BookGist Summary

Anaïs Nin's Paris Revisited: The English-French Bilingual Edition

by Yuko Yaguchi

Key Takeaways

• Yuko Yaguchi uses places associated with Anaïs Nin as a way to read her life: streets, apartments, cafés, and landscapes become evidence of how identity and memory are shaped by where we live.

• Nin’s sense of belonging was divided. Born in France but raised partly in the United States, she experienced Paris as both a homeland and a foreign country—and repeatedly moved between respectable domestic life and bohemian artistic circles.

• Writing was central to Nin’s identity long before she was widely recognized as an author. Her diaries and fiction helped her transform private experience into art and to remake herself as a woman writer.

• Nin’s life was marked by a tension between security and freedom: marriage and bourgeois comfort offered stability, while artistic relationships, travel, and unconventional living opened paths toward a more expansive self.

• Relationships with Henry Miller, June Miller, Antonin Artaud, and psychoanalysts René Allendy and Otto Rank acted as catalysts, intensifying Nin’s creativity while exposing her to questions of desire, power, and self-understanding.

• The book connects Nin’s experiences to debates about gender and identity, presenting her as someone who actively fashioned herself through writing rather than simply accepting a fixed social role.

• Paris is portrayed as both a changing city and an enduring literary landscape. Comparing Nin's remembered locations with Yaguchi's visits shows how buildings and neighborhoods evolve while retaining traces of earlier lives.

• Nin's writing embraced divided, shifting identities. Art, psychoanalysis, and the diary offered ways to explore multiplicity—not as a problem to solve, but as a condition that could fuel creative work.

• The book treats historical sites as invitations to look closely and think critically: a café or house can illuminate literary history, but the author also acknowledges gaps, changing appearances, and the limits of what a physical place can reveal.

Who Should Read This Book

This book is especially suited to readers of Anaïs Nin, literary biography, feminist literary criticism, and cultural histories of Paris. It will appeal to people who enjoy discovering how a writer's surroundings shape her work: Yaguchi brings together diary passages, historical context, observations from her own visits, and photographs to make apartments, cafés, parks, and publishing sites meaningful without treating them as mere tourist stops. Readers interested in Nin's relationships, her changing sense of identity, or the development of her writing will find a thoughtful guide to the tensions that recur across her life. It is also a good choice for readers planning a literary visit to Paris or curious about how cities preserve and alter cultural memory. Unlike a conventional biography, it is organized around locations rather than a continuous life story; unlike a standard travel guide, it uses place to explore literature, gender, desire, and self-invention. Readers seeking a comprehensive account of every period of Nin's life may want to pair it with her diaries or a full-length biography, but those looking for an evocative, research-based companion to Nin's Paris will find this bilingual book distinctive and rewarding.

Chapter Summaries

Preface: Following Nin Through the City

Yuko Yaguchi introduces this revised, expanded bilingual edition as a photographic and literary journey through places connected to Anaïs Nin. The project grew out of a sabbatical spent in Paris and New York while translating Nin's diary into Japanese. Yaguchi carried a camera through the cities, eventually taking nearly two thousand photographs, and came to see the resulting book as a guide to Nin's writing and to the urban environments that shaped her. Inspired by Christopher Rauschenberg's paired photographs of Paris across time, Yaguchi asks readers to consider both a changing city and an enduring one. Her later visits

reveal alterations to transport stations and the removal of the American Express sign, reminders that landmarks do not stay frozen in the form remembered by writers. The book therefore combines literary research, personal observation, and attention to urban change, encouraging readers to use walking and looking as ways of interpreting the past.

Childhood: Neuilly-sur-Seine and Uccle

The opening locations establish the contradictions that shaped Nin's early life. Born in 1903 in affluent Neuilly-sur-Seine, she was given a long set of names and remembered her father's disappointment that she was not a boy. In her diary, she links her poetic identity to her parents' earlier life in Paris's Latin Quarter, which she describes as a world of poets and mad people. Yaguchi reads the move from artistic bohemia to a comfortable suburb as a journey upward in social status for Nin's father, but a division that Nin herself would continue to negotiate. In Uccle, Belgium, Nin's recollections combine artistic inheritance with family instability. Her father's study and piano represent a rich musical and literary world, but his temper, violence, and conflicts with her mother made home life precarious. Nin also remembered his care during her illness and joyful Christmases filled with music, preserving affection alongside hurt. When her father left the family during a stay in Arcachon, the loss became a formative part of her emotional and imaginative life.

