



The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. 3: 1939-1944

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Nin's years of struggle and final triumph as an author in America. "Transcending mere self-revelation... the diary examines human personality with a depth and understanding seldom surpassed since Proust...dream and fact are balanced and...in their joining lie the elements of masterpiece" (Washington Post). Edited and with a Preface by Gunther Stuhlmann; Index.

The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. 3: 1939-1944 Details

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David says

Like I said before, it is so easy to get lost in the vocabulary and language Ms. Nin uses in her diaries. This one took me a little longer than the others to get through because i felt like the middle portion of this volume dealt with her struggles in NYC. In turn, her writing seemed like a struggle and for me reading it felt like a struggle. The last third seemed to gain more momentum.

Rowena says

“Night. The stars and the moon impassive, undisturbed, eternal. A little of their impassivity flows into me. They are consoling. They reduce the intensity and acuteness of human sorrow.” - The Journals of Anaïs Nin, Volume Three

I love reading diaries in general and Nin's are probably my favourite. I love the things she values in life; meaningful relationships, art, literature, music, culture. And not to mention she is the most feeling writer; her rich inner life comes across very well in her writing.

Nin has moved back to the USA following the break of World War 2. Having to leave Louveciennes, a place that she loves, where she writes and knows people is not easy for Nin. She experiences culture shock in the States and finds it difficult to integrate. Her European-style writing isn't well-received in the States; it's considered too surreal and flaky. As a result, she finds it difficult to publish and ends up printing her own books with a printing press.

I think this may be my favourite volume of Nin's journals yet. During the first two volumes, Nin seemed to me a sort of ethereal being; a superwoman even. In this volume she was a bit different, a bit more “real.” Perhaps it's to do with her homesickness, the outbreak of war, and also age, which often comes with realization after all. In this case, it's the realization that she's everyone's “mother”; people take and take from her (and I have to say she's a bit of an enabler too), very few give back. It was so sad to see so many of her “friends” sucking her dry, Henry Miller included. Feeling under-appreciated and overwhelmed, Nin suffers from fatigue and illness:

“I fell into a trap because of my compassion. At what point does self-injury begin?”

I always find it fascinating to see the famous people Nin met and what she thought of them. In this volume she met Dali and Tennessee Williams among others.

Her exhortation of the artist in society is something I appreciate. A reminder that we all need art in our lives.

“To say that the artist is not serving humanity is monstrous. He has been the eyes, the ears, the voice of humanity. He was also the transcendentalist who X-rayed our true states of being.”

As always, beautiful and engaging writing. I read this diary in record time, considering how busy I am.

Abacadabra says

I am now reading Vol. 2 - I happen to randomly find Nin's journals when I travel, and it's been nearly a year that I've read Vol. 3, but all the excitement of being part of Nin's journey, her ways of experiencing life and the enchantment of her words, it is all coming back!

Probably the most poetical description of everyday matters, along with bigger issues like war, poverty of artists and whathaveyou, Anais Nin's journals are a treasure you should have near you at all times.

Lolly K Dandeneau says

I had read Anais years ago, but forgot to add it to Goodreads 'read' books. Some have speculated some of her 'journaling' was embellished but most journalists (or diary writers) always write to some audience (like Rebecca Mann wrote eons ago "reading my journals one would wonder at how great I seem", or something to that effect. I love Nin's musings and nothing I write will ever do Anais and her journals justice. Raw, painful, insightful... her journals cover everything. Like most people, my journals pale in comparison and my life seems un-lived and small :) and yet, like her, many of us are afflicted with the disease of Diariness, it's a compulsion and why not? Why not? Like her, my journal too has become a part of my soul. All women should read Nin at some point in life, and hell- men should too. If for no other reason than to be entertained by her writing about famous men, some before they were famous. No one can accuse that she didn't put herself out there, and how many of us could be as vulnerable, without hiding behind some fictional character when we write?

Janet says

The story continues as Anais moves to New York for the duration of the war. My favorite stuff in this is her friendships with women: the fragile and lovely actress Luise Rainer, Gotham Book Mart's brave individualist bookseller Frances Steloff, and the surrealist patrons, millionairesses Caresse Crosby and Peggy Guggenheim. I loved seeing how her frustration at publishing *Winter of Artifice* with a commercial publisher leads her, not to defeat, but to purchase a printing press and with assistance of the handsome, limpet-like Gonzalo, prints the book herself, which sells through the Gotham Book Mart to collectors--giving an object lesson to today's concern about the dematerialization of the printed work. Will the book itself go back to becoming a collector's item, finely printed and bound, made only for the few?

