

Regional Oral History Office
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University of California
Berkeley, California

Joaquin Nin-Culmell
GROWING UP WITH ANAÍS NIN, STUDYING WITH DE FALLA,
COMPOSING IN THE SPANISH TRADITION

Interviews conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 2002

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Joaquin Nin-Culmell and his sister Anaïs in 1927
Photo courtesy of Joaquin Nin-Culmell

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PREFACE

The American Composers series of oral histories, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1998 to document the lives and careers of a number of contemporary composers with significant California connections, the composers chosen to represent a cross-section of musical philosophies, cultural backgrounds and education.

The twentieth century in this country produced an extraordinary disparity of musical styles and languages, and with those controversy and even alienation between composers and audiences, as composers sought to find a path between contemporary and traditional musical languages: serialism, minimalism, neoclassicism, and back to some extent to neo-romanticism in the last decades. The battle of styles was perhaps inevitable, as well as the reverse pendulum swing that has followed, but as the *New York Times* stated in a recent article, “the polemics on both sides were dismaying.”

The composers were selected with the help of University of California faculty and musicians from the greater community and asked to discuss their musical philosophies, the development of their musical language, their processes of composing, ideas about the nineteenth-century European heritage, and experiences studying with such signal teachers as Nadia Boulanger, Roger Sessions, Arnold Schoenberg, Darius Milhaud, Luigi Dallapiccola and others; university associations (Andrew Imbrie) or orchestral ones (David Sheinfeld); and forays into fields as different as jazz (Dave Brubeck), electronic music (Pauline Oliveros), and blues (Jimmy McCracklin). Also interviewed as part of this series was David Harrington of Kronos Quartet, which has a remarkable record of commissioning new work over the last three decades. Various library collections served as research resources for the project, among them those of the UC Berkeley and UCLA Music Libraries, The Bancroft Library, and the Yale School of Music Library.

Oral history techniques have rarely been applied in the field of music, the study of music having focused until now largely on structural and historical developments in the field. It is hoped that these oral histories, besides being vivid cultural portraits, will promote understanding of the composer's work, the musical climate in the times we live in, the range of choices the composer has, the obstacles he or she faces, and the avenues for writing and exposure.

Funding for the American Composers series of oral histories came in the form of a large grant from San Francisco art patroness Phyllis Wattis, to whom the Regional Oral History Office is greatly indebted. Mrs. Wattis has supported several other of the office's projects, including the histories of Kurt Herbert Adler and the San Francisco Opera and Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to California history. The office is headed by Richard Cándida Smith and is under the administrative supervision of The Bancroft Library.

Caroline C. Crawford
 Music Historian
 December 2005
 Regional Oral History Office
 The Bancroft Library
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Nin-Culmell Biography

Composer Joaquin Nin-Culmell was born in Berlin in 1908, the son of pianist Joaquin Nin and singer Rosa Culmell and brother of Anaïs Nin. He began his musical studies in Barcelona with Granados student Conchita Badia and later studied piano in Paris at the Schola Cantorum and with Alfred Cortot and composition the Conservatory with Paul Dukas. During several summers in the 1930s he studied with de Falla in Granada and in 1936 performed the premiere of de Falla's *Pour le tombeau de Paul Dukas*.

In 1939 he moved to the United States to take a position on the Williams College music faculty (1940-50) and later at UC Berkeley (1950-74). His music is in the Spanish folk tradition but with modern harmonies and asymmetrical rhythms. In the oral history he discusses his *Tonadas* for Piano, the Dedication Mass for St. Mary's Cathedral, San Francisco, ballet music *El Burlador de Sevilla* and *Le reve de Cyrano*, and his opera *La Celestina*, which he and the King of Spain talked about premiering in Madrid shortly before his death in 2004.

Caroline Crawford Biography

Caroline Crawford has degrees in linguistics from Stanford University and the University of Geneva and a keyboard degree from the Royal College of Musicians, London. She worked as a copy editor for *Saturday Review* in 1973, served as staff writer for San Francisco Opera, 1973-1979, and has been the interviewer-editor in music for the Regional Oral History Office since 1986. She writes about music for the *Opera Journal* and *Bay City News* and plays piano with Bread and Roses.

I EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY: 1908-1930
 Grandparents and Parents
 Cuban Aunts and Dictators
 Joaquin Nin and Rosa Culmell
 Joaquin Leaves the Family, 1912
 Memories of Anaïs Nin

Crawford: Let us get started. You were born in 1908?

Nin-Culmell: Yes.

Crawford: What memories do you have from the first years?

Nin-Culmell: None, because all I know is my parents left Berlin almost as soon as I was born. I was born in Berlin simply because all three of us were born in different places, where our parents happened to have been. Well, particularly my mother. One is generally born where your mother is, you know. [laughter] This is an old-fashioned idea, but it does happen. Since they were both performers and students, my sister was born in Paris, my brother in Havana, and I was born in Berlin.

Right after I was born, I was taken to Havana, where my father had been offered to found a national conservatory by the then president of Cuba, who, by the time they got to Cuba, had died. When he got to Cuba with forty-five trunks and three concert grand pianos and three children, and a wife, suddenly, there was no longer the president. The vice president had no idea what the president had planned and there was no conservatory. So we left.

I'd been told that. I really have no recollection except the possibility of a trans-Atlantic trip on a newborn child.

Crawford: Do you remember anything about the house there?

Nin-Culmell: I do remember in Havana, Blanca, because all the blacks in Cuba were always called either blanca or any word that's connected with the word white. Nieve, for instance--

Crawford: Snow.

Nin-Culmell: Yes--a lot of them were called snow. Blanca I met many, many years later, when I began to give concerts and go to Cuba. My mother was very tempted to take Blanca with us. She had been a young woman at that time and had taken care of me.

Crawford: Oh, I see. She had been in your house.

Nin-Culmell: She'd been what the English call a nanny.

