Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Anais Nin, 1972

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Anais Nin in 1972. The interview was conducted in New York City by Doloris Holmes for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

DOLORIS HOLMES: This is Doloris Holmes interviewing for the Archives of American Art. We have been documenting the Protest Art Movement of the 1970's. Today I have the real pleasure of talking with Miss Anais Nin who is in New York City to celebrate the publication of her *Fourth Diary*. Recently I read an interview of Miss Nin by some feminists. This interview was in a publication called *Second Wave* the issue of Summer 1971. Because it was so obvious from that interview that Miss Nin is involved with the Women's Liberation Movement, I have asked her to be part of this series of interviews dealing with the protest art movement. Miss Nin, will you start by reading some comments that you wrote for the *Third Diary*? This is a statement which is not only a beautiful one about the process of art in general but has particular relevance for female artists. Would you read that?

ANAIS NIN: "As to all that nonsense that Henry and Larry talked about -– the necessity of I am God in order to create -– I suppose they mean: I am God, I am not a woman. Woman never had direct communication with God anyway but only through man, the priest. She never created directly except through man. She was never able to create as a woman. But what neither Larry nor Henry understand is that woman's creation, far from being like a man's, must be exactly like her creation of children and that it must come out of her own blood, enclosed in her womb, nourished with her own milk. It must be a human creation of flesh. It must be different from man's abstractions. As to this "I am God" which makes creation an act of solitude and pride, this image of God alone making sky, earth, sea – it is this image which has confused woman; man, too; because he thinks that God did it all alone and he thinks that he did it all alone. And behind every achievement of may lies a woman. And I am sure God was helped, too, but never acknowledged it. Man today is like a tree that is withering at the roots. And most women painted and wrought nothing but imitations of phalluses. The world was filled with phalluses like totem poles and no womb anywhere. My art must be like a miracle. Before it goes through the conduits of the brain and becomes an abstraction, a fiction, a lie, it must be for women more like a personified ancient ritual where every spiritual thought was made visible, enacted, represented. I believe at times that man created out of a fear of exploring woman. I believe woman started about herself out of fear what she had to say. She covered herself with taboos and veils. Man invented a woman to suit his needs. He disposed of her by identifying her with nature and then paraded his contemptuous domination of nature. But woman is nature only."

DOLORIS HOLMES: Miss Nin, that was really a very, very beautiful comment and I especially wanted it to be included in this interview. One of the questions which various women's artists' groups have been discussing over the past few years is the whole question as to whether there is such a separate thing as female art. There's a lob of disagreement about this. Some people feel that if we define a separate entity, that we'll be put back into a box just like we've been in all these years. Other people say that we have to define it, try to think about it, clarify it, because women have had specific cultural experiences and do have definite biological experiences. Therefore we must try to find it in order to know where to go from here. What's your thinking on this subject?

ANAIS NIN: If by "differences" we mean differences in quality, or in capabilities, there are no differences at all. Woman is equally capable of intellectual, of psychological, or emotional art expression. She can do all that. But I do believe that she has undergone very long process of conditioning. Sometimes, for example, when a plant is prevented from growing in a certain direction it develops different qualities. Since woman was really thrust very much into the personal work through the roles that she had to play by having children, being the wife, most of the time her closeness to the personal world, I think added some quality to her which she didn't lose. When man rationalized his thinking to the point really of getting completely away from human reality, I feel that woman kept closer to this human reality. And psychoanalysis did reveal that if both men and women really take their roots in which I call the unconscious, that is, in this hidden collective life from which springs all our

inspirations, our dreams and the things we do not know about ourselves, this is the same in man and in women. I think woman remained closer to it and did not indulge so much in the process of rationalization, of dealing with things directly through the mind rather than taking the whole. You see, women have a greater synthesis between body, feeling, the senses, and her thinking is much better synthesized. And I hope that this -- a difference of roots -- is an element that she will bring to law, or to criticism, or to any of the male activities.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So you're really saying, as you said before, that there are advantages to the kinds of restrictions that women artists, or women, have had; that is, women have had to be more in the home and have had less chance to have adventure but because of that they have been more acutely sensitive to personal relationships, more aware of their own body, their own body's relationship to the environment; and that this is a real advantage in terms of their being able to express universal kinds of experiences? Is that what you're saying?