Love the wealth of thoughts about men and women, about prose and poetry... like a bolt of silk that just keeps unfolding.

Rachel says

"I need a medicine man who will solder my body and soul together, which splits at every separation. The doctor says it is the flu. He cannot see the body is empty, the fire is gone, I am a king without a kingdom, an artist without a home, a stranger to luxury, to power, to bigness, to comfort. I lost a world, a small human

world of love and friendship. I am no adventurer, I miss my home, familiar streets, those I love and know well." (p.11)

"It isn't good to stay too long in the polluted air of history." (p.27)

"America is in even greater danger because of its cult of toughness, its hatred of sensitivity, and someday it may have to pay a price for this, because atrophy of feeling creates criminals." (p.28)

"The nights lie around us like an abyss of sensual warmth, awakening the senses, almost palpable. They are like a caress on the skin. Wherever the earth can breathe, our bodies breathe, too, and the pulse of nature sets our own pulse beating." (p.43)

"I do not want to become hard and callous as other people are doing around me. They shrug their shoulders and don another layer of indifference." (p.48)

"If people knew more about psychology they would have recognized in Hitler a psychotic killer. Nations are neurotic, and leaders can be psychotic.

The ivory tower of the artist may be the only stronghold left for human values, cultural treasures, man's cult of beauty." (p.49)

"We live in an era of destruction. Destruction and creation are sometimes balanced: great wars, great cultures. But now destruction is predominant. People die for systems that are masks for personal power and gain. Against them I close the door of a small but loving world, cells of devotion, care, work, to fight the disease and madness of the world. A small world has sometimes defeated great systems born of delusions." (p.50)

"Man is forbidden to concern himself with anything but the struggle for bread. If his capacity for dreaming, imagining, inventing, and experimenting is killed in the process, man will become a well-fed robot and die of spiritual malnutrition. The dream has its function and man cannot live without it." (p.52)

"When I gave a sensuous or poetic-erotic description, the client would complain, so I began to write tongue-in-cheek, to become outlandish, inventive, and so exaggerated that I thought he would realize I was caricaturing sexuality. But there was no protest." (p.58)

"I have an unfortunate weakness. I cannot bloom in the cold, the impersonal. So I withdraw." (p.66)

"Not all of us were intended to be tied down to the daily humdrum work. Some of us who rejected monotonous daily tasks developed a magnificent gift for living." (p.75)

"The symbolic interpretation is the only one which expands, enlarges the world, makes it boundless, illimitable. All others reduce it. Marxism is a reduction to the practical. Dreams, mysteries, myths, symbols, are as necessary as bread." (p.76)

"...we cannot live forever only in the actual and the present, or we stifle. The realm of the literal is a prison." (p.86)

"When one is uprooted, transplanted, there is a temporary withering. I always panic at this and think it permanent. I thought my life was shrinking." (p.87)

"I have a feeling that Pandora's box is the mysteries of woman's sensuality, so different from man's and for which man's language is inadequate. The language of sex has yet to be invented." (p.100)

"If you live as a poet the poet's duty is to maintain his power to create the marvelous by contagion. If the poet maintains himself inside a dream and is able to communicate this capacity to others by osmosis, well and good. But he should not step out of this dream to preach, to meddle with political and practical constructions. Let him remain a poet and reveal magic coincidences and magic possibilities. The one who has the vision is not necessarily the one who knows how to actualize or embody this vision." (p.113)

"Here I get a feeling of invisibility. You walk by and everyone either does not see or pretends not to see." (p.127)

"Joy is a foam, an illumination. When I am dancing it seems to lie outside in an illusory garden. When I am in the garden it explodes from the house. When I am traveling it settles like an aurora borealis over the land I am leaving. When I stand on the shore I see it bloom on the flag of a departing ship. Joy is in the street fair, but when I arrive it folds its tent, tidies its costumes, starts its motor. Have I ever possessed it? At moments, a joy which came in the form of ecstasy, ecstasy in lovemaking, a soaring, a lyrical flight, joy at beauty, at desire, at creation. But it is rare and fleeting. I want a joy that takes simple colors, street organs, ribbons, flags, not a joy that takes one's breath away and throws one into space. Not a joy like the mystic's ecstasies or the poet's ecstasies which lift one into an atmosphere others cannot breathe with you. There are so many joys, and I have only known the ones that come like a miracle and tough ordinary life with light." (p.134)