- Crawford: Her name was Blanca.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. She was a delightful person. She used to come--well, she came to one or two of my concerts. I don't know if the music meant anything to her, but nevertheless she sat through several concerts.
- Crawford: What do you know of Joaquin Nin y Tudo?
- Nin-Culmell: My father's father. Nothing except what I've heard about him. I imagine that I probably kept out of his way when we lived in Barcelona because that's where my father decided that he couldn't have a wife and three children. It was not good for his career. I suppose that he had a reputation of being very severe. He had beaten his son into practicing the piano.
- Crawford: Literally?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.
- Crawford: Was he a great pianist?
- Nin-Culmell: My father was, yes. He was a good pianist. My grandfather used to, and I'm repeating what I heard, not what I know, he was to count the garbanzos because the garbanzo, you know, was the mainstay vegetable in Barcelona. He used to count them and then would scold the maid if she boiled them too hard and one would disappear.
- Crawford: This was your grandfather?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, Tudo.
- Crawford: Your grandfather, yes. He was of the nobility?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, my father pretended they were. They were allowed to use the particle, which is about as close as I think they got to nobility.
- Crawford: By that you mean the *de*?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. My father never discovered that. Had he discovered it, he would have made use of it. He used to have his coat of arms on the Citroën car and I used to tease him about it later on in life when I said, "You know, when you put a coat of arms on a car, it had better have been a Rolls Royce or a Cadillac, not a Citroën."
- Crawford: You said that to him?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. This was many, many years later. But where did you get the idea that they were nobility, from my sister's book?

- Crawford: I read it somewhere in a biography.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. My sister had a great fantasy about her background.
- Crawford: This is, of course, Anaïs Nin.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, Anaïs.
- Crawford: So much of what was in her diaries perhaps was a little fantastic.
- Nin-Culmell: They were her best novels. [laughter]
- Crawford: They were her best novels. Talk about that.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, no. That's all. I mean, that's enough.
- Crawford: We will get to that. How about Angela Castellanos de Nin, your grandmother?
- Nin-Culmell: Angela Castellanos de Nin I remember well because she was the typical--I saw her many years later also. She was sweet, completely devoted to her daughter, and to her son so that she, in some ways, made life difficult for him because on the one side, his father was very severe as to his studying music and Angela used to be the one who used to cover up for whatever her son did that was not proper. All her life she covered up for her son so that when his wife and three children came, she covered up as best she could. But she was very sweet and very nice.
- Crawford: You lived with her and her family in Barcelona.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, my father left us in 19--I think 1912. We stayed first with them, and then my mother couldn't take the bossiness of her in-laws. She'd always been and continued to be a very independent woman and she began to teach singing at the Granados conservatory. It wasn't called conservatory, it was called Academia.
- Crawford: Academia Granados?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, it's now called Academia Marshall. It belongs to Alicia de Larrocha, so that's how Alicia and I are connected.
- Granados invited her to teach singing and to give concerts. But to teach singing and give concerts and support three children in a country where there were no public schools, and as a woman alone—I'm talking in 1912--it was not exactly easy. My mother had been educated in the United States, and was a very independent woman. She hated to be told how to educate her children, which of course the grandfather probably did. My father probably did by letters.

Her Cuban sisters, particularly Antolina, who was my brother's godmother, said to her, "But, you know, you should go to the United States, where I'm sure you'll make a go of it." And Edemina was there, the mother of Gilbert Chase, the American musicologist. Chase's father, the husband of Edemina, was an American naval officer and I think influenced my mother and probably helped her financially pay the cost of traveling from Barcelona to New York with three children.

Crawford: Your father was born in Havana in 1879, and I gather they met in Havana, but why was your Spanish father born in Havana?

Nin-Culmell: Because his mother was there. [laughter] He married a Cuban, because the Castellanos were a Cuban family from Camaguey.

Crawford: Was it your mother's father, Thorvald Culmell, who was involved in the liberation negotiations?

Nin-Culmell: Yes, yes. My grandfather, yes. Thorvald Culmell was a Dane. His actual name was Christiansen. But you know the Spanish habit of having the father's name and the mother's name, which always creates problems because Nin-Culmell, they always think, Well, your father's name was Culmell, was it? No, no. That's my mother's name. Well, how come it's at the end? Well, that's the way it is in Spain.

Crawford: You attach the mother's name with a hyphen to the father's name.

Nin-Culmell: I attach it to mine simply—I'll tell you about that afterwards, but just to get Thorvald Culmell straightened out, he had a brother who was a Christiansen, who built the largest hotel in Copenhagen. He was a slave trader, which was-- we don't approve of them today. But in those days, everybody traded in slaves. That was a big business. When he went to Cuba and showed his passport the Cubans just couldn't manage Christiansen. That was too much of a mouthful. Since he had signed Christiansen Culmell, they called him Culmell. So he became Thorvald Culmell.

He did a lot of export-import. He became quite a figure in Cuba, supported the uprising. In fact, he took his family to New York during the Spanish-American War, what the Cubans call the War of Liberation, and was appointed I think probably the first Danish consul in Havana for the new Republic. There wouldn't have been a consulate before.

He sent his two oldest daughters, when he was having financial difficulties, to Paris to study with the daughters of his brother, David, with whom I've kept in touch, and was a well-to-do man, and very much respected. I'm sure he must have tried, like a good Dane, to get people around a table to discuss what they were fighting about.

- Crawford: What do you remember about living in Cuba? Do you remember the home on the malecon?
- Nin-Culmell: No. I've seen it. I've seen it afterwards.
- Crawford: Where is it exactly?
- Nin-Culmell: It's on the malecon. It's downtown, in other words, I would say maybe three or six blocks along the malecon. It still has T.C. on the front, or it had then. I don't know now.
- Crawford: When did you see it?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, the last time I was there, in the fifties.
- Crawford: Thorvald married a Vaurigaud--
- Nin-Culmell: Anaïs Vaurigaud.
- Crawford: Vaurigaud.
- Nin-Culmell: From New Orleans. She was French, from New Orleans, and the father was an engineer. He built a lot of roads and railroads in Cuba. That's why the name Anaïs is so prevalent in my family. I have my sister, Anaïs, my cousin, Anaïs, and the daughter of a cousin who is named Anaïs.
- Crawford: What do you remember of them, of those grandparents?
- Nin-Culmell: Of Thorvald, nothing. He died, I think, before I was born.
- Crawford: And she, apparently, left the family, left her nine children.
- Nin-Culmell: She left her nine—you've been reading my sister again. [laughter]
- Crawford: Yes, I have been reading the diaries, but also some of the biographies.
- Nin-Culmell: Really?
- Crawford: So you need to set the record straight, you see?
- Nin-Culmell: No, no, no, no. It's absolutely true. She must have been quite a character, character meaning no, not the little woman who stays at home and boils water. I think Thorvald was told that his wife had been seen in Havana with a man who was not her husband. You know, in those days--. And he brought it up, and she didn't even bother to say whether it was true or whether it wasn't true, or whether she did, or whether she didn't. She just packed up and left. I rather like that.