Return to Paris: Rue Schœlcher, Saint-Séverin, and the Sorbonne

Nin returned to France in 1924 at twenty-one, accompanying her husband, Hugh Guiler, who had been transferred to Paris for work. Although born near the city, she had spent much of her childhood traveling with her musician father before moving to America at eleven. Paris initially struck her as gray and shabby, and the return made her feel less like a native than a newcomer. At the apartment on rue Schœlcher, she began to describe a divided self, naming her imaginative and supposedly strange side "Imagy." Yaguchi connects this split to later ideas about gender and becoming: Nin's writing records an ongoing effort to make and speak a self rather than inhabit a predetermined identity. Other Paris locations reveal the mixture of spiritual, intellectual, and literary influences in her life. At Saint-Séverin, Nin found renewed pleasure in religious spaces even though her faith had been shaken by her father's departure. Her memories consequently resist a simple label of either believer or atheist. At the Sorbonne, she encountered the solemnity of French literature and a city where cafés and bookstores seemed to sustain a continuous conversation about ideas. Yaguchi places Nin's experience against the university's history and later student protests, showing how the cultural institutions that impressed her continued to change.

Domestic Art and Creative Possibility: Boulevard Suchet, Printemps, and Zadkine

At boulevard Suchet, Nin and Hugh moved into a quiet, affluent neighborhood, and Nin put her eye for design to work. She decorated their apartment in a modern Oriental style and later

transformed their Louveciennes house with color and repaired features. Yaguchi presents this as an expression of Nin's belief that life and art should not be separated. Yet Nin's diary also reveals the cost of this polished domestic existence: she described her soul and senses as starved even amid visual beauty. The contrast helps explain why comfort alone could not satisfy her creative ambitions. The Printemps department store brings out unrealized possibilities in Nin's early adulthood. She had left school, married a banker, and did not gain broad recognition as a writer until much later, but she worked as an art model and studied Spanish dance. She sometimes felt objectified by artists, yet also insisted that she was observing and interpreting them in return. Yaguchi sees this reversal of the gaze as strikingly perceptive. At Ossip Zadkine's studio, Nin encountered sculpture as a forest of bodies and forms that still seemed to contain the living wood. Zadkine's later reflection that beauty remains even in death echoes the book's interest in art's power to preserve traces of life.

The International City and the Suburban Imagination: Cité, Montsouris, and Louveciennes

The Cité Internationale Universitaire represents an idealistic postwar effort to bring students and scholars from different countries together in the service of cultural exchange and peace. Its international residences, library, theater, and other facilities were built at the edge of Paris, on land made available through the demolition of part of the city's old defensive wall. Nin attended Otto Rank's lectures there and studied psychoanalysis. Yaguchi emphasizes the symbolism of an international community built on a former boundary, as well as the site's continuing development and its relationship to nearby Parc Montsouris and Villa Seurat. At Parc Montsouris, Nin's reflections on walking suggest that Paris can feel enduring even as people and places change. The journey to Louveciennes deepens that connection between landscape and inner life. Nin described the village as old-fashioned and almost literary, with a church, forest, river, and houses that seemed untouched by modernity. Her home there could appear like a beautiful prison, but she also used it as a setting for transformation, writing and developing a life beyond the role of banker's wife. Yaguchi's visit contrasts Nin's evocative description with the house's present-day appearance and the difficulty of seeing private places from the street. The section suggests that physical obstacles often mirror inward ones, while also warning that a pilgrimage can never fully reproduce the past.

Montparnasse: Cafés, June, and the Meeting with Henry Miller

The Montparnasse cafés—Le Dôme, Le Select, La Rotonde, and La Coupole—serve as meeting points for artists, expatriates, and would-be writers. Le Dôme's history connects the neighborhood to figures such as Picasso, Hemingway, and Fujita, while Yaguchi notes the contrast between its earlier role as an inexpensive gathering place and its later life as a more upscale restaurant. At Le Select, Nin's observations of photographer Brassaï reveal her own sharpness as a watcher of people. The cafés appear both as legendary literary settings and as unruly, commercial, everyday spaces. The American Express office, once a place where

Americans in Paris could collect mail, exchange money, and arrange travel, became the setting for Nin's charged meeting with June Miller. Nin's attraction to June was, in Yaguchi's reading, bound up with identification: each woman seemed to desire becoming the other. At La Rotonde, Henry Miller confessed that he had written Nin a love letter, and their connection took on new force. Their meeting came at a point when both were emerging as writers, and Yaguchi presents them as catalysts for each other's lives and work. The changing sign on the American Express building also becomes a small but vivid example of how literary landmarks can disappear.