"I thought, with me he will be different. Knowing my struggles, he would not burden me. But he did. Furthermore, he demanded a harshness equal to his own. If I have to manufacture an equal hardness, then I do not want any friendship on such terms. I want to be able to trust, not live in perpetual self-defense." (p.169)

"When these things explode, one gets the shock of people who were asleep, for none of us were informed enough to predict or prepare ourselves. We were all caught sleeping, dreaming, loving, working." (p.176)

"...if the world loves war and destruction I won't go along with it. I will go on loving and writing until the bomb falls. I am not going to quit, abdicate, and play its game of death and power." (p.177)

"I want to work. I have no time for battles. The relationship to handcraft is a beautiful one... You live with your hands, in acts of physical deftness... At the end of the day you can see your work, weigh it. It is done. It exists." (p.185)

"Discovering others' weakness is not going to prove your strength. We all have weaknesses. The knowledge of human weakness is what gives friendship its humanity. You must seek another protagonist. I do not thrive on war. War to me is the greatest weakness of all." (p.186)

"Out in the world: fifty English soldiers bayoneted after surrendering. Women raped by the Japanese. Bali invaded, Java invaded. Paris bombarded by the English. India rebelling against the English. Ships torpedoed. Pictures of Polish dead, camp victims, slow starvation, torture, murders. That is the world outside. And what can one do but preserve some semblance of human life, to seek the not-savage, not-barbaric forms of life." (p.188)

"In writing, my only discipline has been to cut out the unessential." (p.192)

"My underground success continues from person to person, fervent, secretly and quietly." (p.205)

"There is a fear that the development of women will make her less of a wife, a mate, that they might lose her. Frances is attentive to Tom's writing, concerned over his struggles. Tom is not concerned with Frances' expansion or gifts. The same with the other women I know." (p.215)

"He bound her femininity as the Chinese bound their women's feet. He polished her language, her manners, her impulses." (p.227)

"And don't tie it up, your work, with the idea that it is the solution to our economic ills. Do it for its own sake, purely. Enjoy it!" (p.232)

"The drama of woman's development is very painful, for in each case the man seems to punish all growth. So the woman intent on growth chooses a yielding, passive man who will not interfere with this growth, with her evolution. But in the end, his weakness destroys her." (p.234)

"You encompassed too much. You had no sense of reality about the body- the limitations of the body." (p.239)

"Woman communicates with the cosmos, the cosmic, through the earth, through her maternal self. So you become the all-mother, giving out endlessly. You attempted the infinite with a finite human body." (p.240)

"The magic consists of the fact that the changes you affect within yourself in turn affect others. Anxiety breeds anxiety, doubt breeds doubt, fear breeds fear. As you get free of yours, there is a chain reaction on all those around and close to you. Tranquillity is contagious. One only thinks of the contagiousness of illness, but there is the contagion of serenity and joy. Neurosis is the real demon, the only real possession, the real evil force in the world. And it is curable." (p.246)

"My imagination pulls me out into the night always. I want to be everywhere. Lying down, I am missing the heart of passion, drama and adventures." (p.254)

"“More light” is what Goethe meant to say. The atoms themselves are composed of light. How then, could there be more LIGHT? Yet you accomplished this miracle of which Goethe, dying, dreamed. You create more light by seeing more light." (p.284)

"There are very few human beings who receive the truth, complete and staggering, by instant illumination. Most of them acquire it fragment by fragment, on a small scale, by successive developments cellularly, like a laborious mosaic." (p.294)

"Stories are the only enchantment possible, for when we begin to see our suffering as a story, we are saved. It is the balm of the primitive, the way to exorcise a terrifying life." (p.296)

Glitter says

Her writing is always beautiful, always imaginative, always alluring, somehow strangely personal to me. She is my favourite writer, by far. Her words echo straight to the soul. This was an insight into her, a magical

idea, a realm all to herself and I loved it. At times, it dragged on a little: ruminations about various people, needless thoughts, letters which were difficult to put into context; but all the way through, there was a voice, a voice of beauty, freedom, love liberating something inside of me.

I loved the part she had on guilt (p.259-260), of her fear of being abandoned by those she loved in expression of strength. It was beautiful. All beautiful.