- Crawford: You like that? Why do you like that?
- Nin-Culmell: Because it shows a little bit of the character of all her daughters.
- Crawford: Her daughters were very vibrant people.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, most of them. Most of them.
- Crawford: Do you want to talk about them a little? I know your mother took care of them when their mother left.
- Nin-Culmell: She brought up her own family.
- Crawford: Rosa Culmell was the oldest.
- Nin-Culmell: She was the eldest, and she brought the others up. There was Anaïs. There was Antolina, the one who helped later. There was Juana, who's my sister's godmother.
- Crawford: Was she the only one who didn't marry?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Her husband-to-be died. He was a gymnast and he died in the air. There was Edemina, Gilbert Chase's mother. Have I said five? I think I have. Rosa, Anaïs, Edemina, Antolina, Juana. I think that's five. And then there were boys--one boy who enlisted in the War of Liberation, who was called Teodor, who died during one of the disembarkations of the young soldiers. The others were Enrique, Thorvald. There was a Thorvald the grandfather, and then a whole series of Thorvalds. My brother was Thorvald. My cousin was Thorvald. That name, like Anaïs, has gone through the family.
- Crawford: What do you remember of the aunts?
- Nin-Culmell: I think my favorite--maybe I shouldn't say that, but yes--my favorite was Antolina, who was the most affectionate and whom I saw until the end, who was very well-to-do. She was the widow of one of the generals of the Cuban liberation army, and had always supported and helped my mother, and was always very nice to us. Anaïs--I should have liked her because of the name--was, on the other hand, a little bit stuffy.
- Crawford: Did they stay in Havana?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. They stayed until Castro. I mean, Anaïs died in Miami. Antolina, I think, died in Havana, but she was a Castroite in the beginning, and then, like so many Castroites, you know--disillusioned.
- Crawford: Oh, that's interesting. She welcomed the revolution.

- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Well, everyone had to welcome the revolution at that time with Batista. Machado, Batista, the two dictators. That's the thing that we don't understand. I say we, the north. We northerners don't understand the dictatorship of both Machado and Batista, who was anti-Machado, but who became a bigger dictator. He was the one that Castro reacted against. But there, of course, it's again, a replacement of dictators. We have another dictator. We went from the right to the left.
- Crawford: But Batista represented wealth, didn't he? Or at least he defended wealth.
- Nin-Culmell: Batista defended wealth, yes. But it wasn't just a question of capitalism. That's a too easy way to justify Castro and blame Batista. Be careful, because that's been a little bit the American attitude, which unfortunately, they've caught on to too late, that Castro wasn't very much better. Although he's done extraordinary great things. Well, so did Mussolini. [laughter]
- Crawford: By making things work and shoring up certain systems.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. And the train is running on time.
- Crawford: That's right. But do you think Castro's made significant changes, significant improvements?
- Nin-Culmell: From what I hear, I would have to say yes. In medicine, education, I think he has. But Cuba is still a country run by people in power.
- Crawford: Business as usual.
- Nin-Culmell: Business as usual. All over Latin America, anywhere. Look at Mexico, good God.
- Crawford: Well, let's talk about the meeting of your parents in Havana, and their lives together.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, he was sent from Barcelona to Havana, to these cousins, the Castellanos, from Camaguey, who turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to him in his life, eventually, because he had gotten in trouble with some young lady in Barcelona, or had gotten the young lady in trouble, which is, I think, generally the way it's put. The father said if he met him on the street he would shoot him. So the Nin family sent the young man to the well-to-do cousins in Cuba to get away from being shot at.
- He was already playing in public and gave concerts. My mother sang. So it was natural that they should meet. He fell in love, which is not difficult to understand. She was very handsome. She spoke much better French than he did. She was musical, she sang, and her father was well-to-do. I mean, you know, [laughing] how much luckier can you get? So they met, they fell in

love. My grandfather didn't much like his favorite daughter marrying a musician, but nevertheless--.

Crawford: She was thirty by that time, I think?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. So he financed them to go to Europe, so that my father could continue his studies in Paris. That's why my sister was born there.

Crawford: Yes, in Neuilly.

Nin-Culmell: In Neuilly, exactly. I've seen the house.

Crawford: Have you?

Nin-Culmell: Yes, it's a lovely house. Oh, they lived in good style. The father, grandfather Thorvald, was not an ungenerous man. But what happened was that Anaïs was born in 1903. Thorvald was born in 1905. My grandfather died in 1906. So she went at that time, I think, largely to see her father. Thorvald was born in that house, down on the malecon.

Crawford: Oh, he was? I didn't know that.

Nin-Culmell: Yes, he's the only one. Mother went to see her father who was probably dying of cancer, which of course they didn't know in those days, but it was serious. Serious enough for her to go back afterwards and when he died.

Then what happened was in some ways difficult, but it needn't have happened. When the will was taken up by all the in-laws, who were all very--well, the way people are when wills are read--they want to see what they're going to get out of it. All of them were married, and the only one, I think, who never made a fuss was Uncle Gilbert because he was an American Naval officer. He didn't really care. But they determined that all the money that had been given to my mother for my father's education--you know, that happens today, too. How many young women I've met who go to work so that their husbands can finish his degree-- they determined that that should be deducted from her inheritance.

Crawford: And it was?

Nin-Culmell: And it was. She still was left with a certain amount, but they all advised her to invest it in Cuban things, which would have been smart at that time because the sugar was at its highest. It went down.

Crawford: And did she?

- Nin-Culmell: No, because my father said, as young men say to their wives who finance their studies, "You know, just invest it in me, and I'll be able to support the whole family."
- Crawford: Well, he did get a professorship, didn't he, through the Schola Cantorum in Paris?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, but, even then, I have a letter from his teacher, which says, "You've spent enough time in Paris. Now you should go to Berlin. It's a center of musicology, and you're interested in Bach and all that. They are now beginning to rediscover Bach. That's where you should go." So he went to Germany.
- Crawford: And Brussels, too?
- Nin-Culmell: Brussels was after. Yes, that's right. Brussels was actually his first job. In any case, he went to Germany. That's why I was born in Berlin. But he was right. He made quite a career after that, playing early music. Then he got interested in Spanish music and then his whole career developed. But, for the moment, things were a little bit tight. And he was not the kind of a man who could take that. And mother was used to having things, you know, and comfort.
- Crawford: What do you remember of your father?
- Nin-Culmell: Not very much. I remember going up the stairs backward, to protect my rear.
- Crawford: He was physical with the children?
- Nin-Culmell: We all had that, once in a while.
- Crawford: All the children?
- Nin-Culmell: I was a pretty naughty child. I had that reputation, and the only thing that sort of quieted me down, and of course, my mother didn't discourage it, was music. I used to love to just sit and listen, and I was small. No one would notice me except my father, when he started to play and then he would see there's this little brat seated there. He said, "He shouldn't be near the Steinway. This is a Steinway. Ahh, it's an expensive piano" and blah, blah, blah. But music was still the only thing that kept me quiet. He didn't like it, and he certainly didn't like my touching the piano. But then, I think I would have had the same reaction. How old was I? Let's see. In 1910 I was two years old. Two years old can do a lot of damage to a piano, you know.
- Crawford: But you were eventually allowed to play?
- Nin-Culmell: No, my father did not allow it. My mother did, but he didn't. Anyhow, things got tight, and the tighter they got, the less he developed a sense of being a

father or a husband. He decided a wife and three children wasn't what he had bargained for.