Love and Bohemian Life: Hotel Central, Clichy, Villa Seurat, and La Coupole

Hotel Central marks the beginning of Nin and Henry Miller's sexual relationship, following their first meeting in Louveciennes. Their letters and diary entries preserve the intensity and uncertainty of the encounter. Nearby Clichy offers another view of Miller's material circumstances: he shared a modest workers' apartment with Alfred Perlès, who helped him with work and lodging. Nin's account of the household conveys both camaraderie and the complications of a close artistic circle, including the possibility of subtle rivalries and unspoken desires. Villa Seurat places those relationships within a specifically creative environment. Nin describes helping Miller prepare his studio, and the address becomes linked to the writing and publication of Tropic of Cancer. At La Coupole, Nin and Antonin Artaud share an intense spiritual and artistic attraction. She describes herself as divided between different kinds of love, while Artaud responds to her as both mysterious and warm. Yaguchi draws attention to the euphoria of their connection but also to its limits: Nin sought a spiritual bond, and later recognized the double standard in Artaud's moral judgment of her. Together, these places show how intimacy could inspire Nin while also making questions of autonomy and power unavoidable.

Art, Myth, and Psychoanalysis: The Louvre, Allendy, and Rank

A painting of Lot and his daughters at the Louvre becomes a focal point for the shared artistic and psychological interests of Nin and Artaud. The biblical story, with its themes of family, desire, and taboo, resonated with both artists, but their responses to it were not identical. Yaguchi notes the irony that Artaud admired representations of incest in art while accusing Nin of impurity when he suspected a real-life connection to her father. Nin's decision to leave him is presented as a response to this moral inconsistency, not simply as the end of an affair. Nin's encounters with René Allendy and Otto Rank show psychoanalysis becoming an ongoing tool for self-examination and creative development. At Allendy's home, the dark rooms and greenhouse-like setting gave her first visit the atmosphere of entering a submerged world. She trusted his insight into her lack of confidence, yet resisted him when she felt controlled. Rank's interests in the artist, the double, illusion, incestuous love, and creativity overlapped with Nin's own lived experiences. Their relationship is presented as an

exchange between two perceptive minds, with analysis helping Nin interpret the material she was already living and writing.

Identity and Escape: Café de Flore, Les Deux Magots, Quai de Passy, and Pompidou

Café de Flore is associated with Nin's discovery of the possibility of escape through life on a houseboat. The boats she rented on the Seine offered a bedroom, a meeting place, and a refuge for people displaced by political events. Yaguchi connects this floating home to Nin's attraction to those who refused conventional rules and to her wish to step outside ordinary social life. Les Deux Magots, meanwhile, links her to the artistic world of Kenneth Anger and to her recurring attraction to talented younger men. Nin could act as a symbolic goddess to artists while remaining alert to the violence or sadism in some of their work. At quai de Passy, the river and bridge map the divide between Nin's respectable life with her husband and the bohemian circles of her lovers. Moving between the Right and Left Banks becomes an image of crossing social as well as geographic boundaries. At the Pompidou Center, Yaguchi turns to Nin's fascination with fragmented identity, using Marcel Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase as a visual analogue for the many versions of a self moving at once. For Nin, multiplicity could be painful, but art also offered a way to live with it. The section presents identity as shifting and layered, and creativity as a means of giving that condition form.

Cinema, Books, and Literary Exile: Studio 28, Shakespeare and Company, Obelisk Press, and Rue Cassini

Studio 28 connects Nin to surrealist and experimental cinema. Her memories of watching Un Chien Andalou emphasize its dreamlike images and unsettling breaks with ordinary narrative. Yaguchi suggests that Nin's early fiction can be read partly as a literary response to cinema, translating surrealist visual techniques into prose. The bookshop Shakespeare and Company offers a contrasting but complementary creative space: Sylvia Beach's publication of Ulysses and George Whitman's later community of readers and penniless writers exemplify how small institutions can shape literary history. Obelisk Press gave works by Miller, Durrell, and Nin a route into print, including Nin's Winter of Artifice. War and publisher Jack Kahane's death disrupted her Paris literary life, and the book's original Paris edition took decades to appear widely in English. At rue Cassini, the account reaches Nin's departure for New York in 1939. She remembered leaving as the end of a romantic way of life, though not the end of her capacity for romance or reinvention. The section emphasizes both the fragility of artistic communities in wartime and the persistence of a city in the writer's imagination after she has left it.

