

# Mirages

THE UNEXPURGATED DIARY OF ANAÏS NIN, 1939–1947

## Q&A WITH PAUL HERRON

Paul Herron is editor and founder of Sky Blue Press, co-publisher of *Mirages: The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1939-1947*, publisher of *The Portable Anaïs Nin*, *The Winter of Artifice* (Paris edition) by Anaïs Nin, *A Café in Space: The Anaïs Nin Literary Journal*, and digital publisher of Anaïs Nin's fiction as well as *Mirages*.

Who was Anaïs Nin and what is her literary legacy?

Anaïs Nin was born in France in 1903 and died in California in 1977. Her posthumously published erotica landed her on the best-seller lists, but it was her diaries that brought her fame after a long history of literary obscurity. The first *Diary of Anaïs Nin* was released in 1966, and even though it was written some 30 years previous and heavily edited, it struck a chord with the youth movement, who, like Nin, were seeking self-liberation. In all, seven volumes of the diary were published in the sixties and seventies, and Nin was a popular figure on the lecture tour for years before becoming ill with cancer.

Tell us about yourself and your involvement with Nin's literary works.

Well, I had a rather inauspicious introduction to Anaïs Nin. One day, I was looking for a movie to see, and I saw that *Henry and June* was playing. What caught my attention was the NC-17 rating, which was a brand new rating replacing the old X, so I said, "Let's go!" While I didn't think the movie deserved the rating, I was drawn in by the sense of sexual and literary adventures the characters of Nin and Henry Miller were involved in, but the kicker was when the credits rolled at the end: these people were real, and they wrote about what I'd just seen on the screen. So, on the way home, I stopped at the used book store and I bought the first volume of the *Diary* and Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. The rest, as they say, is history.

*Mirages* is "unexpurgated." Was this diary published before in a different form?

The same time period, 1939 to 1947, is covered in the third and fourth volumes of *The Diary of Anaïs Nin*. Because Nin's husband was alive at the time, there was no way she could have included the numerous sexual affairs she had with many different men, some of whom were also still alive. The only way she could publish the diary was to excise the entire erotic side of her life, leaving instead innuendo and suggestion. While these diaries still retain an erotic aura, there is nothing specific that could have endangered her marriage. *Mirages* contains much of the material cut from volumes three and four, but more importantly, it reveals the incredible personal struggle Nin had during those years trying to adapt to life in wartime America after having fled France in 1939. She practically had to reinvent herself, both as a writer and as a woman. It is the untold story left out of the previous diaries.



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It has been seventeen years since the last of Nin's unexpurgated diaries was published. What was the course of events that led to *Mirages*?

What will readers learn about Anais Nin from her entries in *Mirages*?

Let's look briefly at the history of the unexpurgated diaries. When Nin's husband, Hugh Guiler, died in 1985, plans were made to release the first unexpurgated diary, *Henry and June*, upon which the movie is based. Rupert Pole, the Nin Trustee, and John Ferrone, an editor at Harcourt, began working together, and after a somewhat contentious process, the book was finished and released in 1986 to critical acclaim. Ferrone's motto was to make the diary read like a novel, and he achieved this brilliantly. The next unexpurgated volumes, *Incest, Fire*, and *Nearer the Moon*, were edited by Pole and Nin's former literary agent Gunther Stuhlmann, and while each volume was successful, a major editorial restructure at Harcourt left the next diary without a publisher.

I was asked to have a look at what was then two manuscripts, one from '39 to '44, and the other from '44 to '47, which totaled some 1,300 pages. I immediately decided to combine these two books into one, and to seek within its bulk the essential story, which turned out to be Nin's painful transformation as woman and artist. I should point out that John Ferrone was very helpful during this process, sharing with me techniques used in *Henry and June*. The end result is that *Mirages* has a flow that never ceases, from beginning to end.

They will see the human side of Anaïs Nin as never before. There is nothing elusive or fuzzy here—it is all laid out plainly in her uniquely elegant prose. Readers will discover that American life nearly drove Nin mad with its puritanical mores, its literary emptiness, its artistic void, all of which countered what Nin had grown to love about Paris. In order to cope, she resorted to two things: writing, and torrid, destructive love affairs. Readers will find out how Nin went about the writing process, how she created her characters, and how she was able to use her diary as a springboard for her fiction, which was becoming prolific. Her personal life was another matter—one failed romance after the next, all while her relationships with her two Paris lovers, Henry Miller and Gonzalo Moré, were dying. It is not until near the end of the diary that she meets “the One” love she sought—Rupert Pole. That meeting forever changed her life; she began what she called the “trapeze life,” swinging back and forth between her husband in New York and Rupert Pole in Los Angeles—which, of course, is the subject of the next unexpurgated diary.



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Edited by Paul Herron  
Introduction by Kim Krizan

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