ANAIS NIN: That's it.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Good. The other question that I would like very much to get into is the question as to whether you felt at any particular point in your life that your sense of yourself either as a woman, or as an artist, or as both, began to become more synthesized? I know that you did see numerous analysts. I remember Dr. Allendy and Dr. Rank, and then there were two female therapists. To digress a point, I remember that both Allendy and Rank wanted you to give up the Diaries; they felt it was a crutch. I'm certainly very glad that you didn't give up the Diaries because they certainly are so beautiful. First of all, the question is: Did you feel there was any particular point at which you felt this crystallization of yourself? And, secondly, whether you could say that the female therapists were more helpful to you? Or whether the male therapists were more helpful to you?

ANAIS NIN: That's a very interesting question. I must say that at the beginning I never believed that the Diary was a crutch so much as a journey into the inner self which would have been prevented if I had not had the Diary. I was determined to play the role that is imposed on woman; I wanted to be a wife, I wanted to be the Muse, I wanted to be the assistant to the artist. I think I've said somewhere that I'd rather be the wife of an artist than to be an artist. In other words, I began with all the personnas, accepting these personnas and these roles, but somewhere I had to be genuine and that happened to be the Diary. Now with analysis this genuine self then came to be born and to affirm itself, and slowly the masks fell off. And although I continued to do what is expected of a woman - I was fully aware that these were obligations - this was not all of myself. So the analysts helped, the men as well as the women. But the woman was the only one who realized the destructiveness of the motherhood experience and how it could be carried to excess - how protecting, nurturing, encouraging, inspiring could ultimately destroy a woman. And I had seen many women destroyed by that role. So it was the woman who put her finger on that. That was the beginning, then, of the effort to grow as a person distinct from the ideals that had been taught to me, or what I had learned from men.

DOLORIS HOLMES: This leads me to several other questions and it's hard for me to know where to focus. I do remember that Dr. Jaeger said that she felt your material was too complicated to understand. Do you feel that this was her problem as a woman, or do you feel that it was her problem as a therapist? I know that therapists are frequently more boxed in than artists.

ANAIS NIN: No, I can't say that because Allendy did not understand my work either, you see. So it was not a question of being a women therapist or her limitations. Allendy was very limited in his dogmatic, bourgeois Freudism, you know. He was the one who did not understand the role of the artist. But I don't think this has to do with her being a women. But she did seize upon something that the men didn't see.

DOLORIS HOLMES: She seized on the tremendous amount of guilt that a woman has when she concentrates on her art rather than on supporting a man. Perhaps you could say that the male therapist would deal more with the anxiety and with the depression, but not with the guilt per se. The other thing that we talked about the last time was Otto Rank, the fact that he was the one who talked about the "birth trauma" as the first trauma, And remember your discussion about the orphan?

ANAIS NIN: We were discussing why all the stories I wrote as a child began, "I am an

orphan", and then my adventures began. Rank's theory was that the artist is one who really wants to give birth to himself, wants to create himself; therefore I did not like the idea of having parents who would create and fashion me. This is how he explained that briefly - and sort of giving birth to oneself.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So the Diaries, in one way, could be seen as a constant, very difficult process, I assume, of getting rid of all those former selves which you had learned as a woman, as a white person, as a person connected with a certain socio-economic group and that you constantly, slowly and minutely had to give birth to yourself. And this must have been a very, very difficult process. The next question that I'd like to get into has to do with the whole problem of the individual versus the group. That's a cliche problem. One of the most unique things that I feel you gave me was the sense that in exploring yourself you did get to the human unconscious; you did get to kind of Jungian archetypes. To bring this up to the Women's Liberation Movement, how do you feel about the Movement in terms of this whole question of the individual versus the group?