Valescure: The Father-Daughter Story

At the Grand Hotel in Valescure, Nin spent nine days with the father who had left the family when she was a child. Her account surrounds the visit with theatrical details: the empty hotel,

special arrangements, long corridors, a bridal-looking mosquito net, and the mistral wind. Yaguchi notes that the hotel is now a luxury apartment building and that some of the weather's dramatic effects may belong more to Nin's literary shaping than to local conditions. The setting makes clear how deliberately Nin transformed remembered experience into art. Yaguchi places the reunion beside the myth of Pericles, in which a father and daughter reunite after years apart but avoid incest by recognizing their kinship. Nin's account, including her story "Lilith" and the unexpurgated diary, moves into territory that the classical narrative avoids. The book considers the controversy around publishing such material and asks whether a woman should be punished for telling how she survived trauma and remade her life. This final section does not offer an easy resolution; instead, it insists on reading Nin's frankness as both a personal act and an artistic construction.

Notable Quotes

> *"“At last out of the world. At last we have stepped off the earth, out of Paris, cafés, away from friends, husbands, wives, from streets, houses, the Dôme, Villa Seurat. We stepped off the earth into water. We are on the ship of our dreams. Alone.”"*

> *"“You see, even in death there is beauty.”"*

Full Summary

Yuko Yaguchi's route through Anaïs Nin's Paris began during a 2014 sabbatical, when she spent half a year in Paris and half in New York translating Nin's Diary into Japanese. She carried a camera through both cities, photographing places associated with Nin as well as libraries and parks, and eventually realized she had taken nearly two thousand pictures. What began as an instinctive record of moving through the city became a way to follow Nin's life through its streets and buildings. Yaguchi was inspired by Christopher Rauschenberg's Paris Changing, which places Eugène Atget's photographs of turn-of-the-century Paris beside images of the same locations taken about a century later. In the same spirit, she sought both the changing city and the enduring one Nin described. By 2018, however, changes to the Metro and RER, new decorations at a Montmartre station, and the removal of the American Express sign from rue Scribe made her feel an unexpected sadness. Paris, she suggests, can retain the traces of earlier lives even as its surfaces are renewed. Henry Miller once wrote that getting lost in Paris was an extraordinary adventure: its streets sang and its stones spoke. After wandering the city herself, Yaguchi felt drawn to wander through cities in books, too.

Nin's life begins in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a prosperous suburb where she was born in 1903 in a white-stone house on rue Henrion Berthier. Her childhood nickname, "Linotte," means "little bird," though the French expression "tête de linotte" also describes a scatterbrained person;

much later, she would title a collection of erotic stories Little Birds. In her early diary, Nin remembers her father, the musician Joaquín Nin, being disappointed that his child was a girl rather than a boy. He imagined her hands might become those of a pianist, not realizing that they would most often hold a pen. She was christened Rosa Juana Anaïs Edelmira Antolina Angela Nin, a long name attached to a future writer whose identity she would continue to shape for herself.

The contrast between Neuilly's respectable comfort and Parisian bohemia was already present before Nin could remember it. She wrote that her parents' first year of marriage had been spent on rue du Four, amid the Latin Quarter's poets and "madmen," and imagined that this atmosphere was why she had been born a poet. Yaguchi is struck by how confidently the seventeen-year-old Nin connected place to destiny. Joaquín's move from the bohemian quarter to an affluent suburb may have represented an ascent into security, but his daughter would never settle entirely into that world. Her life repeatedly swung between bourgeois domesticity and artistic freedom.

