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Fragmented Selves in Anaïs Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* and Irigarayan Non-Duality Within Duality

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Abstract

This study discusses feminine identity in Anaïs Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* (1954) through Irigarayan non-duality within duality of self/other and sensible/transcendental to show that there is no threshold and interval between the dualities of sensible and transcendental in the novel. Failure of main character's feminine identity and her fragmented selves are resulted from her mere sensual relation with men. Unlike Irigarayan view of horizontal transcendental, Nin's view of desire is vertical transcendence, erotic and ecstasy, which is basically sexual. Nin attempts to break away from patriarchal discourse in exploring the female sexual body as a creative power for awakening women's feminine desire in accordance with Irigarayan 'feminine divine' and 'female *jouissance*'. However, Nin's heroine, Sabina, is not successful in discovering her autonomous self through her passionate desire, and she is not able to create a unity between her body and mind, the ideal world of art, music, and dreams and the real world, and a successful relationship with men. Sabina cannot achieve the full measure of Irigarayan non-dual love because she relies merely on sexual passion and desire.

Key words: Non-Duality within Duality of Self/Other; Sensible Transcendental; Feminine Identity; Fragmented Selves; Feminine Identity; Non-dual Love; Female Desire; Ecstasy

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Anaïs Nin (1903-1977), the first forerunner and the prominent modern female writer of eroticism, explicitly tries to express female desire and sexual awakening in her novels as a creative power for women's liberation from patriarchal society. She rejects the Christian formulation of woman that denies sexuality and represses desire for the sake of God the Father. She vividly illustrates that a certain discourse about feminine sexuality has been heretofore imposed upon women, and men have separated and alienated women from their bodies. She creates female characters who rail against those formulations, signifying that the feminine identity is more than simply a construction of masculine discourses. She celebrates female erotic energy, and revises the figure of female sexual body as mute. She perceives sexuality as one of the ways of women's liberation from the patriarchal world.

Some studies have been done on Anaïs Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* in terms of female sexual desire and eroticism. Clare Taylor in *Women, Writing, and Fetishism, 1890-1950*: *Female Cross-gendering* explores the problem of gendered embodiment, cross-gendered women, and women's erotic relationship in the writings of Anaïs Nin, Djuna Barnes, Sarah Grand, and Radclyffe Hall through sexology, female fetishism, psychological and gender studies. Anne Salvator in *Anaïs Nin's Narratives* reads Anaïs Nin's novels in light of feminist, psychoanalytical, reader-response, semiological, and narratological theories. She describes Nin's shifts of the boundaries of traditional concepts of narrativity. Julie Karsten's essay "Self-realization and Intimacy: the influence of D. H. Lawrence on Anaïs Nin" addresses the influence of D. H. Lawrence in Anaïs Nin's several novels, short fiction, erotica, and her diaries. Helen Tookey's *Anaïs Nin: Fictionality and Femininity* (1903-77) focuses the cultural and historical contexts of Anaïs Nin's works, and regards Nin herself as an active modern writer in the women's liberation movement. Suzette Henke in "Psychoanalyzing Sabina: Anaïs Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* as Freudian

Fable" reviews Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* from the psychological perspective in which Nin's female protagonist is known as Freudian fable.

Most studies of Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* have been on eroticism and psychoanalytical issues; however, there is no reference to non-duality within duality of sensible/transcendental and self/other and ethics of love in their studies of Nin's novel which is going to be discussed in this study through Irigarayan theories. It shows that there is no threshold and interval between the dualities of sensible and transcendental as well as self and other in main character's relation with men, as a result, it leads to her failure of identity. Although Nin revises the male-centered perspective of a patriarchal society in *A Spy in the House of Love* by giving her female protagonist, Sabina, sexual freedom, Nin's view of love is based on vertical transcendence, erotic and ecstasy, which is basically sexual. Her female protagonist, Sabina, does not achieve the full measure of non-dual love because she is still tied to men's desire and is engulfed in her sexual body in her relation with men. Nin places Sabina at the center of desire and artistic meaning through her creative art of singing, acting and dancing in relationship with men who are actors, dancers, singers, and musicians. Nin makes an allusion to the creative side of Sabina's empowered and energetic sexual body. Sabina demands desire through the creative work of art and emotional love. Her talent for singing and dancing renews her feminine power. Although she expresses her feminine sexual desire in her relationship with several men, she cannot create a balance between dualities of sensible and transcendental and self and other, thus, she encounters the multiple fragmented selves instead of discovering her distinct subjectivity as Irigaray defines in her sensible transcendental. Sabina feels disfiguration and fragmentation when she cannot recognize herself in the mirror.