Crawford: Where did you first live with your father and your mother?

Nin-Culmell: When I was born, of course, in Berlin, in Havana, and then Brussels. We went from Havana to Brussels where he had a job, and it's in Brussels that he left.

Crawford: He was an extremely handsome man.

Nin-Culmell: Do you want to see a picture?

Crawford: Yes. I have one in my book, here, but perhaps afterwards we could look at what you have. He was extremely handsome.

Nin-Culmell: That was his problem. He was very handsome and very bright. But he never should have married. That was a terrible mistake.

Crawford: And your mother?

Nin-Culmell: [laughing] Well, what can one say about what one remembers of a person who has been your whole life? She was one who was always defending me, and I was a brat. She was the one who took me to Paris to study. She sold the house in New York, and we went to Paris because I had to study in Paris, and supported me. I mean supported me, not necessarily financially; I soon earned my way because of my languages. I was able to tutor students

I tutored lot of the students of my old teachers. But she supported me until I did the supporting.

Crawford: Do you remember your mother and father when they were married and together?

Nin-Culmell: No. No, all I can remember is that when I began to give concerts and went to Havana, and even before that, when we left Paris in '38, my father had to leave Paris also. The Germans took his library, and house, and everything, and he was taken in by the same cousins who had taken him in as a young man. They took care of him until he died.

Crawford: The Castellanos?

Nin-Culmell: The Castellanos. And when I went to Havana one time--it was when I was living in Williamstown--my mother said, "Well, your father is now alone." His second wife had divorced him. "He's alone. He's not well-to-do. He can no longer influence you. I would like you to meet him," which I found quite extraordinary. So I did go to see him. I found him a very delightful person who always wanted to talk about the past and, you know, this question of

justifying yourself to your children for what you've done, or not done, and so forth, and so forth.

Crawford: Where did you meet him?

Nin-Culmell: In Havana. Then I met him again when I gave the first performance of my piano concerto, which he didn't attend, by the way. But he did tell me, "Oh, I would like to see your mother and congratulate her on the wonderful way she has brought you up as a musician." I had my misgivings about that message, but nevertheless I delivered it. My mother said, "I don't want to see him. I've sent you to him because I thought that you should meet him, but I don't want to see him."

Crawford: And she didn't?

Nin-Culmell: And she never did. But wait a second, the story goes on. I think it's fascinating. You may think it's an awful bore. [laughter] I went to my father and said, "Joaquinito—" I called him by the diminutive.

Crawford: You called him Joaquinito?

Nin-Culmell: I called him Joaquinito, and he called me Joaquin. I said, "Joaquinito, Mother doesn't want to see you." Then he had, like a little boy, you know, when you stomp your feet and you have a fit? He said, "I don't understand what all these women have against me." I said, "You tell me." "Your mother doesn't want to see me, my second wife doesn't want to see me." Then he named at least six other ladies who didn't want to see him. He said, "What have I done?" [laughter] And I looked at him and I said, "You don't know what you've done?" And he didn't.

Crawford: What did you tell him?

Nin-Culmell: What do you tell a man who doesn't know what he's done with six women who won't see him, and that man happens to be your father.

Crawford: Did you see him many times?

Nin-Culmell: As often as I went to Cuba. The last time I saw him, it was sad. He was alone, lonely. He was teaching at the municipal conservatory.

Crawford: He had become a Cuban citizen?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, he was a Cuban citizen. He was born in Spanish territory. But they both became citizens when Cuba became a republic because it was easier for them to just travel with Cuban passports than Spanish. But for the same reason the king of Spain has given me, by royal decree, an honorary Spanish citizenship because, in fact, my parents were born in Spanish territory.

- Crawford: Well, let's go back to Barcelona for a minute.
- Nin-Culmell: I'm gabbing.
- Crawford: No, no. The stories are important. But let's talk more about the grandmother you stayed with in Spain because I know she was very much missed when you came to the States.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, Annika? Yes, Annika was quite a person. When the grandfather died, my mother invited her to come and live with us. That was typical of my mother because she was making her way; she did very well. She loved singing, of course.
- Crawford: Your father left the family in 1912 and went to live in Arcachon, in Les Ruines?
- Nin-Culmell: It was in France. Les Ruines was a house that they had rented, which was an honorary ruins. It was supposed to represent an old castle falling to pieces. This was typical of my father--he liked the idea of living in a ruined house. It was a summer place. And very elegant. My father was--if not anything else--elegant. If he was anything, he was elegant.
- Crawford: He left you there. How did he leave you?
- Nin-Culmell: He left by letter. My mother used to say he never had the courage to face her and say goodbye.
- Crawford: Was your mother bitter?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, that's what I was going to lead to. When he died--she was the one who had made me go and see him. When he died--and I remember I was in Williamstown and I had gone to New York to see the Van Gogh exhibit, I came home and my mother said, "There's a phone call for you from Havana, and I don't think it's good news." So I called, and the Castellanos said my father had just died. I remember crying. I remembered then, because when my mother died, I didn't cry. I was saying to myself, "I don't understand this."
- Why was I emotionally upset at my father's death, and my mother died and, you know--. I think it was because I seemed to realize--I realized then that my father had missed on the one thing that life is to teach all men, that you must love something more than yourself during your lifetime. It could be another person, be that children, be that a wife, be that a husband. He had never learned that. My mother had. Somehow my tears were simply because I thought that he had missed the boat, whereas my mother hadn't.
- Crawford: And you felt sorry.