The family's home in Uccle, Belgium, brought a different kind of intensity. Nin remembered a small house on rue Beau-Séjour with four floors, her father's study lined with books up to the ceiling, and his imposing desk by the window. When he was out, she climbed a ladder and secretly read books she could barely understand, trembling at the possibility of discovery. Her father spent much of his time either in the study or playing piano. He was also, as Yaguchi recounts, a tyrannical presence who beat his children and quarreled with their mother, Rosa. During one fierce argument, the frightened Anaïs threw herself between her parents, crying until they stopped. She learned to plead with her father like an actress to avoid punishment, and never forgot his cruel remark that she was ugly when she was ill and emaciated. Yet her memories also include his nursing her after a mistaken diagnosis of spinal disease and the family's music-filled Christmases. This fragile happiness ended after a winter in Arcachon, where Anaïs was recovering from illness: her father left on a concert tour and never returned.

On Christmas Eve in 1924, at twenty-one, Nin returned to France with her husband, Hugh Guiler, whose bank had transferred him to Paris. Although France was her birthplace, her childhood had been spent partly in the United States, where she had moved with her mother and brothers after her parents separated. Paris initially seemed foreign: its taxis sounded like carnival trumpets, its buildings looked gray, and its passersby shabby. Hugh corrected her complaint that the city was dingy by saying it was ancient. Yaguchi emphasizes the divided belonging behind this exchange. Nin could perform her Frenchness and kept her French accent, yet Paris was not simply a recovered homeland. At the couple's first apartment, on rue Victor Schœlcher behind Montparnasse Cemetery, she spent four years feeling split between two selves. She named the strange, supposedly impure half "Imagy," after imagination. Yaguchi reads this division not as a failure to become whole but as part of Nin's creative self-fashioning: through writing, she could live the process of becoming a woman rather than

accept a fixed identity. She draws a connection to Simone de Beauvoir's later residence in the same building, Judith Butler's account of gender as something enacted, and the idea of "becoming-woman" through writing.

Nin's return to Paris also reopened unsettled questions of faith and family. In a December 1925 diary entry, she describes spending Sunday mornings searching the bookstalls along the quays for a rare edition, then visiting Saint-Séverin, where Dante was said to have prayed. The church offered a religious counterpoint to her literary ritual, and she found renewed pleasure in devotion there. As a child in America, she had believed she did not deserve a Christmas present and dreamed at Communion not of Christ but of her absent father entering her heart, imagined as a room. She later told the psychoanalyst René Allendy that she had abandoned faith at thirteen when her wish for her father's return went unanswered. Rupert Pole remembered her as a puritanical Catholic girl, while Henry Miller called her profoundly atheistic. Yaguchi locates the mystery of Nin's spiritual life somewhere between those conflicting accounts.

At the Sorbonne, Nin encountered another kind of authority: the grandeur of French literature and learning. In her diary, she imagines deep, solemn voices and an almost divine literary tradition, then describes a Paris where cafés and libraries succeed one another along streets and quays, making literature seem permanently present. The Sorbonne's history stretched back to Robert de Sorbonne's thirteenth-century college for poor theology students; the name later became associated with the faculties of letters and science. Nin would also meet Antonin Artaud in the orbit of this literary world. In 1933, he delivered his lecture "The Theatre and the Plague" at the Sorbonne, where the audience failed to understand him; afterward, he and Nin talked at La Coupole.

By 1929, the Guilers had moved to the peaceful, affluent boulevard Suchet. Nin delighted in searching for a new home because she could imagine how each space might be furnished. She decorated their apartment in a modern Oriental style and was asked by friends to design their interiors. Later she would transform a neglected house at Louveciennes by repairing its fountain and painting its rooms in different colors. For her, daily life itself could be made into art. Yet she also described the Suchet years as a kind of hibernation: surrounded by color and dance, she felt starved in soul and senses, almost dead before encountering Henry Miller, June Miller, Artaud, and the psychoanalysts who would unsettle her life.

The Printemps department store gives Yaguchi another view of the young woman caught between imagination and physical limits. Nin was captivated by its jeweled headdresses, Oriental veils, Spanish dresses, and Russian gowns, sensing a painful struggle between her fantasies and her body. She had left high school and married a banker, but before writing brought her recognition, she worked as a popular art model and studied Spanish dance. Although she could feel like an object being offered for sale, she insisted that she was

observing the artists and making portraits of them in her mind. This reversal of the gaze, Yaguchi notes, anticipates later feminist arguments about looking and representation. Nin declined an invitation to tour as a dancer because of her physical limitations, but her sense of herself as a writer remained firm: at eighteen she declared that without ink and paper she would die.