ANAIS NIN: Of course there was no question of a group at the time when I was going through my various evolutions. But we substituted for that a very close, one-to-one friendship with women so that we did talk without being a group, just together, two women at a time, about our difficulties, or our problems, or our lives. And very honestly. A different kind of talk from the talk we had with men. The group work today achieves a very different thing. You see they bring solutions. I didn't know the solutions, for example, to the problem of abortion. I knew that women suffered from that and lost their lives and risked their lives and the whole thing was a very tragic thing for a woman. But I didn't know of a solution because individually we don't arrive at these things. Those are the things that you can do as a group when we study law and we study history and social problems. So the only ones I could solve were the ones that you could solve by yourself, through friendships or loves or helping each other. So both are valuable. What I felt is that when the individual has worked very much on his own evolution he has something to bring to the group, and that a great deal of the work we should really do outside of the group, so that we don't bring to the group our problems only but some solutions to whatever he has been able to solve alone. I don't think they mutually exclude each other. I think the group solves many problems that you can't solve individually.

DOLORIS HOLMES: I agree with you. I think that group activity is necessary especially for female painters and sculptors, because there has been less of a tradition of female artists in the sphere of sculpture in particular. So we do need the group. I think the best thing that I'd like to do right now is to ask you to read another quote. You remember you had a very good friend named Olga. At a young age she was a poet; then she became all involved with Marxism. There came a point in her life when she was beginning to question her life. She had been reading your Diaries, and she was very ambivalent about them. And she asked you over. This is a lovely quote from the *Fourth Diary*.

ANAIS NIN: (Reading) "Every time our hope for a better world is based on a system, this system collapses due to the corruptibility and imperfection of human beings. I believe we have to go back and work at the growth of human beings so they will not need systems but will know how to rule themselves. Now you have suffered the shock of disillusion in an ideology which has betrayed its ideals. It is a good time to return to the creation of yourself not as a blind number in a group but as an individual."

DOLORIS HOLMES: Perhaps the point that we have to make here is that nothing is absolutistic. So you want to add something to what you read in reference to Olga?

ANAIS NIN: I don't exactly know how to answer that. The need to work, to create yourself, and then the need to participate in group activities to me are not incompatible at all. I think it's very right when women artists get together and protest certain practices in museums. I have been protesting, for example, the lack of women writers in anthologies. I'm sorry that we have to go through this phase of working as women, as women writers, and all that, because this brings us back again to these distinctions. I wish we didn't have any distinctions. But we're still working with them and until we have found our way into anthologies of writing or into museums and exhibitions and until we're not treated as not of the best artists, that distinction has to be made. I'm sorry it has to be done that way. I think it's only a phase because very soon then that won't exist anymore.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So you're saying, in a sense, that when we do have equality with male

artists then this whole question as to whether we have to operate mostly as an individual or mostly within a group will become an obsolete question?

ANAIS NIN: For the moment this is the only way we can work -- secluding ourselves as women writers or as women artists and gaining our strength that way to change certain external structures which are wrong.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Another question that I'd like to discuss is something that we kind of got into before: you were saying that you felt that women, because of her restricted experience, did have more contact with nature, and with her own body. This brings me to another quote that I found and I'd like to ask you to read that.

ANAIS NIN: This is a quote from the *Third Diary* on page 292: (Reading) "When man invented sails, steam, electricity, it was to master, enslave, and prove himself a ruler over nature. When he enslaved the Negro it was to prove himself stronger than nature. And what a revenge nature wreaked upon the white man! For as he advanced into control of nature he lost his natural vitality and his power. In proportion to his mastery of the elements he lost his other power as man. The more he invented, mechanized, made music boxes instead of playing instruments, the more impotent he grew in his body."

DOLORIS HOLMES: Miss Nin, since you're read this, do you want now to add something about it in terms of your feelings about women?

ANAIS NIN: I think this state that I described as happening to man in his control of nature, and in his mechanization of the world, and the whole complete dehumanization of our world did not happen so much to woman because she was kept on the periphery; I mean she was not the one who invented the computer, she was not at first the one involved in all the abstractions of commerce. And I consider that a very fortunate thing because somehow she kept her human connection with the things that were happening in nature and in the world. She almost basically hated war; she hated death; she hated destruction; woman is quite capable of feeling that a Vietnamese body is a body close to her, not just an enemy. Things like that which I hope she will bring into politics and into history –you know, it will be less dehumanized –into business, into law. I've seen women lawyers operate and they are different.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Will you say more about that?