- Nin-Culmell: And I felt sorry for him. But she wore black after he died. She went in mourning. Now, this from an independent mother, an independent woman, who brought up three children on her own without any help from her husband.
- Crawford: What year did he die?
- Nin-Culmell: He died in '49.
- Crawford: She never saw him after Arcachon.
- Nin-Culmell: No. No, no.
- Well, oh, yes, the children did.
- Crawford: The children.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Anaïs and Thorvald saw him in Paris, but both Anaïs and Thorvald--and this is strictly between us because it's not a nice comment—it's more for Anaïs, because Anaïs was older and independent. Anaïs was married to an absolutely wonderful man called Hugo Guiller, and the only husband she ever had, in spite of what certain people say. I've lost my track.
- Crawford: I asked if Anaïs and Thorvald saw their father.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Anaïs was older when my father left. I think as it's fairly normal, a girl of her age--he left in 1912 and Anaïs was born in 1903. She was nine years old. A nine-year-old girl who's attached to her father, and who loses her father, it's a traumatic experience. Much more than the three-year-old that I was.
- Crawford: She was very much attached to him.
- Nin-Culmell: Tremendously attached, and she never got over it.
- Crawford: Did he mistreat her as she wrote in the diaries?
- Nin-Culmell: No. No, no. That's all--no. That's all the result of Anaïs' discovery of psychoanalysts, and I don't know very much about psychoanalysis, although I could tell you funny stories about his saying to her, "Well you are a writer, why don't you write all these traumatic experiences and what you would have liked to have happened, or what you think happened in all that." That's the basis of the book that was made by her literary executor, who felt that a book called "Incest" would sell very well.
- Crawford: Well, I think she said in her diaries, "I don't know if this is reality, or if it's a little embroidered reality." But not true.

- Nin-Culmell: No.
- Crawford: What was she like as a child?
- Nin-Culmell: Sensitive--very ill. You know, she almost died of a ruptured appendix in Brussels. Anaïs was always very delicate. She never had a child--well, she did have one, but it didn't work out.
- Crawford: Died at birth?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, died at birth, and she never could have children. She was wonderful at telling stories. My brother and I used to be her audience. That was one way she kept us quiet--kept me quiet in any case. My brother was always very quiet. He was the good one of the family. [laughter]
- Crawford: No problems with him.
- Nin-Culmell: No problems, except those that were inside. But, anyhow, she used to tell us stories because, after all, she was in charge, you know, when my mother went off either to sing, or to be a buyer for the stores of New York. She used to leave at eight in the morning, come back at six at night. And she was in charge. The only way of course she could dominate these two boys, one who was a real demon, which is me, and the other who was very sweet and obedient--she used to keep us fascinated with stories. She'd tell us stories and act them out. And act them out so well that we--she had a story in which she died and she would do all the acting of dying. We would both get on our knees and say, "Oh, please don't die. Please don't die!" [laughter] These are the things I heard about later.

- II NEW YORK YEARS: 1914-1924
 Remembering Richmond Hill and Rosa's Singing and Business Careers
 Anaïs' Diary and Letters to Her Father
 Some Family Photographs
 More about Rosa and Joaquin
 Some Family Photographs
 Anaïs and Hugo Guiler
 Early Exposure to Music

Crawford: What do you remember of New York, of your homes and your aunt's homes?

Nin-Culmell: Well, we stayed with the Chases first, but right away my mother got an apartment in New York. Right away she got to work. And then she bought a house. She discovered that very quickly. The doctor told her that she was working too hard and she should try to move out so she moved out to Richmond Hill. That's Long Island, you know. She bought a house in Richmond Hill. Her sister, Edemina, used to live in Kew Gardens, which is right next to it.

Crawford: I believe she had been schooled in Long Island as a young girl?

Nin-Culmell: She went to school in Flushing, a Catholic school that became an orphanage. And she used to go back to see the sisters and they always used to tell her, "Rosita, don't say that you went to Flushing to school because they're going to think you were an orphan." They had changed from running a girl's school to an orphanage.

Crawford: What was the Richmond Hill house like?

Nin-Culmell: A big house, a lovely house. But there, again, she very often bit off a little bit more than she could chew, and then also the sugar crisis came through and all her clients in Cuba who had ordered a lot of things couldn't pay. So she had to take in boarders. Anaïs says that she ran the boarding house. That isn't true. It's more dramatic, but it isn't true.

Crawford: She took in musicians, I think, mostly?

Nin-Culmell: Most--a lot of musicians who were coming from Spain, or just musicians because she liked musicians. She was a musician herself.

Crawford: And who cooked and did all the work?

Nin-Culmell: She did the cooking. Anaïs must have done some cooking. Anaïs used to have to prepare things and then mother would come at six o'clock and cook.

Crawford: You said your grandmother, Angela Castellanos, always protected your father. Did your mother, too?

Nin-Culmell: Well, not after he left, no. What makes it extraordinary is that she would send me to him, and that she would go into mourning when he died, the fact that she could overcome her disappointment.

Crawford: Did she cover for you?

Nin-Culmell: No.

Crawford: What was your relationship to her?

Nin-Culmell: I owe her everything. First her example--remember that I started the piano seriously because she used to say to me, "Well now, you say you want to accompany my singing, but if you can't read music, you can't help me. So you have to study the piano. You have to practice. All that was to be able to accompany her.

Then she would often say, in order to see if I could practice a little bit more, "You know, if you practice, I'll take you to Europe some day and then you could study." I remember going to high school and it's amazing that the first day I was there, I took all the classes that I wanted to take. I mean literature, or history. No sciences, no math, no chemistry. Nothing until some bright advisor called me and said, "Hey, Nin-Culmell, you're not going to get into any college if you don't take some science courses." And I drew myself up and said, "Oh, I'm not going to college. I'm going to Paris to study music." So I remember coming home to my mother and saying to her, "Well, the time has come for you to make the sacrifice to take me to Paris to study." What does she do? She sold her house the following month and we were on our way to Paris.

Crawford: This was the Richmond Hill house?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. That house was a source of our income which was, you know, very slight. I got into the Schola Cantorum because my father had been a teacher there. I decided that those places were not expensive. But whatever the case was, I began already to pay for my way because I would be the translator. I would be given a student, an American student, and I was his tutor, and I would tell him what the teacher said, and make sure that he did what he was told, which was a very good experience for me because I learned how to teach, having the students right away.

Crawford: Back to New York for a moment. Your mother was quite amazing because it was only a few months off the ship from Spain that she was singing in Chickering Hall and Town Hall.

