.

## **2.2 The Diary as a Disease and as Therapy**

Despite Nin's diaries being some of her most popular and iconic work, Nin also saw her diary writing as a kind of disease. She writes, "My journal writing is a vice, a disease" (Nin 110) and that upon opening her diary "I had the feeling that this is the way an opium smoker prepares his pipe" (110), she writes of her journal as a kind of drug, an addiction, an escape from reality. She notes, "I was cured" when she had not written in her diary for three days (113). She writes about the diary as something of a crutch or a dependency. Nin writes, "The journal is a product of my disease, perhaps an accentuation and exaggeration of it" (154). While Nin does not expand on the reason for this, one could speculate that having kept a life-long journal since the age of eleven, perhaps she felt a dependency on journaling, felt that it acted as a catalyst for her difficult emotions, or that diary-writing highlighted underlying issues or frustrations that caused her to later seek out psychoanalytic therapy.

On the other hand, Nin also writes about her diary as a healing space of free association, that can be likened to psychoanalytic therapy. She writes, "I would like to confide to a human being what I confide to my journal" (Nin 91). When she begins psychoanalytic therapy with Dr. Allendy, she says, "I tell him things I have never entirely admitted to myself, and which I have not written in my journal, things I wanted to forget" (Nin 129). Both psychoanalysis and her diary become spaces of confession and of healing.

Dr. Allendy is first introduced at the start of the diary as her cousin Eduardo's psychoanalyst. Eduardo tries to convince Anais to get psychoanalytic therapy as well, however



Anais is at first incredibly sceptical about psychoanalysis. She writes, “No Dr. Allendy for me. No paralyzing analysis. Just living” (Nin 84). At first, Nin views psychoanalysis as the antithesis to life, to art, to writing, and to passion. She views the psychoanalyst as a scientist, the opposite of the artist and she is mistrustful of the psychoanalyst figure, “I lived it with the consciousness of the poet, not the consciousness of the dead-formula-making psychoanalysts” (Nin 41). She further elaborates, “I turn fiercely against science and feel a great loyalty to my instincts” (Nin 91) and yet at the same time she also realises, “Psychoanalysis may force me to be more truthful. Already I realize certain feelings I have, like the fear of being hurt” (91).

Nin struggles between living life through emotion, and living through analysis. While at first she sees them as two opposing forces, she later begins to merge the two, incorporating analysis into her way of living. While Anais Nin’s relationship with psychoanalysis was rocky, she was soon convinced of its benefits, exclaiming, “I could not believe psychoanalysis worked so swiftly. I praised its effects extravagantly” (Nin 118). There is a shift in Nin’s attitude on psychoanalysis from the start till the end of the diary. Anais Nin became an early devotee of psychoanalysis, and this influence can be seen clearly in her diary. The language Nin uses becomes increasingly blended with psychoanalytic terms and theories, particularly Freudian theories such as that of the taboo, that of incest, and the Oedipus Complex.

### **2.3 Religion & The Diary: The Diary as Confession**

Anais Nin also uses the diary as a form of confession. She uses a confessional style of writing, as though writing in her diary was like going to confession at church. This idea of confessing and religion is interesting because it is also a reoccurring theme within the diary. Nin says to her psychoanalyst Dr. Allendy, “I have confessed to you, and I so rarely confess” (105).

Nin makes a deliberate effort not to confess, to keep secrets, to not spoil fantasies with reality. It is within her diary, rather than to people, that she confesses.

Nin continuously circles back in her diary to the image of the saintly woman, the pure or innocent Madonna figure. Nin navigates and negotiates the space between morality and desire, or repression and indulgence. Her recurring focus on religion in the diary may be due to her Catholic upbringing. She critiques her own “perversions” and finds “evil” within herself because of her taboo desires. She questions, “Am I hypnotized, fascinated by evil because I have none in me? Or is there in me the greatest secret evil?” (Nin 182). There is a constant push-and-pull dynamic between her unconscious desires and her conscience, as Freud explained in *Totem and Taboo* about the nature of taboo desires or incestuous desires. The unconscious and often repressed desires are the desires that are usually forbidden - and thus repressed, but nonetheless influencing behaviours from the unconscious mind. Nin plays with this dynamic of repression and indulgence, and confession and penance, within the diary. For example, she writes, “I have a capacity for delicate perversions” (34) and she writes of her wish “to penetrate the evil that which attracts me” (34). She admits that “I have always been tempted by unknown pleasures” (9), playing on the biblical themes of evil, temptation, and forbidden pleasures.

On the contrary, she also feels a desire for penance and absolving herself for her desires and taboo actions. She seeks to help others, even to suffer for them or to serve them, playing the role of the martyr. She writes, “I constantly help men in their work, make sacrifices for them” (101) and “I have made obscure sacrifices, whether small or big” (104). Selfless giving and sacrifice and indulging in one’s passions take turns in her diary. She writes, “as soon as I achieve cruelty, I want to prostrate myself” (Nin 124). Nin, aware of her taboo desires and the ‘sinfulness’ of them, fluctuates between desire and penance, “when I give away all I own, when I

help, understand, serve, what tremendous crimes I am expiating...like my love for Eduardo, my own blood...for June, a woman; for June's husband" (Nin 182). She struggles between her virtues and vices, "I am finished with myself, with my sacrifices and my pity, with what chains me. I am going to make a new beginning. I want passion and pleasure and noise and drunkenness and all evil" writes Nin (108). This is what makes her diary unique - it explores both sides of human nature while navigating questions of morality and the taboo.