ANAIS NIN: Yes. I've watched a women slowly bend the law really by her sense of the human situation instead of applying the law very rigidly to any situation as an abstraction, a sense of the complexity of the human situation affected her interpretation of the law.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So women were less involved with the establishment, therefore less involved with rules and regulations, and therefore women could be more flexible and apply whatever laws to the particular human situation? One of the things that female sculptors, painters, film makers frequently talk about is that we have no role models. If you go into the Whitney Museum or into the Guggenheim you don't see any female art on the walls and therefore you don't have any sense of whom you can follow. I think this is somewhat less of a problem in terms of being a female writer. Fist of all, would you agree with that? And, secondly, would you talk about those female artists who have influenced your work?

ANAIS NIN: Of course, being a writer, I think mainly of women writers who have influenced my work. But I can also think of women painters who I have admired very much. And women musicians, women composers. A person like Martha Graham in all her creations of dances has influenced my writing. I'm thinking of Djuna Barnes. I'm thinking of a very great woman writer we have among us right at the moment, Marguerite Young, who has done for the unconscious of America what James Joyce in *Ulysses* did for Ireland. She has really written what you might call a completely subconscious, subterranean book about what happens to the most ordinary people in depth; she goes very deeply into it. The book is called *Miss MacIntosh, My Darling*. On the other hand, I've seen them do other things. I think what happened with women painters is that the critics themselves perhaps didn't treat them with the same attention. A woman like Georgia O'Keeffe –I'm sure it took her much longer to be recognized than other painters. But we also lacked the ones who would write about them and who would notice them. Even in the Women's Movement –I think I mentioned to you Judy Chicago's saying that she had only begun to read women writers two years ago. And I said, "But why! I have always read them; I was nourished by them; I needed them; they

really presented a very different view of the world." One particular instance is very, very noticeable; at the time when all the male novelists were writing about "alienation" I can cite five or six women who were writing books about relationships. Like Maude Hutchins, who is kind of like our grande Colette, who is studying human relationships in the home. Marguerite Young is one. Marianne Hauser is another one. There are a few other names that just escape me at the moment. But I must say that parallel to the men there were the women who were writing about relationships while the men were writing about alienation. This was a very significant fact.

DOLORIS HOLMES: This again leads to a lot of different kinds of questions I could ask. If I remember correctly, it wasn't until the *Fourth Diary* that you mentioned James Joyce. I don't know if you remember that. You had previously mentioned Proust. Do you feel that Joyce influenced your work at all?

ANAIS NIN: No. It was Proust who influenced my work, because Joyce didn't do the psychological probing which always fascinated me, what I call the "X-ray of the psyche". Even though Joyce is said to have written a free association book, a subterranean book, or a night life book, I never felt as close to him as I did to Proust.

DOLORIS HOLMES: You also mentioned that Martha Graham had influenced you. Could you spell that out a bit more?

ANAIS NIN: I used to watch the way she composed the scenes of her dances and the symbolic way in which she handled themes, which, if they had been handled, say, in a Greek play, or in a play of our own, would have been stated directly and much less importantly. She used some symbolism. And I remember that when I came home I had her in mind when I wrote the whole section of *Ladders to Fire* about the party, the movements and the motions at the party. I described a party which I called "the least attended party in literature" in which everyone, because he had obsessions and preoccupations, was absent from it and did not really attend it, perhaps some through lack of self-confidence, some because they were expecting something that didn't happen, each one is really carried psychically away from the party: so it was only their bodies that moved on the stage. The party began with a symbolic thing. And it was from Martha Graham that I learned this idea of movement, you know, the pattern that the lives of people make.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Are you with us, Sylvia? (Sylvia Goldsmith)
Another woman who is mentioned is your *Fourth Diary* in particular is Maya Deren. Do you want to tell us somewhat about her work and how you felt about her as a female artist?