In 1933, Nin visited the sculptor Ossip Zadkine in his home and studio on rue d'Assas. His many wooden figures seemed to her like a forest of bodies, faces, and animals, with the grain and different tones of the wood preserving the presence of the trees from which they were carved. Zadkine had come from Russia to Paris as a young man and made the city his home. Nin also recorded that he fell in love with June Miller and gave her a sculpture. During the Second World War, his Jewish origins forced him to flee to New York; when he returned, he found two sculptures of women overgrown with vines and flowers. Looking at them, he said that even in death there was beauty.

Beyond Zadkine's garden, the Cité Internationale Universitaire offers another kind of artistic landscape: an idealistic "home away from home" for students and scholars from around the world. Founded in 1925 on Paris's southern edge, it was intended to encourage international exchange and peace after the First World War. Its national houses, library, theatre, restaurants, post office, bank, and swimming pool make it a city within the city. The site was created partly by demolishing the nineteenth-century Thiers Wall, and fragments of the old boundary remain beside buildings devoted to bringing different nations together. Anaïs attended Otto Rank's lectures there and studied psychoanalysis. When Yuko Yaguchi stayed in the Fondation Suisse, designed by Le Corbusier, she encountered a student named Anaïs, named in Nin's honor—a small sign of how the writer's life continues to leave traces in places that have changed around it.

Across boulevard Jourdan, Parc Montsouris offers a more rural kind of refuge. The park's lake, hills, and remains of a tunnel lend it a quality Yaguchi finds missing from many city parks. Nin, too, understood Paris through walking. She recorded the long journey from the Opéra to Montsouris and concluded that the city seemed built for eternity. Later, Lawrence Durrell walked there with her and called her diary more terrifying than *Tropic of Cancer*: although other people might cut at her, he said, she remained like a diamond. The image suggests both her vulnerability and the force of the self she fashioned through writing. Nin's own walk to the park, from central Paris to its southern edge, also makes her an energetic wanderer in a city Henry Miller was famous for crossing on foot.

Louveciennes, where Nin and her husband, Hugh Guiler, lived from 1931 to 1935, felt far removed from the city, though Paris could be glimpsed from its hill on clear nights. Nin described an old church, cobbled streets, a forest once used by French kings, and houses left to decay by a miserly owner. The village's history and its atmosphere suggested a setting

from Flaubert or Balzac, while its garden scents and the whistle of the small train linked it to a romantic, literary past. Yaguchi's visit finds a quieter suburban place, but the modest house where Nin lived still bears a plaque. Its gates, shutters, and windows invite speculation about the private life hidden behind them. Nin herself turned the image of the closed gate into a reflection on inward obstacles: although she knew she could leave, she sometimes stared at it as if it represented whatever kept her from living freely.

The house was no grand estate; the Guilers had moved there for financial reasons. Yet Nin's account made it a "laboratory of the soul," a place where she reshaped a constrained domestic existence into material for art. She compared the village to the home of Madame Bovary, but insisted she would not follow Emma into suicide. Writing about D. H. Lawrence, she said, had awakened her. From the position of a reserved suburban housewife, she remade herself as a woman writer, recording experiences that women's books had long left unspoken. Yaguchi notes that this self-creation anticipated the challenge to domestic femininity later associated with Betty Friedan. The house is thus both a real address and evidence of Nin's effort to turn confinement into a starting point.

Montparnasse's cafés provided a contrasting world, where struggling artists, expatriates, and famous writers met. At Le Dôme, the oldest of the neighborhood's historic cafés, Nin wrote about Richard Osborn, an attorney who tried to live as both a respectable professional and a bohemian. He paid for everyone's meals and spoke endlessly about the novel he meant to write, seeming to teeter between his law office and Montparnasse. The café once offered inexpensive food to penniless artists; it is now an upscale restaurant, though visitors can still sit over coffee. Its history preserves the tension between everyday survival and the artistic life that Nin found so compelling.

The American Express office near the Opéra was another meeting place, though one shaped by money and travel rather than café life. Americans in Paris could receive mail, exchange travelers' checks, and arrange hotels there. It was at this crossroads that Nin met June Miller, who had arrived in Paris after sending her husband, Henry, there to become a writer. Nin had heard so much about June from Henry that she fell in love with her almost immediately. Her diary's scene of offering June stockings, perfume, jewelry, and a wine-colored handkerchief conveys a desire to give herself as well as gifts. Yaguchi reads the attraction as a longing for identification: each woman wanted, in some sense, to become the other. The building later lost its American Express sign, replaced first by another business and then by Swiss Tourism, showing how quickly the city's visible markers can disappear.