While Nin is not necessarily apologetic in her diary, she does reflect on these desires and taboos within her diary entries, the deeper meanings behind her, she uses the language of both psychoanalysis and religion to try to come to terms with her own desires and 'sins', while also subverting the language and rebelling against it. She seems to contradict herself at times by using contrasting imagery; of penance and purity and then of evil and desire. Nin makes use of paradox, and contrasting imagery in this sense - highlighting both opposing themes, of the desire for goodness and desire to be moral, and the desire for evil and the desire to be free from limitations and rules. It seems like a ritual of purifying herself through her writing.

Anais Nin's religious imagery of saints, gods, and good and evil in her diary are particularly riveting. Nin herself plays both the role of the 'madonna' and the 'whore'. This is referring to the Madonna-whore Complex, also defined by Freud, which is the theory that divides women into two categories, separating the respected, motherly, asexual, loved but not desired women as the 'madonnas' and the sexual, desired, but not loved women as the 'whores' - the theory being based in the belief that love and desire are two separate processes and not synonymous. Nin expresses, "with a madonna face, I still swallow God and sperm, and my orgasm resembles a mystical climax" (182). She defines, in this moment, the sexual as the spiritual, and as something godly, "I seek refinement in my incest, the accompaniment of

beautiful chants, music, so that everyone believes in my soul” (182). Rather than demonise sexuality and that which is taboo, she seeks to find acceptance of it. By eroticizing religious vocabulary and evoking herself as the Madonna, which is a religious term for describing the Virgin Mary (a holy figure), Nin seems to be provocative and engaging with blasphemy even. In her language she seems to question religion and re-define and re-appropriate it. This was also a common theme in modernist writing, the questioning of religion and blind faith, and instead exploring the rise of “self consciousness” and the inner world of the self.

Nin is also often glorifying and idolising figures within her diary as god-like personas. For example she noted, “I recall the sacrilegious communions during my childhood at which I received my father in place of God, closing my eyes and swallowing the white bread with blissful tremors, embracing my father, communing with him, in a confusion of religious ecstasy and incestuous passion” (182). Again, this statement might be seen as blasphemous, by replacing god with the figure of her father. Yet it seems to highlight her critiques on the patriarchal hierarchy of religion, of how god is synonymous with the ultimate patriarch, the ultimate father figure. In a way she subverts the figure of god by sexualising him, and by making him human, giving him the shape of a human father. Yet by doing so she also glorifies and elevates her own femininity, her own servitude, her own sensuality and sexuality. She highlights her innocence as a child, noting her own “confusion” between religion and sexuality, and yet the erotic imagery she uses conflicts with that innocence, it seems perverse. The notion of kneeling to accept the bread “closing my eyes and swallowing the white bread”, seems deliberately to mirror the sexual act of oral sex and the white bread seems to be a metaphor for sperm.

Furthermore, her father Joaquin is not the only father she glorifies as a god and sexualises. Anais, after several sessions with her psychoanalyst, begins an affair with her

psychoanalyst Dr. Allendy. She also views Dr. Allendy as a Father figure and as a God. Later on, she encourages her husband Hugo and her lover Henry to go to seek advice from him as well. They then become increasingly influenced by Allendy in their personal lives, “Allendy is now a devil god directing all our lives” she writes (Nin 185). Thus, Dr. Allendy, similarly to Nin’s father, also takes the position of a god-like persona in her diary, and it highlights a recurring theme of desire for a father figure but also the rejection of a traditional god and a reinventing of God through personal beliefs.

The theme of sacrifice and infinite giving might stem from her wish to please her father; she says, “Everything was for him. I wanted to send him my journal” (182). Her father is a kind of omnipresent, god-like figure throughout the diary, always present in her mind. Those Anais loves, like June or Henry, are like demi-gods or saints to her. She writes of love as pain, as sacrifice, as worship - “Incense. Worship. Illusion” (51) she writes. The imagery of religion, of devotion, of worship, and punishment or penance take on an entirely new meaning in Anais Nin’s diary.

She plays with this imagery, eroticizing and perhaps degrading religion. With this, she is also elevating the sexual as sacred, and the taboo as mysterious or mystical. She blurs the traditional Catholic notions of good and evil, or holy and blasphemous. In this sense, Nin is also truly capturing the double meaning of the taboo in her diary, as Freud had written about the ancient meaning of the taboo as being that which is unordinary, but also sacred or unclean, that which is a forbidden desire. Nin captures these nuances of the taboo through her use of imagery, and the motifs of saints and gods, and by depicting love as both holiness and punishment. She makes the reader feel conflicted perhaps, by creating tantalising and sensual imagery over taboo

topics, such as lust for the father figure or incest - yet manages to capture it in a beautiful way, blurring the boundary between what readers might see as “right” or “moral”.