Jennifer says

I picked this up at a bookstore in San Francisco. Didn't realize until after I bought it that it's part three in a volume of six. So far I've just read the preface, which is obviously not autobiographical. I actually like that I'm starting in the middle of her life. Sounds like she had the romantic life of a vagabond. I'm gonna be a different person after I read this.

Jess says

Reading Anais Nin is always like a homecoming to me. I reconnect to my emotional self in a very strong way when I read her; I become more human and am able to access the beauty in the world more deeply. I love reading about her struggle and learning process to relate to the world as a woman and as an artist; how to understand the mode of describing what surrounds her and is inside of her in the diary versus the mode of creating for her novels. This is something I struggle with in my own writing and when I read Anais's work I feel more able to see the balance between living naturally and living artfully.

Ying says

"One evening I did enjoy myself with Brigitte and Hugh Chisholm. She is flawless, a delight to look at. A Viking, but fullbreasted, with rich hair, a rich voice, a wonderful ease. She was sitting crosslegged on a satin divan, wearing slacks, she the natural beauty, I the artificial one, the created one, the one who needs a certain atmosphere, a certain light, a certain mood. That night, in the warmth of their admiration, I too bloomed. Everywhere now I see people seeking the deep current in me, that which they seek in themselves. I no longer believe it is that they think me beautiful, or that I can dance, or write, but that it is the deeper current they feel. Brigitte showed me her design for a bathing suit. For this she undressed herself completely, which affected me, enchanted me. Later as we were going out and I was powdering in the salon, she called me vehemently to the bathroom where she was absolutely naked, to dress herself again. Only when she was dressed did I feel courage enough to kiss her. I came away filled with colors, flavors, bathed in luxury and beauty."

Aric Cushing says

Nin's account pre WW2 are riveting. A first hand account of an artist trapped in the onset of war. Her multi-national background, besides her artistry in writing, captures a vivid account of pre-war trepidation and mounting doom.

Giovanna papi says

It is quite impossible for me to review a book that I've read through 9 months. Every single time I turned a page I felt different, I had different emotions and expectations. Sometimes I hated her, sometimes I felt that she was the only human being in the world I wanted to admire, i felt so much, I will carry on this journal in my heart. I don't need to read everything she ever wrote, because this much satisfies me already.

Ciara says

i'll be honest: i enjoy reading anais nin's diaries (in limited doses), but i'll be damned if i could tell you what they are "about," you know? i mean, they're diaries. i guess this one mainly takes place after anais relocates to new york during world war two. she is working as a kind of secretary/administrative assistant/student of otto rank, a famous psychotherapist. she is thinking of abandoning writing & becoming a therapist herself. there's more to it, but that's the gist, i guess.

Véronique says

Géniale, merveilleuse, profonde et vraie, j'ai l'impression d'avoir rencontré une amie. Ce livre réconcilie avec le fait de parler de soi.

Donald Estolas says

Comparative comment such that you are asking for is going to be relative to the reader. I can feel my blood flow through every chapter of the diaries. In a sense---it is the same with all truths fundamental to the human progression through time---they have to pertain to our very own life. Every episode, every thought that we have ever had about ourselves has to immanently correspond. Otherwise, we merely read the life. The latter is not unlike a weather report. It becomes something we listen to. It is not the actual experience of the moments one is reading about and absorbing into our very being (a recreation/enactment of our very life before our core of perception). I don't think we can facsimulate actual experience. Anais from what I have read is the embodiment of the actualization of art. The accessing of that which may have been hinted at by others but which is instead hers to bring into human focus--is at the core the very essence of art. It is presenting a vista never purveyed before but in which we see ourselves as we could not articulate before. Her work is incredible for those who can relate. The propensity for human blindness about ourselves is really transcended in the diaries of this magnificent woman. For all time.

kelly says

This volume of the diary documents her life in America while war is tearing apart Europe. Her (a)political consciousness is becoming more apparent in this work and her strength in focusing on her immediate

relationships is solidified and paradoxically placed in a broader social context.

Nimrodel says

In comparison with the previous volumes, not my favourite one. At first, I thought this would be my favourite volume, taking into account that it narrates events during the Second World War, but well, nope.

Sarah says

Anais is a beautiful writer. I feel guilty for putting this book down several times. For some reason, I just don't seem to be able to finish it. I think I'm more interested in her history with Henry Miller and relationships with other writers of the period. Although her life was spectacular in its own right. Maybe I should have started with volume 1.

vi macdonald says

4.5

cansu m says

a bit too abstract for my taste but it's still unmistakably anais so
