



The Early Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. 1: 1914-1920

Anaïs Nin, Jean L. Sherman (translator)

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A charming and amusing view of Nin's early life, from age eleven to seventeen; the self-portrait of an innocent girl who is transformed, through her own insights, into an enlightened young woman. "An enchanting portrait of a girl's constant search for herself" (Library Journal). Preface by Joaquin Nin-Culmell; Index; photographs and drawings. Translated by Jean L. Sherman.

The Early Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. 1: 1914-1920 Details

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sheena says

What's a polite way to admit that these diary entries are, you know, kind of boring? What did you expect? Anaïs was just a baby. Still, pretty exciting moment there when she realises she is no longer ugly. I'll stop this review now, because as she notes, "people who complain are good for nothing in the world. And pessimists are monsters!"

Katy White says

Reading the earliest diaries of Ms. Nin was enjoyable. I would recommend them only to fanatics, however.

Sarah Greenman says

Voyeurism at its best. A study on the psychological landscape of young womanhood. Nin is a born writer - even these diary entries, some as early as nine years old, are concise, beautifully detailed and filled with piercing vulnerability.

Kate says

I'm not sure where I heard about Anais Nin but I wanted to read her journals. I couldn't bring myself to start in the middle of her life, so I found her earliest journals... and was pretty much bored silly.

Rachel says

She fascinates me. That is all.

Ruth E. R. says

Actual diary of 13-year-old creative writer from the 1910s, whose family immigrated from France to NYC. I had never heard of Anais Nin when I discovered this book browsing through the Brookfield Public Library. Anne Frank's diary had been very special to me, as a person and as an adolescent writer, so this was a happy discovery. I marveled at her descriptions of life as a Catholic youth from an extended artistic family in New York City during the early 20th century. She meticulously listed how much her clothes cost, and which books she read. She found beauty and mysticism in the most ordinary things.

NOTHING ELSE BY HER IS WORTH READING. She grew up to become famous for her erotica, bisexuality, "open marriage", etc. Reading a bit more of her celebrated multi-volume diary led me into temptation; consider yourself warned. (I wish someone had warned me, or that I had been less willing to explore.) A quote of hers that I have remembered ever since: "Those who indulge in the unnatural lose their taste for natural things."

Julia DelSignore Peoples says

Not terribly interesting, but I realize she was very young when writing this. Considering her age at the time of writing, it's fairly well written. I am willing to read another book of hers when she is older.

Meagan says

Her thoughts are astoundingly deep and mature, even when she was only 11. There's a bit of jealousy that goes along with reading this, be warned, a lot of looking back at yourself at these ages and regretting that you weren't as intelligent, as talented, as thoughtful as she was.

Cherie says

Oh, I LOVE Anais Nin! This is a must for any Anais Nin fan. I wish I had started with this years ago, to see her progression. It is fantastically written; even as a young teenager, she is an excellent and captivating writer. You can see her skill and it was not boring by any means; her life has an adventure to it, a novel-like quality like her later diaries do. (What happens next with Prince Marcus? Will Papa come over? What will happen with Maman's business?) I highly recommend this fabulous diary.

Jennifer says

I am having such a hard time putting this book down. Its amazing that an 11 year old girl can write something so beautiful.

Leslie ellis says

Those of you who do not know who she is, for one she was a lover of Henry Miller.
Henry Miller, well hmmmm... Wikipedia him.

She started her diary early, age eleven.
This is a great prerequisite to foundate her latter writings.
I'm so excited!

I'm enraptured at the moment and am deleting all current readings. Yeah.

Kay says

This book is really wonderful. In a world where we have endless amounts of young adult fiction, in which grown women trying to mimic the thoughts and feelings of a teenage girl, it's refreshing to read the true thoughts and feelings of an actual teenage girl. She might be a precocious one, but her diary is so genuine, so passionate, so beautifully written that I found it inspiring.

Anaïs Nin, A.N. or Linotte, as she nicknames herself in the book, is a French-Cuban immigrant that came to New York at the age of 11 from Paris by way of Barcelona. At first she despises New York. Eventually, though, she grows to love New York and even begins to forget Spanish.