At Le Select, Nin observed the photographer Brassaï watching people with an intensity that seemed almost hypnotic. He photographed both her and Henry, and later wrote about the emotional triangle involving June. He described Nin as falling passionately in love with her, and recalled the two women dancing and kissing in nightclubs, at times forming a bond

against Henry. The cafés could be meeting places for French intellectuals, but they were also crowded, unruly crossroads for people arriving from abroad. At La Rotonde, Henry and Nin's relationship came into sharper focus. They met in December 1931, when Osborn brought Henry to Nin's home in Louveciennes. She had just finished her study of D. H. Lawrence; Henry was writing *Tropic of Cancer*. Their meeting, Yaguchi suggests, came while both were becoming writers and helped propel each into a new stage of life.

Three months later, at the Hotel Central, they made love for the first time. Henry's question—whether Nin had expected more brutality—belongs to an encounter she later described through the language of dream and surrender. The hotel's neighborhood retained a trace of its older, rougher reputation, alongside Breton crêperies and newer commercial buildings. Henry and his friend Alfred Perlès then shared a small apartment in Clichy, a working-class suburb. In Nin's account, the thin walls let sounds through, while Henry opened wine and Perlès tossed a salad at their housewarming. Henry later called their years there a "stretch in Paradise." Sharing the apartment cost less than two hotel rooms; Clichy may also have appealed because Louis-Ferdinand Céline, whom Henry admired, had written there while working as a doctor.

In 1934, Nin helped Henry move into a studio at Villa Seurat, where friends painted, hammered, and cleaned. Its large room, skylight, terrace, and small adjoining façades made it an artists' enclave. Nin found photographs of Antonin Artaud while cleaning a closet; Brassaï also associated the lane with artists such as Dalí and Chagall. Henry had begun writing *Tropic of Cancer* nearby, and the book appeared with a preface by Nin on the day he moved into the studio she had rented for him. At La Coupole, her relationship with Artaud took a different form. She felt a spiritual kinship with the poet and theatre-maker, but his kiss seemed to draw her toward death and madness. Nin described herself to him as divided, able to love the poet in him but wary of physical intimacy. Their intense, almost mystical wanderings through Paris coexisted with that fear, as the city's cafés and streets became the stage on which she tested the boundaries between desire, art, and selfhood.

At the Louvre, Artaud brought Nin to see a painting of Lot and his daughters, an anonymous work once attributed to Lucas van Leyden. Its subject came from Genesis: Lot flees Sodom with his daughters, and, fearing their family line will end, they make him drunk and become pregnant by him. Artaud was drawn to the story of incest, a subject he had also staged in *The Cenci*. Nin felt that art could make the body and spirit vibrate together, but the painting also sharpened the conflict in their relationship. Artaud accused her of being impure and questioned her bond with her father, although he himself admired women in art who loved their fathers or brothers. Seeing this double standard, Nin left the man she had regarded as a spiritual brother.

Psychoanalysis offered Nin another way to investigate the myths and contradictions shaping her life. At René Allendy's office, she entered a dark salon opening onto a greenhouse of tropical plants, a goldfish pool, and filtered green light that made her feel submerged, as if she had left ordinary daylight behind. Allendy, a founding member of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society and Artaud's analyst, recognized her lack of confidence. Nin linked this to her sense of being immature as a woman, and showed him her undeveloped breast in a gesture that blurred confession and seduction. When she began to experience his manner as controlling, she mocked him as a maker of simple patterns. She valued analysis, like her diary, as a means of reaching creativity, yet resisted allowing anyone else to impose a settled interpretation on her.

Otto Rank's concerns as a psychoanalyst seemed to echo Nin's lived experience: the artist, the double, illusion and reality, incestuous love, and the return to the father after a journey through obstacles. Before visiting him, she wondered whether he would be interested in a woman who had enacted the very themes he studied. Their meetings became exchanges between two people of unusual intellectual force, each confronting and confiding in the other. Rank was one of the doubles Nin seemed fated to encounter, helping her examine a self she described as divided among many identities.