Nin proposes the issues of fragmented and multiple selves in the first volume of her *Diary*: "I have always been tormented by the image of multiplicity of selves. Some days I call it richness, and other days I see it as a disease" (1966, p.54). She admits, "Sabina caused me a great deal of trouble, because I wanted to describe the fragmentation without the disintegration which usually accompanies it. Each fragment had a life of its own. They had to be held together by some tension other than the unity we are familiar with. […] if she had no center to hold on to, she could be destroyed" (p.63). Sabina seeks her identity through a series of lovers, each of them speaks to one aspect of her, but none of them help her to coalesce the fragments of herself into a whole self, thus, her multiple selves are created through a series of unfulfilling love affairs: "She was tired of pulling these disparate fragments together" (Nin, 1974, p.129). She seeks to act out her fantasies and is caught in "a web of multiplicity" (Nin, 1986, p.68). Her identity changes according to her position in relation to others. Nin explores "the contrast in behavior of the same character toward many others, in intimacy, in contrast to behavior in the world" (p.64). She portrays Sabina's psychological struggles and the chaos within her: "There was in her no premeditation, no continuity, no connection... She carried herself like one totally unfettered who was rushing and plunging on a fiery course" (p.99). Sabina is unable to visualize precisely who she might actually be within the framework of 'woman' and 'other' that men desire. "[She] appears to be an erotic fantasy of 'woman' projected by men onto the bodies of women" (Michael, 2006, p.142). Thus, her identity splinters into those of many women, both real and imaginary:

> Sabina appeared as the woman with gold hair, and then altered to a woman with black hair, and it was equally impossible to keep a consistent image of whom she had loved, betrayed, escaped from, lived with, married, lied to, forgotten, deserted. (Nin, 1974, p.100)

Sabina tries to escape an unsatisfactory marriage to her husband, Alan, who is unable to relate to her as a lover. She takes one lover after another in a hope of finding her subjective identity, but she cannot recognize and appreciate her self. Each of her affairs ends miserably because all the men whom she engages with, Mambo, Philip, Donald, John (the aviator), add to her dilemma by demanding only her feminine sexual body. Sabina pursues men's sexual pleasure "to arrive at the enjoyment without dependence which might liberate her from all anxieties connected with love" (Nin, 1974, p.63), but is unable to do so because she focuses only on physical pleasure. In John, a war-crazed young pilot, Sabina sees merely an image of her own compulsion toward erotic flights. "His airplanes were not different from her relationships, by which she sought other lands, strange faces, forgetfulness, the unfamiliar, the fantasy and the fairy tale" (p.66). John has no real love to Sabina, and treats her as an object of his own sexual desires, something for him to grasp: "[His] lithe fingers into her shoulders, into her hair, grasping her hair as if he were drowning to hold her head against his as if she might escape his grasp" (83). Through John, "she wanted to rescue... from a distortion she knew led to madness. She wanted to prove to him that his guilt was a distortion, that his vision of her and desire and of his hunger was a sickness" (p.91). Having achieved in "his vicinity a long, prolonged, deep thrusting ecstasy" (p.91), she cannot save herself from passionate sexual desire. Although Sabina goes beyond the traditional restricting and confining image imposed on her by expressing her feminine sexual power, she is much more in the service of men for their sexual fulfillment. Unsuccessful in establishing her identity in relation to men, Sabina is admonished: "Yours is a story of non-love" (p.117).

Sabina cannot find her subjective identity and full measure of non-dual love in a male identity-quest society through the loveless relationships with men who seek to discover her essential conformity to their own conception of woman; they seek commonality among the multiplicity

of Sabina's multiple selves. She tries to make love, but realizes that what she desires cannot be achieved through an embrace in the encounter among Sabinas and her lovers. Sabina, collapsing "because she has no center" (Spencer, 1996, p.85), becomes lost "somewhere along the frontier between her inventions, her stories, her fantasies, and her true self" (p.133). She glimpses her own inner chaos: "Sabina, who [has] many selves, is also self-less because she is too frightened to live from the deep core or center of her self" (p.85). She struggles constantly against her own imperfection through her passionate sexual desire. "Half of you wanted to atone, to be freed of the torments of guilt, but the other half wanted to be free. Only half of you surrendered, calling out to strangers: 'catch me!' while the other half sought industriously to escape final capture" (Nin, 1974, p.137).