- Nin-Culmell: Yes.
- Crawford: What was the quality of her voice?
- Nin-Culmell: Mezzo. Very warm, very musical, and she sang essentially lieder and 18th century Italian music.
- Crawford: And Spanish music? *Tonadas*?
- Nin-Culmell: The *Tonadas*, yes. With Granados, by the way. She gave concerts with Granados in Barcelona. And when he came from the opera, she didn't sing with him, but she had already been singing the *Tonadillas* all over the place. So she was very musical.
- But what I think is so extraordinary, because I've seen so many cases of people, who are gifted by the way, and some ungifted, which is more justified, but gifted, saying to themselves, "Well I, regardless of the cost, I'm going to make it." My mother, immediately when she saw she couldn't educate her three children with her voice, turned to business.
- Crawford: And she was a good businesswoman.
- Nin-Culmell: A very good businesswoman. But she loved to sing. As I say, her influence on me was great. Imagine my accompanying her--you know, what a chore for a little snot.
- Crawford: Did you ever accompany her?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Not in public. No, no, no. But at home, yes.
- Crawford: When you started playing the piano, you were very young.
- Nin-Culmell: I can't remember what I did when I didn't play. I thought I was playing the piano, maybe I wasn't. But I had wonderful influences--Mia Cintaro, who was mother's accompanist, did a lot of very good teaching. I had a man by the name of Bleeker, who taught me a little bit about the theory, which I hadn't even the foggiest notion.
- Crawford: You had pianos at the house?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Always. And there was always music at home, even when she was a buyer for the big stores. When I say buyer--she had clients. She would take clients, Cuban clients, for instance. She would tell wonderful stories, for instance, the clients who had made a fabulous amount of money with the sugar business going to Gorham's--wasn't that a famous silver store?
- Crawford: Yes.

- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Gorham's in New York, and saying, "Well, I would like to buy this," and there would be a pile of silver things on the table. Mother says that the client would ask, "Now, how much is this?" But anyhow, she loved doing that, especially because she got along with people. She was very sociable. People liked her. Not only did she translate very well, but she got along.
- Crawford: And she would shop for people who were back in Havana. And then when they came to the States she would also take them shopping?
- Nin-Culmell: That's right. But they left her high and dry. She went down there and tried to get them to pay. Well, some of them paid a little bit, and maybe that coincided with my coming home, saying, "You have to make the sacrifice now and take me to Paris." Fortunately Anaïs had just married Hugo, who was an absolute angel, and he applied for foreign service and was sent to Paris for the National City Bank. So that all coincided. Moreover, Hugo was the one who, when things didn't go well, made it possible for me to continue working and studying.
- Crawford: He helped you?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Not only helped financially, but morally. Hugo was in that sense was really a brother. I mean, a caring brother.
- Crawford: Anaïs started her diary on the voyage from Spain. Why do you think she chose that time to begin?
- Nin-Culmell: My mother made her. She knew that Anaïs was writing all the time. She was writing poetry, she was writing stories. When my mother decided to go to New York—I don't think she's ever told this, but it's true—she brought home these first cahiers, notebooks, and said, "Look, Anaïs, you're going to a new world, a new culture, a new language. You should really keep track of all of this in these books." And she gave them to her to encourage her to write. Anaïs never, never acknowledged this, which was very curious--
- Crawford: I think she said something about writing to make life bearable or better.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, which is possible, too. Also, she said that they were letters to her father. Well, they may have been, and maybe they did make life more bearable, but how could she not remember that her mother was the one who encouraged her to write, who bought her her first books? And the reasons she gave—you're going to a new country—couldn't have been more sensible, but more sensible directly to Anaïs' particular talent, because Anaïs was very, very shy. Very introverted.
- Mother felt that maybe writing would help her sort of blossom. Which, of course, she did.

- Crawford: Interesting. So she was a shy girl.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, a shy girl, and you can understand why the absent father was a great illusion, why she wrote to him.
- Crawford: And he wrote to her?
- Nin-Culmell: And he wrote to her. That's why the diaries weren't letters to her father. She was writing letters to her father.
- Crawford: Where are those letters?
- Nin-Culmell: He destroyed them. He never kept them.
- Crawford: Did she keep his letters?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know. No, otherwise, he only wrote to his father, telling him what he should tell my mother about how to bring up the children. And apparently, Mother's answer, and that was when they had to move, was to grandfather, "If your son wishes to educate his children, he better come here and do it."
- Crawford: But he didn't.
- Nin-Culmell: Of course not. But, you know, Spanish men--and Tudo was of that generation--your daughter-in-law was not about to tell you her husband, if he wants anything done, he better come and do it himself! I think he was disappointed in his son. He didn't approve of his son. He approved of Mother, but at the same time, his masculinity couldn't permit him to sort of deal with her, and particularly when she decided that she would leave them and take an apartment herself--a woman? With three children? Take an apartment by herself in Barcelona! In 1912!
- Crawford: We have to turn the tape over. I like the interview very much. May I--just turn this off for one second.
- Nin-Culmell: [has brought photographs to the table]
- Crawford: You want to hold them up and tell me?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh! Oh, this is my mother [pointing to photographs].
- Crawford: Rosa Culmell.
- Nin-Culmell: Rosa Culmell-Vaugirard. Don't forget to use the second part of her name because otherwise, you'll get terribly mixed up. The Spanish custom is a good one: Nin-Culmell. I'm the Nin and my mother is Culmell. Did you get it?

- Crawford: I got it. Anaïs did not use the Culmell?
- Nin-Culmell: No, because Anaïs was not brought up in the Spanish tradition as I have been.
- Crawford: She felt more French.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, she married. And, for instance, when she used Anaïs Nin as her writing name, there was no possible confusion with her father. But, you see, I was Joaquin Nin, and there were two Joaquin Nins, so I had to use my mother's name. But the real reason is when I went to Paris, I did all of my musical studies under my mother's name because I was continually approached, "Joaquin Nin, are you any relation to Joaquin Nin?" And my mother said she didn't think that was a very healthy thing for a young musician. This is my mother. Let's see if I got it straight--yes--[holding up picture] when I was born in Berlin. Can you see it?
- Crawford: Let's have a good look at that. Yes. And what sort of a gown is she wearing?
- Nin-Culmell: My dear, you're asking me questions that--
- Crawford: Well, it's a white gown. I'm wondering if it has to do with the childbirth.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no, no. This was after I was born. That's just the way ladies dressed in those days, my dear. You should know that. [laughter]
- Crawford: Very lovely and formal.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. I'll tell you about my godmother, who was Elisa Carreno. Oh, there's a small one of my mother. That's the way she looked about the time she died, here in this house.
- Crawford: She lived with you here, and when did she die?
- Nin-Culmell: '54.
- Crawford: '54. Now let's look at your father's photograph.
- Nin-Culmell: That was my father at the age of seventy. [laughter]
- Crawford: Impeccably dressed.
- Nin-Culmell: Impeccably dressed and knowing it.
- Crawford: Where was he living at age seventy?