As was mentioned in the Historical Context section of this thesis, Podnieks wrote, sexuality was an important theme for modernist diarists. Modernism sought to overthrow Victorian ideals of morality and propriety. Nin’s exploration of sexuality may have been inspired by modernist writing. Within the diary, she is very much defining herself as a “New Woman” like figure; an intellectual, educated, literate, sexually emancipated woman who embodies also masculine qualities and who seeks to find self-fulfilment and break away from traditional gender roles. She does not confine herself to her role as “Angel in the House” as Hugo’s wife, as she is going out to cafes, restaurants, to the theatre, to her lover’s house, and even to whorehouses. She drinks, she dances, she fucks, she works through her writing, she engages in literary and intellectual debates. She engages with all activities men in her society would too. She is heavily inspired by Freud and psychoanalysis and in her diary she also links sexuality to modernist themes of the rise of the self and self consciousness, exploration of subjectivity, and the questioning of religion was key to modernist thinkers such as Anais Nin and Henry Miller - whom Nin was deeply inspired by.

## **2.4 The Diary as a Dialogue with the Self: Nin’s Multiple Selves**

Anais Nin’s diary seems to offer to her a safe space for reflection on her relationships and sense of self. She notes, “My journal writing... it was an intimacy with myself” (Nin 113). Reflecting on the writing of N.W Balestrini, one can see a dialogue with the self at play within Nin’s diary. The diary acts as a space of negotiating subjectivity and of conversing with the self, or perhaps between the multiple selves or roles of the self. While Nin likely had the intention to publish her

diary later on (similarly to the private-diary-as-public-text that Podnieks wrote of) and seems to write in a highly edited, polished, literary, and narrative style fit for an audience - Nin mainly seems to be writing in her diary mostly for herself. Within the private diary space her multiple selves and roles can co-exist. "Some perversity drives me outside of the role I am forced to play. Always imagining another role. Never static" writes Nin (93). The diary is a space in which she can let go of gendered performativity, simply admitting to herself her dynamic, and changing sense of self. She becomes increasingly aware of her shifting emotions and her own duality. Her duality exists in many different forms within the diary, and her diary encapsulates all those sides of her.

Nin discusses her own conflicting feminine and masculine energies or the two conflicting sides that create her whole self, she writes, "I will always be the virgin-prostitute, the perverse angel, the two-faced sinister and saintly woman" (Nin 2). The theme of duality or multiple selves is a recurring one throughout the diary. For example, her duality exists in between her married life and her extra-marital affairs, and between her love for men and her new-found lesbian desire, or between her masculine and feminine side.

There is also the duality of the literary self (Anais Nin the diarist and the novelist) and her "real" self (Anais Nin the woman). Nin struggles in the diary between her 'duties' as a wife versus her desires as a writer. Nin tends to define herself as either a writer or as a woman, though she seems to divide the two. She notes, "My temperament belongs to the writer, not to the woman...the faithful wife is only one phase, one moment, one metamorphosis, one condition" (Nin 12). She feels torn perhaps between her duties as a woman and wife, and between her creative literary freedom. One might think of Virginia Woolf and her famous text *A Room of One's Own* in which Woolf argues, "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is

to write fiction" (Woolf). Nin, similarly, seems to speak out against the status quo and writes in a similarly feminist vein of thought - Nin reflects on her life and decides to seek fulfilment independently, through other means besides her married life and her role as a woman/wife.

Only later in the diary is there more of a bridge between what she defines as her two roles. She ponders, "What was left for me to do? To write as a woman and as a woman only. I worked all morning, and I still felt rich" (Nin 173). Nin begins to connect her two roles that she previously saw as conflicting. Nin also uses her diary and letters as ways of practising writing, she seeks to nourish her inner writer through these means of writing accessible to her. She says she feels she must create a work of writing after "nurturing this work with a lifetime of journal writing" (179). Nin finds more harmony between her role as a woman and as a writer the more she begins to accept her true self, a sum of all her roles.

Throughout the diary, the reader experiences Nin struggling more and more with the conventions and limitations of marriage. It is one of the ways in which she feels torn between her two selves. She concludes that she must find purpose outside of her married life and seek a higher ideal than that of the perfect marriage. She notes, "I will work, I will love my husband, but I will fulfill myself" (8), writing about the need to look for "fulfillment in other directions" (9). She concludes later in the diary, "No one can help weeping over the destruction of the "ideal marriage." But I don't weep anymore. I have exhausted my scruples" (Nin 157). Nin remains conflicted between Henry and Hugo for most of the diary.

She remains fond of Hugo yet she finds her sexual awakening and intellectual self stimulated by her relationship with Henry, the famous writer. She glorifies Henry for his literary genius, calling him a "genius monster" (167). Yet while idolising Henry for his sensuality and his literary talent, she also finds him to be callous, coarse, paradoxical, and poor. Nin remains torn



between the security and comforts of being married to Hugo, the successful banker, and the desire for a life free of convention; a life of passion and writing.

