

**Anis Nin**  
**1903 - 1977**

by **L. Margaret Pomeroy**

Born outside Paris, France, February 21, 1903, Anis Nin was actually a repatriate among the expatriate artists and writers moving through Paris from 1920 to 1940. Her mother, a French-Dane was a singer, and her father, who was Spanish, was a concert pianist and composer. Nin lived in France for eleven years, but when her father deserted the family, her mother took Anis and her two brothers to New York City to live. Although she was enrolled in school there, she did not like it, withdrew in 1918, and embarked on self-education. When she was about twenty-one, she married Hugh Guiler from Philadelphia. He gained fame as a filmmaker and engraver under the name Ian Hugo. He also illustrated Nin's books. Soon after her marriage, Nin moved back to Paris.

Although not much of her life during the 1920s is documented, it is well established that Nin formed a lifelong friendship with Henry Miller in early 1930's Paris. He worked with her on her book *House of Incest*, and her force is evident in his novel, *Black Spring*. Nin and friends such as Lawrence Durrell, Antonin Artaud, Alfred Perles, and Michael Fraenkel formed a coterie that gave her an inspirational atmosphere in which she could continue to mature as a writer. Additionally some of this group established the Villa Seurat Library for the Obelisk Press which published Nin's *The Winter of Artifice* (1939) as well as works of other members of the group since mainstream publishers would not. Two other important figures in this period of Nin's life were her psychiatrists who also influenced her writing.

When World War II began, Nin returned to the United States. Back in New York, she established the Gemor Press and printed her own books. By the mid-40s she had commercial publishers, but it was not until 1961 that publisher, Alan Swallow, made all of her fiction available. Although by age forty-five, Nin had gained recognition for her work, she was tired of New York. In a 1947 trip through the American southwest she discovered friendlier, less harried environments and eventually resettled in California. She died in Los Angeles on January 14, 1977 of cancer and at the peak of her popularity. She has been described as "daring and determined," "a groundbreaking writer who helped to define a feminine tradition in literature."

**Sources used:**

Franklin, Benjamin V. "Anis Nin," *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1978 ed.), II, 364-370.

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