But even if A.N. is an immigrant (the book is translated from the volumes she wrote in her native French tongue), she's still more privileged than most of her peers. If her family struggles financially, we don't see much of it. They take long summer vacations and attend the theater often.

Yet her world isn't without strife; she writes often to her absent father, who remained behind in Paris as a concert pianist and divorced her mother before the book even begins. She will chide him, even sometimes cruelly berating him for not writing back. We watch her gradual process from adoring her father to realizing "papa" is a flawed human being—and eventually one she hasn't seen in years.

Meanwhile her mother works to support A.N. and her two brothers. A.N. herself struggles with her duty to help her mother with household chores and spending time "dreaming" of new stories and reading. One of the central themes of the book is this inner conflict, as she struggles to be "good" instead of "bad."

Sometimes this conflict is literal. She talks often of her Catholic faith, even as she begins to question it more and more as she grows older. Other times, she struggles with the expectations that are placed on women: to be kind, generous, upbeat, and so on. Her family encourages her to pursue her intellectual pastimes, but it's hard for her to escape the expectations of being the eldest and a young women in this world. She might not be expected to read literature, but she does.

And oh how this girl loves reading. When her mother gives her permission to buy a new book, she chooses one thoughtfully and carefully. She enthusiastically talks of stories and poems she's working on. Her effusive praise of poetry and literature would be annoying if it wasn't so earnest.

Ultimately this volume might not be everyone's cup of tea, but I really enjoyed spending time in A.N.'s world. I found myself rooting for her, hoping she'd break free from the expectations she felt bound by and become a great artist. Of course, we know she did become a well-known writer in her own right, but her journey to get there is an engaging one.

Greta says

Anaïs Nin clearly has a passion for writing. Her first diaries evoke detailed images of what it was like for her as a teenage immigrant to America. Despite being written in French and subsequently translated into English, her ability to express herself (in two languages) is phenomenal. Her words flow and the minute details of her

life are rarely boring. Her insights into other people and the nature of life are much deeper than one would expect for a person of her age. Many of her observations show a wisdom and intelligence that create a desire, for me at least, to continue to read her thoughts and descriptions of her life to find out how she continues to evolve and blossom as a writer and as a woman in the 20th Century.

Jess says

Very interesting to read such young thoughts from Anais Nin, whose adult impressions have been such a big part of my adult life. I liked seeing her development and am excited to read more of the early diaries of her late teens and early twenties, as I have only read the ones starting in the early 1930s, about ten years after this one. At times this volume could be a bit repetitive, but that makes sense given that it is the day to day of a child's life.

Cari says

Anais Nin's writing always makes me happy sigh, infused as it is with a certain otherworldliness and a beauty separate from whatever one may think of the woman herself. (Even in her own diaries, it's clear that Nin must have been a very difficult woman to deal with. And that's putting it mildly.) In short, I'm very much a fan of all her work, but while I'd *love* to recommend Linotte to everyone, I can't. I'm too aware that this is really a book that will only hold the attention of like-minded fans past the first few pages, because everyone else may be put off by the scribblings of the eleven-year-old girl we are introduced to in the beginning.

Let's be honest here: those first few pages aren't exactly great literature. They're shaky, often silly, and hit or miss in the "mostly miss" kind of way. She was *eleven*, so of course they are, as writing better than the average pre-teen, even significantly better like Nin, isn't really saying much. But there's promise there, even in the earliest entries, and the older she gets, the more the reader can recognize that first signs of Nin's style developing, the one that was so defined in Henry and June. The reward at the end is worth the mishaps in the beginning. Definitely. If nothing else, witnessing Nin's evolution as a writer is fascinating.

Highly recommended for fans. If you're interested but uncertain about committing to a 500+ page read that might just end up boring you to tears, just skip the early stuff and go directly to the entries for 1919. You'll be able to catch up, and the final two hundred and fifty pages are the crux of these diaries, anyway.