She writes about Henry, “I want to give up my life, my home, my security, my writing, to live with him, to work for him, to be a prostitute for him, anything” (99) and again remarks, “I want to live with him, be free with him, suffer with him...I follow Henry the writer with my writer’s soul” (168) yet she continues to “have doubts about our love” (168). When Henry imagines their life together, he says, “You will never seem as beautiful as when I see you roll up your sleeves and work for me. We could be so happy. You would fall behind in your writing!” (133) and Nin thinks, “So, I fall behind in my writing and I become the wife of a genius. I had wanted this, among other things, but no housework. I would never marry him” (133). Yet it is with Henry that Anais feels her role as woman and as writer come together most clearly, she admits, “I am not only more woman, but more writer, more thinker, more reader, more everything” (179). Nin remains torn between her two lives, between married life and her extra-marital affair. She seems to use her journal, as well as her sessions with her psychoanalyst, as a form of coping or coming to terms with her feelings and reality while finding her path towards self-fulfilment and her ‘real’ self.

### **Chapter Three: Exploring Freud’s Taboo, The Self, and Gender Roles within Nin’s Diary**

#### **3.1 Unearthing the Taboo of Incest**

One of the key themes in Nin’s *Henry & June* is the exploration of the taboo (such as the incest taboo) and Anais Nin arguably takes great inspiration from Freud and psychoanalysis in her work. Within the diary, Anais Nin explores the meaning of her dreams, her childhood and her behaviours in her diary, seemingly inspired by psychoanalytic theory. Later in the diary she also

begins working with a psychoanalyst named Dr. Allendy, which further influences her writing with psychoanalytic theory and language.

Dr. Allendy correctly assumes Nin's jealousy of her mother and her forbidden desire for her father, of whom she never received full attention or love, and who abandoned the family when she was eleven. This remains an important topic influencing Anais's thinking and behaviours throughout the diary, and this childhood trauma of her father's abuse and abandonment seems to cause in Anais a fragmented sense of self and child-like incestuous desires in a grown-up Anais. Nin inscribes in her diary, "I have remained the woman who loves incest. I still practice the most incestuous crimes with a sacred religious fervor" (182). The notion of incest is an important one in the diary, influenced heavily by Freudian themes such as the Oedipus Complex, taboo, and psychoanalysis.

The taboo exists in several ways in the diary, most obviously through Anais Nin's incestuous desires for her father, which remain unrealised in reality, but which she fantasised about in her diary, "It only remains for me now to go to my own father and enjoy to the full the experience of our sensual sameness, to hear from his lips the obscenities, the brutal language I have never formulated, but which I love in Henry" (Nin 182). While Nin is not able to fulfill her incestuous desires with her father, which is caused by remnants of her childhood trauma in which she wishes to please and be loved by her father which never having been resolved as a child has turned (to use Freud's term) into neurosis in her adulthood. Thus Nin searches for older men in her life to replace this father figure and re-enact or imitate the incest desire. As seen in the passage, her older lover Henry takes on the role of the surrogate father and lover.

Incest also occurs between Anais Nin and her cousin Eduardo who is part of her actual family, "Eduardo, my own blood" (Nin 182), and who is also her lover. She notes, "He was the

first man I loved” (Nin 46). He is described as her childhood love or first lover. He feels incestuously towards Anais and struggles with jealousy over her husband and lovers. Dr. Allendy, who was originally Eduardo’s psychoanalyst and later becomes the psychoanalyst of Anais, states that Eduardo sees Anais as a “mother, sister, and unattainable woman. To conquer you means conquering himself, his neuroses” (89). Once again, these incestuous themes are reminiscent of Freud’s Oedipus Complex. Eduardo’s inability to feel truly loved by his cousin Anais also manifests as neurosis and incestuous desires in his adulthood.

It is Eduardo who first pushes Anais into psychoanalysis, although she at first resists his analysis of their incestuous feelings and actions, “I have suggested to Eduardo a doubt about his passion, which has been fostered by psychoanalysis, artificially stimulated by it. The scientific tampering with emotions. For the first time I am against analysis” (Nin 77). Although later Anais admits that she too could benefit from psychoanalytic therapy and begins her sessions with Dr. Allendy, discovering much about her unconscious mind and her repressed desires.

Nin chooses to include parts of her sessions with Dr. Allendy in her diary, using both as a space of self reflection. Her diary becomes a continuation and extension of her psychoanalytic therapy sessions, it becomes a space of digging further into her own psyche - both the diary and the psychoanalytic therapy influencing one another and serving as spaces of healing.

### **3.2 The Omnipresent Father Figure**

At the core of the diary, though hidden in the shadows of what is written, is Anais Nin’s father Joaquin Nin. Suzette Henke writes, “the figure of the absent father dominated much of Nin’s development” and the “parental *imago*... haunts much of her diary” existing to her as a “Father/God” figure (Henke 120). Her wish to write for an audience stemmed from the absent

and idealised parent figure. The desire for an audience and surrogate lovers were an attempt to fill the empty void in place of the father figure - and her diary acted as a “psychological refuge” (Henke 121). She “reconstructed herself as both author and protagonist” in her diary, as the diary allowed her the control to name, analyse, and discuss her trauma (Henke 121). One could argue Nin’s father is linked to both her childhood trauma which has shattered her sense of self, and the source of her incestuous desires. Her childhood self wished to be seen, loved, and accepted by her father. It became an obsession due to his abuse and abandonment of her, and remained a pain which stayed with her all her life.