ANAIS NIN: Maya Deren was a very courageous woman, a very talented woman, who really started the beginning of what we call here the "underground" film. (We did have Cocteau in France and he was a special thing in film, he was not shown in every movie house in France, and we didn't have that many either.) So with what we call the "art" film and is called here the "underground" film, Maya Deren did a spectacular thing. Of course she was married to a very fine cameraman, Sasha Hammid, who did *The Mexican Village,* I think. Maya had a very difficult time. As I remember, she had to use her friends as actors. As you know, we were not very good actors but I mean she couldn't do better that that. And we had to have fake backgrounds had go to Central Park and go to the beach at Amagansett. She had to use whatever was available. She had a greal deal of imagination, a real talent. I think the only good thing that ever happened to her was she received a Guggenheim to go and make a film on Haiti. You know about that? She spent two years there and became really very, very deeply learned in voodoo practices. When she came back she found that she needed more money in order to edit the film, and the laboratory work was very expensive. I know that she did not receive a second grant and I don't to this day know whether the film was ever finished. In frustration she was obliged to write a book about voodoo and Haiti which is very wonderful.

DOLORIS HOLMES: There are so many very sad stories about women artists who have gotten frustrated. As I said before, I've been involved with these various women's groups for three or four years now, and if I had a tape recorder going all the time that I've been listening to these women I would have one of the saddest stories possible because so many women simply have not been recognized. It's a terrible shame. As we're talking about different kinds of female artists, why don't you say something now about Sharon Spencer who apparently is an art critic?

ANAIS NIN: She's a literary critic. I give her as an example of someone who can do an academic, intellectual work as well as a man and yet added another dimension to the work because she opened up a new vein in criticism. We haven't had criticism that could deal with the modern novel. By that I mean the most advanced writers of all like the surrealist, like John Hawkes. She studied them, she studied German writers, French writers, Spanish writers, American writers, the most advanced writers of all. She was able to analyze all of them. This what I mean when I say woman is an intellectual equal. But the root of the work was not an academic rigidity which accepted all the standards of criticism. She made a new kind of criticism for what she calls the "open structure", a different structure of the novel. So there it was her flexibility which she added, because we have had a great many academic critics; I remember in the *Fourth Diary* the episodes with Edmund Wilson. He certainly seems to have been with you, let's say, maybe fifty percent of the way, but fifty percent of the way he certainly did not understand you. Can you say that there is a particular critic who you feel best understands you work?

ANAIS NIN: It had to be a woman. Her book hasn't come out yet. But this is Evelyn Hins who is in her thirties and is teaching literature at Amherst and has done a very objective, cool, but not cold, study of the entire work. So far the first man who made a study did not understand and took it too literally; he was not transcendental enough and not symbolic enough.

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: So who was that?

ANAIS NIN: That was Oliver Evans whose book I did not like. And then the second one now will be this one which is coming out in November. This woman is very remarkable in her interpretations of D.H. Lawrence, which interpretations are completely new. Miss Hins called her book by the title of one of my novels translated into French. It was called *The Mirror* in the Garden. It's a line from *Ladders to Fire* meaning really bringing up the problem of illusion and reality in women. She has a great understanding of D.H. Lawrence. Her interest was turned to D.H. Lawrence by reading my book on D.H. Lawrence and his efforts to understand woman. Then she began to take an interest in my work. The book is coming out in November. I consider it the best study, the best interpretation of my work.

DOLORIS HOLMES: NOTE: At this point in the interview we have three of us talking. I have been interviewing Miss Anais Nin, and Sylvia Goldsmith has been helping us out with her take also. We have begun to talk informally about how we don't want to attack men, even though we feel there is a tremendous amount of discrimination against women; that we would like to focus less on our anger and more on some other more intricate, more complex kind of problems. I've asked Miss Nin to read something from her Fourth Diary which I think is particularly pertinent; then all three of us will get into an open discussion here.