- Nin-Culmell: In Havana, teaching little kids at the conservatory and having all his bills paid by his cousins. He did have royalties, but they weren't coming in because of the war. The Spanish publisher couldn't send them anymore.
- Crawford: What happened to him at the end of his life?
- Nin-Culmell: The last years? You mean from "Let's see, we left in '38?" He left just before. He left with nothing. He didn't even have his library.
- Crawford: No music?
- Nin-Culmell: Very little music. And the curious thing is also I met this man who had done a lot of publication of early Spanish music and editions. He was the one who discovered Solare and things like that. My father never wrote another note of music once he went to Cuba.
- Crawford: You said that he was a great influence on you.
- Nin-Culmell: His work was. His work, not himself, because he wasn't a composer, and I think, I don't know, this sounds kind of arrogant, but he was, above all, a publisher and arranger of old Spanish music. Musicological publications, I would say. I've never been musicologically inclined. I've taught musicology. I mean, I've taught history of music, stuff like that. But my interest all my life was to compose.
- I've just received a recording of all of his piano works. I don't know whether I have it. It must be somewhere around here.
- Crawford: When you went back to Paris, did you feel that you were in his shadow?
- Nin-Culmell: No. I think that was the most cruel thing to have happened to him, to have had a son musician who didn't study with him.
- Crawford: And he never encouraged it?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, he wasn't in a position to. When I went to Paris I never saw him, don't forget.
- Crawford: As a child, as a young person?
- Nin-Culmell: From 1924 until he left in '38 I never saw my father. I used to see him at concerts. In fact, we were invited to dinners, because in Paris, very often before a concert, they used to serve meals on stage for distinguished guests. We [both] would be invited, not knowing that we weren't speaking to each other, and we weren't.
- Crawford: But he knew you were there?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.

Crawford: Oh, that must have been very hurtful.

Nin-Culmell: Well, sometimes I'd feel guilty about it because I'd think I probably did more hurting to him, than he did of me. But still, because I was young and independent, and this was his son. I don't know. It's a funny thing. People are very cruel, and all of mother's friends in Paris from Havana, because Paris was filled with people who were coming there, you know, when the sugar prices were high, would be received in my father's house, which was very fancy and very elegant.

And when my mother came, there were very few of her friends that didn't tell her, "Well, why did you come? Why didn't you just send your son to be educated by his father? Why did you have to come?" In other words, "Why do you have to make it complicated for us to have to choose between you two?" That got to me, I think, as a young man. I felt that the only ammunition I had was to be utterly and completely faithful to her. Then all right, I won't see my father. If that's the way you want to play this game, I can play it, too.

Crawford: Well let's talk about your musical education now, starting with Emilia Cintaro. What was her method and so on?

Nin-Culmell: Just to make good grades. [laughter] No, Emilia Cintaro was the ugliest woman I've ever known in my life. She had all kinds of tics, she had been Pablo de Sarasate's accompanist. That's quite a background.

Crawford: Erik Satie?

Nin-Culmell: No, Sarasate, the fiddler. The famous Spanish fiddler. Emilia was the first one who sort of in the first place encouraged me to compose, such as it was at that time. But other than that she gave me serious music right away. I mean, she didn't bother with giving me childish stuff that children are given. She gave me sonatinas by Beethoven, and Mozart, and all that. To her dying breath, she was convinced that I was a great talent. So much so that at the age of eighty and some years old, when I was in Paris at the beginning, she gave a concert to celebrate her eightieth birthday. And she played some music of mine, which I thought was quite an elegant gesture on her part.

Crawford: Lovely. And after Cintaro?

Nin-Culmell: After Cintaro--I should mention Mr. Bleeker, I think, in New York. But I can't remember his first name.

Crawford: With whom was he associated?

Nin-Culmell: He was associated with several of the music schools in New York. One of the ladies who ran that rented a room from my mother. She said, "Oh, I know just the man who would teach him." And she took me to James Bleeker.

I believe we became very good friends. But he, unfortunately, thought I was so talented that I really didn't have to learn, which was a great pity. What happened to me in Paris was very good for me. I went to the Schola Cantorum and they said, "But you know nothing." You get to start from scratch. And I was put in class with--

Crawford: By that, they meant no technique?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. I didn't know anything, which was true! My technique was nonexistent, I had no idea of theory, and I was pretending to compose. How can you compose when you don't know anything? You know, the French are very sort of no-nonsense. Bleeker was sort of typically part of the American theory that holds that talent is what counts. Well, maybe it does, but I didn't get very far with him. He was very sweet and very nice until I came back from Europe and he helped me give a concert in New York.

Crawford: Yes. And, so he was with you until you left for Paris?

Nin-Culmell: That's right. And when I got to Paris and the Schola Cantorum, I knew nothing and was put in class with little boys in short pants. You know, I was deeply offended. [laughter]

By the way, one person who could have done something, and my mother went to see her, because I used to go to school with his son, was Lhévinne. What was his name? Josef Lhévinne! And what was the son's name? I can't remember. It wasn't Nicolas.

Crawford: You went to school with him?

Nin-Culmell: Went to school with him. And we got together because he was Jewish and I was Catholic and we were in an Episcopal school, so--

Crawford: The outsiders?

Nin-Culmell: We were the outsiders and we sort of stuck together. Beside that, his father was a pianist, mine was a pianist, too. And mother went to see Mrs. [Rosina] Lhévinne and I think she could have done something with me. I must say, I was a very difficult little boy.

Crawford: How so?