Anais Nin’s father is not actively a person in her life. Yet his influence upon Nin’s desires and behaviours are undeniable. He exists as an elusive, omnipresent father figure who haunts the entirety of the diary. She writes, “The haunting image of an erudite, literary father reasserts itself, and the woman becomes small again” (99). Through psychoanalysis, Nin realises the importance of her childhood trauma on her coming to grips with her fragmented self throughout the diary. When Eduardo speaks of her father, she notes, “He makes me remember that my father beat me, that my first remembrance of him is a humiliation” (21). She realises “Now, because of psychoanalysis, it is heavy with significance” she realises, “I can see no good in my childish admiration of older men” (99). Nin uses her diary as a continuation and reflection on her psychoanalysis sessions, finding greater meaning in her dreams and behaviours. Reflecting on her session with Dr. Allendy, Anais writes, “From my dreams he culls the consistent desire to be punished, humiliated, or abandoned” (Nin 101) and this “comes from a sense of guilt for having loved your father too much” (101). The father figure, while not present in her life or the diary per say, exists in her memories and in her dreams. She writes about a psychoanalysis session in which they analyse the figure of a King in her dream, the King

representing “the conquest of my father through other men” (Nin 118). Nin realises her attempt to seduce several men, particularly older men such as Henry, is due to her never having received her father’s love in fullness. Dr. Allendy explains how this childhood trauma affects her; “It is your childhood tragedy repeating itself. If, when you were a child, you had been made to realize that your father had to live his own life, that he was forced to abandon you, that in spite of this he loved you, you would not have suffered so terribly” (Nin 188). Nin begins to realise the ways in which she repeats her childhood patterns and wounds in her current relationships.

However, to return briefly to the theory from Freud, Freud also discussed the taboo as a contagion, something which is associated with the act of touch. While Nin’s incestuous desire for her father is certainly taboo, it remains an unrealised act, a fantasy, which she records in her secret diary. However, Nin re-enacts this desire by seducing men within her immediate circle, she notes, “The men I love, Hugo loves, and I let them act like brothers” (182). She imitates the desire of her fantasy and is able to act upon the desire in a physical sense through emulating or re-enacting the idea of attraction in familial bonds.

Anais Nin also seeks to fulfil her need for a father figure through desiring her psychoanalyst Dr. Allendy. Dr. Allendy, as the psychoanalyst figure, is also a father figure to Anais. He is a figure which guides her, corrects her, analyses her, and moulds her. Anais Nin notes, “I am his creation” (183). She also starts an emotional relationship with him which expands into a sexual affair, of which she elaborates, “I enjoy Allendy’s concern for me...he must protect me now by the deftness of his analysis and the strength of his arms and his mouth” (Nin 181) and has a desire “to obey him” (185). Nin seeks protection and concern from him as one would from a father. This in itself is taboo, as it is a breach in professionalism on Dr. Allendy’s part, it is a subversion of doctor-patient confidentiality and objectivity. Anais also

realises the complexity of the situation, “I can no longer confide everything to Allendy because we are man and woman with passion growing between us. I have lost a father!” (Nin 186). Here, one can see Nin searching for a father figure in the men in her life, including her older lover Henry and her psychoanalyst Dr. Allendy.

As Valerie Harms writes, “Anais Nin sought analysis with Rene Allendy and Otto Rank, she encountered analysts who profoundly failed her by their unprofessional conduct” (Harms 112). In 1932 Anais Nin sought out the analysis of Rene Allendy, who was at the time the psychoanalyst of her cousin Eduardo. She sought help and wished to not be torn between multiple lovers and selves, she wished to be a great writer and to find her equal in a partner (112). Rene Allendy was a protege of Sigmund Freud, and because psychoanalysis was such a new field, there were a limited number of “analysts” in the field. Dr. Allendy and Otto Rank, both proteges of Sigmund Freud, were self-appointed analysts (112). Within a month or two, Allendy started a personal affair with Nin, which flourished into a sexual affair. At this point, he was losing objectivity as a doctor towards his client. He engaged in sexual intercourse with her, and apparently engaged in spanking her, which brought flashbacks to Nin of her father beating her. In her diary, she does not explicitly say this and yet she does note that after seeking out the connection, she begins to hate and rebel against Rene Allendy.

Anais Nin ended things after some time and began sessions with Otto Rank instead. Henry Miller was a fan of Otto Rank and encouraged her, and Nin was intrigued by Rank’s writing and research on incest. Their relationship became both personal and sexual within one year, in 1933 (Harms 113).