At Café de Flore, Nin found an advertisement for a houseboat, a discovery that opened the way to one of her most cherished forms of escape. She rented boats on the Seine, imagining life afloat as a departure from Paris, the earth, and the ordinary roles imposed by home. The boats became a bedroom shared with the Peruvian journalist Gonzalo Moré, a setting for his political gatherings, and a refuge for people fleeing Franco's Spain. In her story "Houseboat," Nin sympathized with those who refused to obey—tramps, beggars, prostitutes, and a woman who drowned herself in the river. She later told a New York analyst that her ideal life would be the bohemian existence she had known on the Seine. When she returned to Paris in 1954 to search for one of the boats, it had vanished.

Les Deux Magots, once a novelty shop and later a gathering place for poets, surrealists, and existentialists, carried Nin into a different artistic circle. In 1954 she appeared in Kenneth Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* as Astarte, goddess of light. Nin could become a goddess to young gay artists, though she was also drawn to sensitive men she called "transparent children," rather than to rigid paternal authority. Anger had admired her writing for years, and she recognized his talent after seeing *Fireworks*, even as its sadism and violence repelled her. Their connection showed how performance, artistic kinship, and her search for father figures could coexist without neatly resolving one another.

The apartment on quai de Passy placed Nin at the edge of an aristocratic district, between the refined world of her banker husband and the bohemian lives of her lovers, Henry Miller and Gonzalo Moré. She crossed the Seine by bridge and subway, moving between rich and poor,

domestic stability and artistic possibility. This back-and-forth recalled Louveciennes, but the river's boundary also suggested a route out of the center, a line of flight toward another version of herself. At the Pompidou Center, Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* gave visual form to that multiplicity: one woman appears in a succession of outlines, as if personality were layered and mobile. Nin could boast of having a thousand faces and, at other times, feel like a shattered mirror. Art allowed her to embrace a divided self and imagine lives that seemed impossible to inhabit.

Cinema offered another language for transformation. At Studio 28, an experimental film house on Montmartre, Nin recalled watching Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*, the surrealist film he made with Salvador Dalí. Its disjointed images—a hand in the street, a falling bicycle, an eye sliced by a razor—seemed to her like a silent dream. The shock of the film helped prepare the ground for *House of Incest*, her first work of fiction, which she began two years later, as though literature could answer cinema with a surrealist film of its own. Studio 28 itself, despite its avant-garde history, remained a small neighborhood cinema, its proximity to cabarets preserving something of the movie theater's disreputable allure.

The bookshop Shakespeare and Company connected Nin to the wider struggle to bring modern writing into print. Sylvia Beach's English-language shop had published James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922, despite its prohibition in the English-speaking world. Beach later introduced Henry Miller and Nin to Obelisk Press, which published *Tropic of Cancer* in 1934. When Nin revisited Paris in 1954, she found George Whitman presiding over a bookshop by the Seine, lending books and sheltering penniless friends. The place had an untidy, hospitable spirit she cherished. Its later popularity and new café made it more comfortable and fashionable, while changing the atmosphere she remembered.

Obelisk Press placed Nin's *Winter of Artifice* within a precarious literary history. The Paris edition appeared as the last of a group of books associated with Villa Seurat; soon afterward, publisher Jack Kahane died and war broke out. Nin had to leave Paris quickly, sending her books to New York. There she republished *Winter*, but the American edition differed substantially from the original, which took nearly seventy years to appear in English. Nin remembered the Paris book as beautiful, its blue cover and obelisk design now bound to Kahane's death and the war that had interrupted her life there. The press's address on the elegant Place Vendôme seemed an unlikely home for a publisher of banned books.

In 1933, twenty years after Nin's father had left the family, she spent nine days with him at the Grand Hotel in Valescure. She shaped the encounter into a father-daughter story that resembled the ancient legend of Pericles, in which a reunited pair avoid incest by recognizing their kinship. Nin, however, went where the fictional characters did not. She wrote about the encounter in her diary and in "Lilith," describing herself as her father's mystical bride. Rank told her that they had been punished for trying to make a myth real. By recording the

experience, Nin turned childhood trauma into a story of survival and self-creation, though later readers would debate the ethics of publishing it. The hotel is now a luxury apartment building, and the mistral that animates her account may never have blown there at all; in Nin’s writing, landscape, memory, and invention remain inseparable.

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