Nin's depiction of Sabina's lack of ability to discover her subjective identity through solely sexual love and Eros is in contrast to Irigarayan 'feminine divine' and 'sensible transcendental' which are physical and spiritual interchanges of cosmic and material energies and open a new circle of love. While Irigarayan 'feminine divine' and 'sensible transcendental' celebrate the female body, mind, and spirit as an unbreakable union necessary for women's creative imagination, transcending the traditional limitations of human expression of the body, Nin's ideas pivot merely on Sabina's passionate sexual desire. Sabina is engulfed in her sexual body, as an object of male desire and a mirror image of men, for the fulfillment of their sexual needs, thus, she cannot achieve her self-realization and spiritual consciousness. Sabina's identity and subjectivity are transformed into multiple selves, that is, the inward Sabina is weakened and the outward becomes a mere shell of her.

Sabina's various selves make Sabina recognize her failure in the final scene, when all the motions come to a complete stop: "Sabina slid to the floor and sat there with her head against the phonograph, with her wide skirt floating for one instant like an expiring parachute; then deflated completely and died in the dust" (Nin, 1974, p.118). Her phallocentric love relations which do not let her grow and consume her are in contrast to Irigarayan love based on the union of two different subjects. Irigarayan dual subjectivity proposes "the irreducibility of the other" which "cannot be overcome, but it gives a positive access neither instinctual nor drive-related to the other" (1996, p.13).

Sabina's love-making with other men cannot protect her against their dominance. She backs away from the relation with Alan and other men because the resulting state of *jouissance* would kill her desire. For instance, John tries to grasp Sabina's sexual power in his hands. "Pleasure he had given her ignited her body like flowing warm mercury darting through the veins….as if he had thrown a net around her by the pleasure she wanted again" (Nin, 1974, 89-90). In fact, the desire exchange between Sabina and her lovers is not interchangeable. She cannot achieve self-consciousness through her sexual bodily needs, her physical desire, and her multiple selves: "Some parts of me tear off like a fragment I lose vital parts of myself" (p.122). She cannot achieve the balance of her spiritual, emotional, and physical consciousness through merely erotic and passionate sexual relationship to her lovers, thus, she is dispersed into multiple selves. "I could step out of my ordinary self or my ordinary life into multiple selves and lives" (p.132). She cannot find true love through her multiplicity. Her sense of self is constantly on the move and her wandering sexuality drives her to roam public spaces in a search of the next lover.

Sabina as a woman is torn between the love she feels for her husband and the love she feels for a series of other men. "She wants to live in all directions, the problem lying in the fact that the different selves will not coexist harmoniously. She understood why it angered her when people spoke of life as One life. She became certain of myriad lives within herself" (p.34). The existence of many different Sabinas leads her to several conflicting directions and yet all of them remains as separate parts of her. Her internal conflict is expressed as a struggle between her need for stability on one side, and her need for mobility on the other side. Alan and home would represent her need for stability, for he is described as being very calm, "a photograph in her mind", "a snap-shot", "a static pose" (p.10), "a fixed point in space", "having a calm face" (p.9), as having "a rock-like center to his movements" (p.12), "his emotions, his thoughts revolved around a fixed center like a well-organized planetary system" (p.12). And, "in the two snap-shots she carried he showed two facets but no contrasts: one listening and waiting, wise, and detached, the other sitting in meditation as a spectator" (p.10), a description which once again stresses the figure of the actress in the midst of a performance, in movement, in contrast to Alan's fixed image. Alan's stability is expressed in detail:

> He was there. Five days had not altered his voice, the all-enveloping expression of his eyes. The apartment had not changed. The same book was still open by his bed, the same magazines had not yet been thrown away. He had not finished some fruit she had bought the last time she had been there. Her hands caressed the overfull ash trays, her fingers designed rivers of meditation on the coats of dust on the table. Here living was gradual, organic, without vertiginous descents or ascents. (Nin, 1974, p.43)

As totally opposed to this static situation, Sabina's need for mobility is stressed throughout the novel: "She could not sit still. She talked profusely and continuously.... She sat as if she could not bear to sit for long and when she rose to buy cigarettes she was equally eager to return to her seat" (p.99). Sabina is the "firebird" (p.78) which her lovers want to capture, a bird in perpetual motion to avoid confrontation with herself.