Harms argues that psychoanalysis is intended to be therapeutic and intimate without being sexual, so that the psyche can be explored and so that it is a safe place in which to analyse

the unconscious. Both psychoanalysts must have known to some extent of Nin's relationship and abuse from her father. Yet both analysts ultimately failed to keep their own unconscious desires in check. In this sense, ultimately, Nin's attempts at psychoanalytic therapy were a failure (Harms 113).

### **3.3 Healing Childhood Trauma: The Woman & The Inner Child**

Another polarity that exists in the diary and within the persona of Anais Nin is that of "Anais The Woman" and that of "Anais The Child". She reflects in her diary, "At that moment I know I am half woman, half child. That a portion of me conceals a child who loves to be amazed, to be taught, to be directed. When I listen, I am a child" (99). Furthermore, she writes "my two voices...one, according to Fred, is like that of a child before its First Communion, timid, soundless. The other is assured, deeper" (Nin 110). Nin's focus on her inner child and on her childhood is part of her healing journey.

She begins to realise the effects of her childhood on her current relationships; "I was amazed that a child's confidence, once shaken and destroyed, should have such repercussions on a whole life. Father's insufficient love and abandonment remain indelible" she writes (Nin 90). Nin also competes with her inner child, wishing to move beyond the scars of her childhood, "I wanted to triumph over the child. I refused to become sentimental, to retrogress. It was like a duel. The woman in me is strong" (Nin 114). She seems to win and lose this battle in turns, noting at times "I see I have fooled them. I have concealed the smaller me" (Nin 119). Freud wrote in *Totem and Taboo* about the tendency for incestuous desires to cause 'regression' or 'inhibited development'. Freud wrote that it is unresolved incestuous desires that cause neuroses in patients. While Freud focused specifically on the male child, naming this the Oedipus

Complex, Carl Jung defined the experience of this from a female child's perspective as The Electra Complex. Anais Nin's experiences mirror this theory of The Electra Complex. Dr. Allendy analyses, "You are repeating the experience of your childhood. Identifying my wife, who is forty years old, with your mother and wondering if you can win your father (or me) from her" (124), this passage is very reminiscent of Freud's Oedipus complex and his theory on incest. She writes of Dr. Allendy, "He senses that he is also approaching the sexual key to my neuroses (Nin 125) and that this evokes "the feeling of having been discovered" (130), which Nin is equally elated by and terrified of.

### **3.4 Gender as Performance: Performativity in Nin's Diary**

Anita Jarczok writes about how Nin developed a performative persona throughout her writing career. Jarczok writes, the diary "became a major medium through which she developed her persona—a version of herself manufactured for the public" (3). She writes that the diary and Nin's persona are deeply intertwined. And yet Nin's Diary Persona and the "real" Nin are not the same. Through a postmodern view of identity, identity is not static or fixed. It is multi-faceted and changing, thus there is no one "real" Nin in her diaries (Jarczok 48). Furthermore, "Language was the medium in which Nin chose to capture and convey her-selves" and yet language can never fully and objectively capture reality, an issue that Nin herself wrote about; that achieving perfect truth in her diary was impossible. Jarczok argues that due to this, "Nin's diary therefore contains not the "real" Anais Nin but the Nin persona" (50). Her diary rather captures the "public façade of Nin"; her "carefully crafted...portrayal" (Jarczok 55). Not only was Nin influenced by her self-representation in her diary, but also by her public persona. Her public identity shifted several times during her life, influenced by the culture of the time. For



example her fame as a feminist icon very much coincided in the 60s and 70s with the feminist wave and rise of “counterculture”, as Nin defined herself part of the bohemia and modern women, this appealed to young generations of hippies and feminists (57). Her exploration of the self was ongoing and she depicted numerous versions of herself in her diary.

With this in mind, it is interesting to analyse the recurring motif of identity or the self as a costume, a mask, a role, or a performance. This motif further highlights the theme of exploring the self which lies at the core of Nin’s diary. Her diary records her path towards self-fulfilment and her attempts at trying to find her true self without falling into the shame surrounding her taboo desires, nor to be dissuaded by gender roles inhibiting her or pushing her into a particular role. Nin writes of Henry (and perhaps about herself), “The writer is clothed in his humanity, but it is only a disguise” (172). Nin has many roles in her diary, that of the woman, the lover, the wife, the writer - her roles are like those of an actor. They are a performance of gender, a performance of identity, and of various roles she feels she must play with various people in her life. When she talks with her psychoanalyst Dr. Allendy notes that he “thinks I have created a completely artificial personality, like a shield. I conceal myself” (110) and indeed she tries to play a role to evade the psychoanalysis of Dr. Allendy which she deems “the most elaborate piece of acting I have ever done in my life” (189). Nin views herself as a performer, an acrobat of personalities and roles - although ultimately she knows she must face and heal her fragmented self.

Nin writes, “I remembered that the place where I have been most soundly happy is Switzerland, where I lived washed of all external roles” and begins to ponder, “What would I be without my decoration, costume, personality? Would I be a more vigorous artist?” (Nin 146). Nin becomes increasingly aware of her own performativity. Ultimately, she realises, “I must not

overstep the bounds of my nature, create dissonances, deviations, roles (as June has done), because it means misery” (Nin 146) and wishes to “wash my hands of all superhuman roles” (173) and to find contentment within.