ANAIS NIN: This is from a novel really; it is a note made to use in a novel. (Reading) "The use of an iron lung as the symbol of one person breathing through another, living through transfusion of oxygen, the dependence of Djuna on Jay. Any dependence causes anxiety because one is living through another and feels a loss of the other. For Lillian it was not her thought, her senses, her life, but all the tasting, touching was done by way of Jay. When he welcomed friends, was at ease in groups, accepted and included all of life undifferentiated, then she experienced this openness, this total absence of retraction through him. In herself she carried a mechanism which interfered with deep intakes of life and people. Her critical faculty would pass judgment, evaluate, reject, or limit. Jay never limited his time or energy. When the time came he fell asleep. But Lillian felt she had to forestall such a surrender because it was public. She had to foresee when her energy would fail and so she lived by the clock. At twelve she should leave. Even if the evening was just beginning to flower she had to cut the cord and resist the demands of others, assert a solitary gesture of determination, the opposite of surrender to the current of live. Jan permitted himself to be consumer. He was more rested, even when he slept less, by his relaxed abandon than Lillian was from her exertion of control.

DOLORIS HOLMES: I asked you to read that because it seems to me as if one of the reasons for the antagonism between men and women is this real over-dependence, and that a good result from the Women's Liberation Movement will be that men will be more separate from women, each will have more of a chance to define themselves as separate beings and then when they come back together there will be more chance for real love. Sylvia, does this get into anything that you have been thinking about?

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: Well, it's like Miss Nin said. I think what happens is that we're so inter-role playing, we're so conditioned very early to think of ourselves as helpless, as not wanting to compete with men in order to gain their love and feel that if we achieve something of our own very often we lost their love. So I think we're psychologically conditioned to always accept and think of ourselves in a secondary way. We fear very much our freedom at the same time that we want it.

ANAIS NIN: I feel the solution to that is a real, very complex, creative labor with man about relationship, and when we can convince him that whatever we achieve is an enrichment of his life, that it doesn't take anything away from him, that actually dependency is quite clear, that it is just as bad for him as it is for the woman: it puts a great burden on him and doesn't free him. And I think the young men are beginning to realize that this is freeing them.

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: I mean they say now too that Women's Liberation is Men's Liberation.

ANAIS NIN: So that when they don't have this helpless woman, but somebody who is bringing enrichment and stimulation into their life –- I think that many men have seen that this is really an enrichment; it's not taking something away. We still have the problem of when one artist is more successful than another, but this has always been true. I was reading about a very old woman photographer. She and her husband were photographers, she became famous and he divorced her.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So, in one sense, our fear of losing our men is a real one because men can't take our competition or –I'd like to use a different word – our strength and our talent. I think even a more basic problem vis-a-vis broad questions of political repression, of technological dominance in this country, of dehumanizing factors, is that all of us, men and women, are really so terribly afraid of finding ourselves that many of us would prefer to fill this role that you were talking about, Sylvia, because it means less anxiety. It's easier to think what somebody else wants you to think than to really go through the process that Miss Nin has gone through in her Diaries.

ANAIS NIN: Yes. I would like to say something here: that I did a very feminine thing at the beginning of the Diaries. If you notice, I expressed rebellion by associating with rebels. I did not myself rebel. I associated with Henry Miller who was a rebel against Puritanism. I associated with Rank who was a rebel against Freudian dogma. I associated with Artaud who was a rebel in his own way against surrealism. You see, this was a vicarious way of making ideological revolutions through the men. And I think that woman has done that a great deal, and that is not fulfilling.

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: Did you find that they tried to dominate you, or they tried to keep you in a secondary role? Or, as you said, you felt women were supposed to give the support, the nourishment.

ANAIS NIN: This expectation exists in all men. You see, for instance, Rank wanted me to give up my writing and devote myself to rewriting his books because they had been translated from the German and the translation from German can become very heavy, and he felt that I could make them shorter and briefer and lighter in tone and in style. And he never thought that it was a great sacrifice for me to leave my work. That is true. That is always there.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Again, I'm so glad that you believed in your Diaries and kept on writing them because, as some young person said to you in your *Fourth Diary*, that what you've actually done is "you've found a language to express our feelings". And now I think those of us who have the luck to read your book are more able to experience some of our feelings and hopefully to clarify our experiences. I'd also like to get into this question that we were throwing about before. Sylvia Goldsmith is a film maker, I'm an art ecologist, and, of course, Miss Nin is a writer. We would like to throw around a question as to what is missing today in art. This is a broad question but we'll just throw it around and then relate it back to women and to some of the things we've been saying about the peculiar talents and experiences of women. Are there peculiar characteristics of women which could make art more meaningful for all of mankind? Miss Nin, would you start on that?