The conflict of stability-mobility is taken even further by a parallel between Sabina's relationships with her

husband and with each one of her lovers. Alan calls her "My little one" and "total woman" (Nin, 1974, p.13), in this way expressing his partial view of only one Sabina. There are many other Sabinas under many layers, and each one of her lovers is invested with a particular symbolic quality which clearly establishes the distinction between the different kinds of love she feels for each one of them, while she "could only see Alan as a kind father who might become angry at her lies and punish her" (p.57). Sabina, as a woman of many lovers, is permanently looking for something in several different men and never finds what she seeks. Art refers to the mobility and the existence of many Sabinas: "During a visit to an ancient city ravaged by an earthquake, the remaining facades of the houses remind her of De Chirico's paintings, in which doors and windows are not closed, and people are protected from strangers only by one wall and door, but otherwise completely free of walls or roofs from the other three sides" (p.55). De Chirico's painting is an image which expresses the possibility of innumerable escapes from the stability represented by home in search of "this illimitable space she had expected to find in every lover's room, the sea, the mountains visible all around, the world shut off on one side" (55). Sabina also sees in Duchamp's famous Surrealist painting, 'Nude Descending a Staircase,' a symbol of her own multiple selves as the trail of selves when it descends the staircase.

> For the first time, on this bleak early morning walk through New York streets not yet cleaned of the night people's cigarette butts, she understood Duchamp's painting of a Nude Descending a Staircase. Eight or ten outlines of the same woman, like many multiple exposures of a woman's personality, neatly divided into many layers, walking down the stairs in unison. (Nin, 1974, p.124)

Sabina's other lover, Jay, as a painter, adds to the ideas of multiplicity. Her fragmented and dismembered self is reflected in Jay's paintings which indicate that Sabina is suffering from a state of fragmentation; her fragmented selves are too far apart to be gathered and linked back together again.

> She recognized his paintings instantly…. His figures exploded and constellated into fragments, like spilled puzzles, each piece having flown far enough away to seem irretrievable and yet not far enough to be dissociated. One could, with an effort of the imagination, reconstruct a human figure completely from these fragments kept from total annihilation in space by an invisible tension. By one effort of contraction at the core they might still amalgamate to form the body of a woman. No change in Jay's painting, but a change in Sabina who understood for the first time what they meant. She could see at this moment on the wall an exact portrait of herself as she felt inside. (Nin, 1974, p. 441)

What Sabina sees in these pictures is her fragmented self. "He had painted Sabina, or something happening to all of them as it was happening in chemistry, in science. They had found all the corrosive acids, all the disintegrations, all the alchemies of separateness" (p.441). Jay's relationship with Sabina is basically sexual and strengthens his own sexual needs. "In Sabina's fluctuating fervors he met a challenge: she gave him a feeling of equality" (p.103). He usurps Sabina's sexual body for his own pleasure:

> Her behavior always aroused in him a desire which resembled the desire of a man to violate a woman who resists him, to violate a virginity which created a barrier to his possession. Sabina always incited him to a violent desire to rip all her pretenses, her veils and to discover the core of herself which, by this perpetual change of face and mobility, escaped all detection. (Nin, 1974, p.135)

In trying to portray a woman who is 'active' in her sexual desire, Nin still shows Sabina as being the passive recipient or participant in these sexual encounters. This passivity comes through very clearly when Sabina appears as a woman whose sexual energy is for the desire of men. The more she enters into the relationship with men, the more she distances herself from her subjective identity and creates multiple selves for herself. Through the relationship with men, her fragmentation is intensified: "All her seeking of fire to weld these fragments together, seeking in the furnace of delight a welding of fragments into one total love, one total woman had failed" (p.114). Sabina is depicted as torn by her desire for the endless multiplications of desire itself:

> Sabina … felt germinating in her the power to extend time in the ramifications of a myriad lives and loves, to expand the journey to infinity, taking immense and luxurious detours as the courtesan depositor of multiple desires. (Nin, 1974, p.39)