Within the diary, Nin also speaks out about gender roles and about the double standard between men and women, particularly in love and sexual matters. Nin, in her unexpurgated diary, does not shy away from the topic of sex and brings to light the sexual frustration women can suffer from, which in itself was seen as a taboo. As Podnieks had discussed, topics relating to sexuality or sexual fantasies, particularly by women writers were heavily censored in the literary publishing world. By using the “private” diary form, Nin is able to explore these taboo themes in a much more personal way. Nin pushes this female sexuality taboo further by not only discussing her sexuality but also lesbian desires, incestuous desires, and extra-marital affairs.

She admits to her psychoanalyst, Dr. Allendy, that her search for ideal love in multiple lovers is due to her difficulty with achieving sexual satisfaction, “My biggest secret: In the sexual act I do not always experience an orgasm” (Nin 129). She writes about the link between gendered expectations and sexual satisfaction, noting, “Oh, to be a man, capable of satisfying one’s self so easily, so indiscriminately” (176), as well as the societal expectation of passivity from women in love and sexual matters. Due to this double standard in sexuality, Nin is filled with “restlessness” at what she termed “the enforced passivity of women” (132). Nin challenges her ascribed role as a woman within her society and instead wished “to dominate, to work like a man, support Henry, get his book published. I want more than ever to fuck and to be fucked” (Nin 99). Nin repeats throughout the diary that she wishes to have the sexual and creative freedom of a man. The diary thus allows Nin a safe and “private” space in which to reflect on gendered expectations and to share her own emotions and embodied experiences. Nin is able to

create and recreate herself and her reality through the diary form. The diary could be seen as a counter-public feminist space, a space in which Nin is not adhering to the socially ascribed rules of femininity or any one static feminine identity.

### **3.5 Androgyny in *Henry & June: The Woman and Her Double***

Nin lives a double life throughout the diary, playing a double leading role like an actor in her own life. The diary explores the theme of polarity, and the theme of in-between-ness and androgyny. This is explored particularly through the women in the diary, June and Anais. Nin elaborates, “There are only two women in the world: June and I” (105). June is described as a beautiful and voluptuous woman, yet also as a mannish figure. June is described to have a “manlike strength” (Nin 17), and “a mannish neck, a mannish voice, and course hands” (18). Nin glorifies the figure of June, both for her feminine beauty and for her unconventional androgyny. She writes, “She has taken drugs; she loved a woman; she talks the cops’ language when she tells stories” (21). Her physical beauty contrasts her mannish and androgynous mannerisms. Nin depicts June as a femme fatale, demonizing her. For example, she writes: “Henry and I look with awe on her monstrosity” (39). June is depicted as a demon or monster on the one hand, but on the other hand, June is depicted with an almost saint-like worship from Anais.

Anais idolises June because she exists outside of any one static feminine identity. June exists in the androgynous space between male and female - having both masculine and feminine features. Nin writes about June’s unconventional bohemian lifestyle, her poverty, and her immorality. Anais views June as immoral because she is crass, dismissive of the feelings of others, and wielding the power of her beauty cruelly on others. In contrast, Anais is constantly catering to the needs of others.

June and Anais differ in many ways. The setting that June lives in, which Anais discovers later, is one of squalor. June lives with Henry in a run-down apartment, and June took in a lesbian lover named Jean to live with them. Anais is married to a successful banker and living in a large and comfortable home, and she has certain aristocratic airs about her. By comparison, June lives a life free of the comforts and conventions that Anais has.

Yet, it becomes clear that while Anais enjoys these comforts and the security of marriage, she feels equally trapped by them. She wishes to give June money and to help her achieve material comfort, as well as being envious of her bohemian life and unconventionality. While Anais has a preoccupation with attempting to be morally pure, June is more reckless in her actions. Ultimately, June (and Henry) act as catalysts to spark Nin's transformation as a writer, as well as her sexual awakening.

Anais characterises June to be the "other" in opposition to herself. Nin notes that June "is my greatest rival" (106). June acts as a character foil to Anais, contrasting her personality and her looks. Whereas June is bold, voluptuous, beautiful, and cruel, Anais defines herself as her opposite as someone tender, sensitive, timid, with gamine features and a fragile body. They complement one another in their contrasting opposition. However, Anais also recognises a similarity between herself and June. She writes, "But like June, I have a capacity for delicate perversions", and that "I want to experience those very things with June, to penetrate the evil ...which attracts me" (34). Nin in some senses feels her lesbian desires are 'perverse' or 'evil', yet also finds beauty and her relationship with June also inspires her to explore her own masculine and androgynous side. For example, Nin explains, "I have discovered the joy of a masculine direction of my life by my courting of June " (51) and defines herself in this process as "The woman sundering into a woman-man" (51). Nin discovers the duality of masculine and