ANAIS NIN: What I've found in general in art –and I really don't consider myself an art critic – is a depiction of despair, of almost the gutter and the trash of our lives and the complete negativity of life -the opposite of life, the cult of the ugly. I can't find the word I want exactly –the underworld, the sort of satanic underworld.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Do you think you'd disagree with that a bit?

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: I think that what happens is that men Adamize themselves; they take Adam, you know, and when they portray that role they don't separate themselves; they don't look at it from any human point, they don't evaluate it. Just like you were saying before, I think women really always still have a certain sense of feeling, a certain sense of humanity, which is really very ancient, you know. I go back in terms of other early art, feeling very close to very ancient Greeks, to things that are eternal, things that are beautiful. I think there is such a thing as beauty and love and truth and all of those things. If I look at something destructive and if I create something destructive I'm saying, yes, this is destructive, not I am destructive, or not just destruction, which is what very often we see in all of modern life.

DOLORIS HOLMES: This makes me think that over the past few years with the involvement of the country in the Vietnam War and my own despair about ecological problems, every time I get to a very low point I'll pick up a book which has drawings of the Lascaux caves in them, or I'll pick up one of my favorite books on medieval art. And it's only this kind of thing that really saves me. Do you have the feeling that because women are more connected with themselves as body, as a natural entity, because they have traditionally been more involved with children, they must think of the future? I think that if they were to consider that there is no place for their children in the future, then their despair would be so terrible that there would be mass suicide of women. I also would like to do statistics for the next ten years and find out whether there are more homicides by women. Traditionally we have been more suicidal, but now that we're getting into some of our aggressive impulses there may be a few more homicides. So although I say that what I think that women are more concerned about the future because of what I said before about children and so forth, I still think that there are a lot of "bad" impulses in women also. And the main thing that's necessary is for both men and women to feel that there are impulses in all of us and then maybe there'll be a balance in all of us.

SYLVIA GOLDSMITH: I guess it comes back again to women being able to express their total selves, not just old role-playing, like being nice and good and quiet, and careful. Women, if and when they get into art, into life, into business, being able to be themselves without anything being shut off. A lot of times women's art is expected to be pretty, or sensitive, or lyrical. Men's art has to be strong, gut, neat. But again I think women should really be able to fact that part of themselves, too, and express it in their lives.

DOLORIS HOLMES: Let's finish by getting back to the question as to whether there is some special talent that women –now that they are beginning to know themselves better –do have to bring to art as it is now. Miss Nin, would you go into that?

ANAIS NIN: I would like to see women become very articulate about their feelings so that they can talk to men and make them see certain things, the things that we would like them to aware of. I think awareness has to do with language, and for a long time, you know, we have denigrated what we call literature, reading. Now what it does for us is it teaches us to talk to men. I would like to see women creating their own language, trying really to find a language for their feelings, a language for the things we comprehend, things which are instinctive; after all, intuition is not just a miraculous thing; it is composed of observation, it uses all of yourself in order to sense what this other being really is. We've always made fun of that quality. It's really a quality which seems to me is a synthesis. I would like to see women use that and believe in it as I do in my first impression of people.

DOLORIS HOLMES: So if I may re-phrase what you've said: one of the aspects of art, as you see it now, is that it's fragmented and that woman because of her cultural and biological experience is less a fragmented self, and that she is able to use her total intuitive perceptions of herself and other people, and that this is the quality that she should bring to art?

ANAIS NIN: The split only came when she found it impossible to play all the roles. I think women have found it difficult to be a mother, to be a muse, to be a wife, to be a professional, to be an artist. And if she can handle all these things she will have a wonderful synthesis.

END OF INTERVIEW

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