The wholeness she wishes for can only be another role, staged for the benefit of her husband: "Play the role of a whole woman, at least you have always wished to be that, it is not altogether a lie" (p.21). Nin imagines her own desires in Sabina who struggles to free herself from the restrictions of sexual body in a patriarchal world, to find a space for herself by expressing her sexual desire. But eventually, Sabina experiences a dissolution and loss of identity which is more frightening than pleasurably liberating:

> The entire sky a warm blanket of eyes and mouths shining down on her, the air full of voices now raucous from the sensual spasm, now gentle with gratitude, now doubtful, and she was afraid because there was no Sabina, not One, but multiple Sabinas lying down yielding and being dismembered, constellating in all directions and breaking…. [S]he was weeping: Someone hold me – hold me, so I will not continue to race from one love to another, dispersing me, disrupting me…. Hold me to one. (Nin, 1974, p.439)

Sabina envisions herself making this plea directly to her husband, Alan. She imagines herself dispersed in multiplying new selves over time. She could not find her autonomous identity by being dependent on lovers. She faces the horror of fragmentation, experiencing it as a splitting.

> Each year, just as a tree puts forth a new ring of growth, she should have been able to say: Alan, here is a new version of Sabina, Add it to the rest, fuse them well, hold on to them when

> you embrace her, hold them all at once in your arms, or else, divided, separated, each image will live a life of its own, and it will not be one but six, or seven, or eight Sabinas who will walk sometimes in unison…. Sometimes separately. Was this the crime to have sought to marry each Sabina to another mate, to match each other in turn by a different life? (Nin, 1974, p.453)

All of men serve only to crystallize the multiplicity of Sabina's different selves, preventing their fusion into one whole self. They contribute to Sabina's fragmentation. Her fragmented selves and her defined sexual identity are formed by her relations with different men in her life, which lead to her disfiguration. Nin reveals Sabina's duplicity and deceitfulness as "twistedness, distortion, deformations" (1986, p.27). Sabina sees herself as a fragmented woman with multiple selves, all held in her body. She does not know who the real Sabina is; she is the woman whom her lovers wish her to be, thus, she feels she is a spy in the 'house of love,' the house of her own multiple loves. Her lovers attract her into the misrecognition of her subjective and gendered identity. Through her relationship with many men, Sabina engages only with one part of her personality, and she has been "evaporated through the spaces between each layer of the personality" (Nin, 1974, p.128). When Sabina realizes that she cannot find her fulfillment and liberation through sexual desire, she begins to lose symbolic "withered leaves" from the "tropical growth" of her desire, from the "purple-bell-shaped corolla of narcotic flesh," the "purple flower" of her genitalia (pp.93 & 104). Hence, she feels unfulfilled and can no longer reach her "core" (p.132) because of the constant fragmentation and dissembling needs. Sabina cannot find her core through her different and multiple selves so that she constantly wonders, "Where was Sabina?" (p.109).

When Anaïs Nin comes to an understanding that "woman never created directly, except through a man and was never able to create as a woman" (1970, p.233), she lays out the 'universalist' possibilities of female identity within the symbolic order. The only symbolic identity of women then is the engagement in defined wifehood and motherhood. For Nin, "the woman was born mother, mistress, wife, sister. Woman was born to be the connecting link between man and his human self. .... Woman's role in creation should be parallel to her role in life" (Evans, 1968, 87). A woman seemingly cannot identify herself beyond those essential identities while remaining within the dominant discourse of the symbolic order, and continually denies the possibility of a feminine subjective identity. Geismar cites Nin in *The Diary of Anaïs Nin Vol. V* as "one of the few women in our literary tradition to affirm the centrality of the biological impulses for her own sex, and on the same terms, as for men" (1975, p.108). In fact, Nin establishes a discourse that reifies gender differences into permanent, even biologically given aspects of the human condition (Nin, 1994, p.540). She defines women according to the traditional gender roles, and her difficulty in separating the womb from woman's traditional role as man's support has led her to have women entrapped in patriarchal society.

Throughout her work, Nin is "driven into the subconscious to search for the essence" of things (Nin, 1986, p.55), but she never resolves the enigma of the essence of the Woman. She acts in accordance with Lacan who states that Woman with a capital W, woman as singular in essence doesn't exist; Woman as an all-encompassing idea is an illusion. There is multiplicity of women but no essence of "Womanhood" or "Womanliness" (1999, p.7). Unlike Irigaray who provides a cultural place for the female subject with a gendered and subjective identity, beyond the pre-defined cultural history of the patriarchal world, Nin is unable to capture a total essence of womanhood and defines woman as the product of history and culture; therefore, woman is alienated from the possibilities in the masculine discourse. Her protagonist, Sabina, never manages to have a balance in man-ruled society. She is torn between her search for self-realization, and her feeling of needing to conform to social orders.