feminine within her throughout this process, she notes, “I need two lives. I am two beings” (60). Nin discovers her own inner duality, and androgyny by accepting June as both her “other” and her double. Nin explores her masculine side by courting first June, and later Henry. She explores different roles besides the feminine and docile wife that she plays with Hugo, and learns to express both sides of herself. However, even in her lesbian desires, Nin expresses a distress about not being able to have the sexual freedom and directness of a man, “What eludes me forever is the reality of being a man” (58). Even in her lesbian or queer relationships, Nin feels herself holding back due to gendered expectations about femininity. Dr. Allendy also prescribes Anais with ‘The Diana Complex’, which is “the woman who envies man his sexual power” (Nin 101). This quote seems to link to Freudian themes as well, such as his hypothesis that women suffer from “penis envy” of men. Anais agrees with the Diana Complex, noting her desire to possess women such as June in a manlike or masculine way, but feeling unable to due to her frail body and her timid nature. Through the exploration of these Freudian and taboo themes however, she becomes increasingly aware of the tension between her contrasting sides/desires and her own duality.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, *Henry & June* by Anais Nin has been an incredibly fruitful case study for exploring the diary form and the practice of diary-writing. The hope of this thesis was to explore and bring to light the niche diarist, Anais Nin. While many diarists such as Virginia Woolf or Sylvia Plath may be more common to study in academia, this thesis wished to explore the work of Anais Nin in-depth. Due to this, only one diary was selected, in order to allow for an in-depth exploration through close reading analysis, rather than comparative analysis. Making use of

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* as a theoretical framework, Freud's notion of taboo, incest, and psychoanalysis informed the analysis of the diary. The main aim of this thesis was to respond to the research question; in which ways does Anais Nin make use of the diary to challenge conventional gender roles, and to negotiate questions of desire, repression, and taboo?

It can be concluded that Nin's diary of *Henry & June* touches upon each of these themes. In terms of subverting gender roles, Nin's diary acts as a feminist space of healing and of self representation. Nin uses the diary as a space in which she can represent herself as she chooses. While she admits to the imagined reader that this 'self' is not always accurate to reality, she uses the diary as a medium for exploring self-consciousness, identity, and self-representation.

As discussed in the various subsections of the Second Chapter of this thesis, Anais Nin also uses the diary to explore her personality through her dualities; such as her masculine and feminine side, and her journey towards finding balance between being a woman/wife and a writer. With these themes in mind, similarly to what Cynthia Huff argued about the diary being a feminist practice, Nin's diary can be seen as a feminist counter-space in which she discusses taboo themes, such as childhood trauma, seeking fulfilment outside of marriage, seeking sexual and creative freedom, and exploring polyamory, and queer desires. By writing about these things openly and publishing her work, she shares her embodied experience and also allows a literary space in which readers can engage with these themes. Her diary also acts as a continuation of her psychoanalytic therapy, and it is a space for further self reflection. She makes use of Freudian theories and psychoanalytic language for furthering her understanding of the self.

One could also argue that the diary is also a space of confession, with Nin drawing her influences for symbolism and motifs from religion. The diary acts as a space of purifying oneself. Nin confesses in the diary, mimicking the ritual of going to confession in church.

Furthermore, Anais Nin tries to analyse and negotiate her desires and the reasons she feels for repression. For example, she cites gendered expectations as a source of repression; which she terms the ‘forced passivity of women’. Yet she also discusses religious morality and the desire to be ‘pure’ as another reason for repression and for repenting for one’s desires. Through psychoanalysis she discovers her childhood trauma also acts as a repression of her true self. These themes serve as modes of understanding and negotiating desire and repression in her diary.

The taboo also proved to be a key theme in Nin’s diary. Anais Nin uses her diary in order to explore her incestuous desires for her father. This links to Freud’s concept of neurosis, caused by a divide in the desires of the unconscious mind, and the active repression of these. Incestuous desires remain symptomatic of regression or inhibited development; remnants of unresolved childhood traumas. One learns that Nin suffered from the abuse and abandonment of her father, and these incestuous desires have become a neurosis stemming from her fragmented sense of self and her obsessive desire to be loved by him. Her diary allows a space to further question her taboo thoughts and behaviours. Ultimately, Nin’s diary acts as a literary space in which taboo is explored, as well as the multitude of ways in which desire and repression circulate in our lives. Her diary defies neat categorization yet draws its unique status from its blending of reality and fiction, and the duality of Anais Nin.

To conclude, this thesis ends with a suggestion for further research. One area for further research might be the exploration of the diary as a feminist space of healing. Building off of arguments proposed by those such as Cynthia Huff, who write that the act of diary-writing is a feminist practice, this idea is intriguing to further analyse in relation not only to taboo, but also in relation to trauma. As was discovered in this thesis, taboo topics can often be enmeshed with

trauma and diaries can act as a medium for self exploration, and a mode of healing. More specifically, one might further explore the uses of the diary as a space for healing trauma. While this thesis mainly focused on the exploration of the notion of taboo in diaries and the scope of this thesis does not further cover this, the notion of how trauma is stored in diaries, and how diaries can be a vessel for embodied and lived experience, and another mode of knowledge could tie into the topic of diary-keeping as a feminist healing practice. This could be an interesting extension on this topic for further research.



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