Sabina is offered as the primordial and traditional woman; a mother and a wife who fails in her relationship with men especially her husband when she "wants to be the woman Alan wants her to be" (Nin, 1974, p.83). Also, "she wears the clothes which stayed in the house, which are his (Alan), baptized by his hands, played a role of a whole woman" (p.84). Sabina remains fragmented and metamorphoses into another role - mother, seductress, and wife - and never develops her full potential as a woman with a subjective and gendered identity - as each lover appears to her in his role of masculinity. "The new self she offered (Alan), created for him, appeared intensely innocent, newer than any young girl could have been, because it was like a pure abstraction of a woman, an idealized figure, not born of what she was, but of his wish" (pp.83-84).

Sabina plays the role of a mother in her relationship with Donald, a feeble yet passionate man whose "manhood is trapped and captured" (Nin, 1974, p.98). In fact, "Donald's voice was passive, he was gently clowning by his parodies of women's feathery gestures, by a smile so deliberately seductive" (p.93), and "his dress, a shirt the color of her dress … a woman's billfold, or a strand of hair dyed silver gray on his young luxuriant gold head.… His wax figures of women were an endless concentrate of treacheries" (p.95), and "he made [Sabina] doubt her femininity… His love of small roses, of delicate jewelry seemed more feminine than her barbaric heavy necklaces" (p.94). Sabina and Donald's mother-child relationship is apparent when "he kneeled at her feet to relace the sandal which was undone, an act he performed with the delicacy not of an enamored man, but of a child at a statue's feet, of a child intent on dressing woman, adorning

her… it was a caress not to Sabina's feet…. Touching his mother's body" (p.96). As a mother does a child, Sabina begins to see Donald not as an object of desire, but maternal desire. Thus Sabina transforms her desire from her own satisfaction to the fulfillment of Donald's needs. By touching Sabina's body, Donald's passionate desire is invoked: "by touching her naked foot he had felt a unity resembling the first unity of the world, unity with nature, unity with the mother**,** early memories of an existence within the silk, warmth and effortlessness of a vast love" (p.97). Donald's powerful desire in the form of dependence demands Sabina's passionate desire: "He became aware of all his fragilities at once, his dependence, his need" (p.98).

Sabina exists in a fantasy of mother for Donald. Since Sabina identifies her relationship with Donald as one of mother and child, this maternal fantasy sacrifices her desires, leaving them unaddressed: "When I see that I have let him be aroused, it seems natural to let him release his desire between my legs. I just let him out of pity" (Nin, 1974, pp.98-99). She cannot address the nature of her love relationship with Donald while drawing on the maternal fantasy of womanhood.

Sabina is represented as the object of desire that functions only to satisfy the desire of men and, therefore acts within a primarily masculine and patriarchal construct. She is victimized by such definitions for the only desire allowed her is her desire to fulfill the others' sexual needs. Without an autonomous identity and Irigarayan self-love, she cannot have sexual differentiation. Sabina functions as a maternal figure and sacrifices her body for a masculine other. Thus, motherhood forecloses Sabina's own subjectivity and desire. When Nin then attempts to write about her own erotic nature, she begins to become aware of the boundaries of the symbolic construction of the feminine. Sabina does not seem able to define her own subjectivity, and to express her own desire with falling into the role of wife and mother in her relationship with her husband, Alan, and other men especially Donald. Her desire for men places her within a hierarchical and symbolic structure which is attributed to the traditional heterosexual relations. She is not able to free herself from conformance to the world of men, especially her husband, Alan:

> [Alan] is the only one I trust, the only one whose love is infinite, tireless, all-forgiving… This love you need, Alan has given you… you will lose him one day, for there are other Alans exactly as there are other Sabinas. (Nin, 1974, p.135)

Sabina realizes the instability of such interactions that her desire does not fit within the symbolic order. She embodies one of the primal fantasies of womanhood symbolized in a patriarchal world. She exists as a desirable object with multiple selves drawn from various masculine fantasies of the erotic woman: "How all the other loves clung to Sabina's body... How they made her heavy with the loss of her self, lost in the maze of her gifts. How the lies, the loves, the dreams, the obscenities, the fevers weighed down her body" (p.114). None of these selves are really her own, so Sabina clings to a multiplicity of forged identities to hide the absence of a real one. She plays the role of fantasy woman for so long that she forgets the reality of who she is and what she desires. But she has no other way of coming to terms with the natural eroticism which is such a major component of her personality. Rather than being obsessed with sex, Sabina desires love and searches for an ideal lover, but a mutual love relationship does not happen. "Her love with Alan displays the bondage of the traditional husband/wife love" (Rogers, 1966, p.106). For Alan, Sabina acts as a traditional wife and shows "a collective, or universalized picture of woman as she has appeared through the centuries of human experience in relation to man" (Harding, 2001, pp.8-9). She fulfils Alan and other men's wishes but it is unsatisfactory because she fails to function as more than being an object of male desire. Harding notes that Sabina becomes aware that her husband and lovers "do not really love her but is always seeing something over her shoulder, as it were" (p.20). Indeed, when Philip turns his "glacial blue" eyes on Sabina, they seem "to gaze beyond her at all women who had dissolved into one, but who might, at any moment again become dissolved into all" (p.30). Sabina knows that the sensation will "vanish like the ecstasies of drink, leaving her the next day even more shaky, even weaker at the core, deflated, defeated, possessing nothing within herself" (p.32). She condemns herself to being the one Philip will call on when he wants "fever" (p.41). Sabina is not able to achieve the full measure of non-dual and irreducible love in relation to men.

In the last part of the novel, the lie detector attempts to set Sabina on a path toward self-awareness by adjusting her conception about men and love. "You've only been trying to love, beginning to love. Trust alone is not love, desire alone is not love, illusion is not love… All these were paths leading you out of yourself" (Nin, 1974, p.136). The Detector shows that sexual desire alone is not adequate for love relationship, as Irigaray defines irreducible love in *To Be Two*:

> Neither body nor language simply, but incarnation *between* us… Thus I and you, she and he, speak to each other and each one forms a subjectivity denying access to the self and the other prior to all speech. Between us are the world and the word and the universe and the word. One is, in part, common to us while the other remains unique to each of us. You remain a mystery to me through your body and through your word, and our alliance will always involve a mystery" (2002, p.12).

Sabina's relation with men as the object of their desire isolates her from herself. Philip says about Sabina's silence: "If you had spoken then I would have walked away. You had the talent of letting everything else speak for you. It was because you were silent that I came up to you" (Nin, pp.128-129). Sabina allows Philip and other

men to continue their dreams. She eventually becomes aware that men do not really love her. Whilst Sabina is identified by various positions – as an actress; a wife; an adulteress; and a liar – none brings any closer to defining exactly who she is. The narrator notes that, '[t]he faces and the figures of her personages appeared only half drawn' (364). Sabina is never identified through her multiple selves, as she refuses to contain her multiplicity within one single identity. "The more she is pursued, the more skins she sheds abandoning like a disguise, shedding the self he had seized upon" (p.407).

CONCLUSION

The study of Anaïs Nin's *A Spy in the House of Love* has shown how Nin was not completely able to grasp an essence of the Woman, either for herself or her female character due to the sociocultural-historical constructions of womanhood imposed upon herself and other women such as Sabina. She was aware of the sacrifice of women's subjective identity, and showed her own resistance to the boundaries of these constructions which limited a woman's identity. She referred to the erotic nature of women without being completely aware of the fact that as long as an erotic emerged through the fantasy of motherhood and wifehood, it generated masculine constructions of eroticism based on masculine fantasies. Nin's female character, Sabina, could not achieve her spiritual enlightenment and full measure of non-dual love through her passionate sexual desire, her bodily needs, and fragmented selves. Rather than creating a balance between dualities of body/spirit and self/other, Nin focused merely on women's sexual desire which led them to disfiguration. Thus, Sabina could not be held as an accurate picture of womanhood in her fragmented selves. In contrast to Irigarayan non-possessive love based on dual subjectivity, Nin's female protagonist could not achieve her subjective identity and non-dual love because she was engulfed within her multiple selves created through a series of unfulfilling, possessive and reducible love affairs. In fact, she was entangled in her sexual body, as an object of male desire and a mirror image of men, for the fulfillment of their sexual needs.

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