- Nin-Culmell: Well, I knew so much and I knew so little. In other words, I think potentially anyone who had been patient enough to press the right button could have gotten anything and that she could have.
- Crawford: Did she take you?
- Nin-Culmell: No, she gave me to one of their students, a young lady from Canada. The first thing that she did was to look--say, "Put your hands up! Don't cut your nails!" Well, of course, you know, that was the end.
- When I went back to Mrs. Lhévinne, after having been in Paris for ten years, she said, "Play something for me." I played my sonata, which I had just finished or something like that. She said, "I don't understand your harmonies. They're so dissonant." And I said, "Mrs. Lhévinne, what are you talking about?" I said, "That chord is used by Chopin in one of his piano solos, so what do you find difficult about it?" The only thing she did was when I came back and got my first job at Williams, I suddenly received in the mail an application to belong to the Josef Lhévinne Student Association. I wrote back and said, "But I never studied with Mr. Lhevinne, and I haven't studied with you. You never taught me anything." And they never did.
- Crawford: Why did you want to go to Paris.
- Nin-Culmell: Why I wanted to go to Paris? Paris seemed like heaven! [laughter]
- Crawford: The fact that your father was there didn't have anything to do with it?
- Nin-Culmell: No, no.
- Crawford: Anaïs had married Hugo Guiler.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, she married. And so we went to Paris--we went first, but they followed us within months. And it was thanks to the fact that Anaïs and Hugo were there that my mother was able to survive, because she couldn't have paid for everything.
- Crawford: Where did they live in Paris?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I think one of the first addresses we had was Rue Schoellcher, which was right across from the Montparnasse cemetery, which is near the Schola Cantorum. Then after that, Boulevard Sucher. And then after that, Louveciennes.
- Crawford: Did you live with them?
- Nin-Culmell: We always lived in contiguous apartments, but never with them.

- Crawford: How was their marriage in the early years?
- Nin-Culmell: As far as I can see, I thought they were very good.
- Crawford: They were a very romantic couple?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. And Hugo was a great one for supporting anything Anaïs did, or thought, or wrote. And, in fact, helped her, for instance, with her first book on Lawrence. They used to have terrific discussions, because Hugo was better trained than Anaïs. Hugo would say to her, "But, Anaïs, what do you mean when you say so and so?" "Well, I've said what I meant!" "No, you haven't." And he would oblige her to rewrite and to finally express what she was trying to say.
- Crawford: So he really edited her work.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. He was the only one who ever did.
- Crawford: So when you got to Paris, you enrolled at the Schola right away?
- Nin-Culmell: No. I was ill for a year. They never knew what I had. I must have had something.
- Crawford: Your mother had been ill. Had she not just had a breakdown of some sort in New York? Too much pressure?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. That's why she moved to Richmond Hill. She was working too hard, but no, she had quite good health until we arrived here. But they never knew [about me]. It just retarded everything by one year, which was good. It was tough on a young man who wants to get started. However, I survived and went back to the Schola Cantorum, and there it all began.
- Crawford: What was your course at Schola Cantorum?
- Nin-Culmell: Piano. I was a piano student and I got finally, in 1930, I got what they called a *diplome de piano--diplome surperieur de piano*. They didn't give prizes at the Schola Cantorum. They were too severe.
- Crawford: That meant you could perform?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, I could perform in public and, in fact, I did. That's when my performing career began, in 1930. But then, in 1930 also I had been composing, and of course my ideal at that time was Falla, who was beginning to give concerts of his works. I knew I wanted desperately to meet him. My mother said, "Well, there's nothing easier. Falla used to come to see us when we lived in Neuilly. Next time he comes to Paris, I'll go and see him and you'll come with me." I said, "Oh, no. I couldn't possibly."

- Crawford: You were in your early twenties then, I think?
- Nin-Culmell: No. Much, much younger. 1930. Yes, in 1930, I was what? In 1928 I was twenty, right? I was twenty-two.
- Crawford: So very early in the twenties.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. And I had written something and had dedicated it to Falla. And my mother said, "Falla is conducting in Salle Pleyel. Let's go and see him." I said, "Oh, I couldn't possibly." "Well, I'll go." [laughter] And so she went and she went to see him. He was very nice to her. She said, "My son who is a composer wants very much to meet you, but he's very shy." Well, she didn't say very shy, but "He's embarrassed to meet you."
- I don't know what excuse she gave, but it wasn't a bad excuse because shy, you know, is a thing that a lot of people do to their children and it isn't shyness at all. Anyhow, he said, "Well, that's fine, but see I'm terribly busy with this concert and the rehearsals and all that. Tell him to come to see me in Granada. I will be very happy to see him." So my mother said, "Falla will see you in Granada." I said, "Fine, when do I go?" So, I went there in 1930, 1932, and 1934. Every time, I would bring something new. The first time, I brought *Three Impressions*, the second time, I brought the *Sonata Breve*, and the third time, I brought the Piano Quintet.
- Crawford: Well, before we get to your work with Falla, let's talk more about your household and your traditions in Paris. How did life differ from your life in New York?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, in the first place, I could practice piano, and I didn't have to go to high school--
- Crawford: That's right. You told me you were a high school drop-out.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. [laughter]

- III Paris: 1924-1938
 Living Arrangements in Paris with Anaïs and Hugo Guiler
 The Schola Cantorum, 1924-1930, and the Paris Conservatory, 1932-1935
 Studying with Paul Dukas and Alfred Cortot
 Households in Paris and Louveciennes
 Tutoring the Menuhins [Tape 3]
 Anaïs Nin, Henry Miller and Others
 Publishers and Composers
 Studying with Falla in Granada, 1930, 1932, 1934
 Performing in Paris in the 1930s
 [Interview 2; January 7, 2002]
 [Begin Video Tape 2, Part 1, Side A]

Crawford: This is January 7th, and we are beginning interview number two.

Nin-Culmell: I'm reading this book. Saul Bellow. This is horrifying. A terrible book. *Dean's December*. So, how are you?

Crawford: I'm well, thank you. I'm well, and I thought we would talk about Paris this morning because we left you moving back to Paris and starting in at the Schola Cantorum, which is a difficult school, I think?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. It wasn't--maybe I shouldn't be quoted on this, at that time. My father taught there. The Schola Cantorum was founded by pupils of César Franck.

Crawford: Was D'Indy one of the founders?

Nin-Culmell: D'Indy and others. And it was in reaction to the conservatory of that time, not what the conservatory became later, because when Fauré became the director of the conservatory, all things changed. It became much more musical and much more--Ravel graduated from the conservatory, so did Debussy. But, in D'Indy's time, the conservatory was very conservative, very much like the minor French composers. I can't remember the names of those.

But when I went to Paris, in the first place, I couldn't get into the conservatory, because you had to be a certain age. You had to be fifteen to be able to compete to get in because the conservatory didn't cost anything but you had to enter by competition. I was sick for a year so I really couldn't compete. So my mother thought, we'll go as far as Schola Cantorum.

Crawford: You've said you weren't in your father's shadow, but he had taught there, been on the faculty and--

Nin-Culmell: Well, I wouldn't say in the shadow, no. No. He was faculty. Let me explain. He had taught at the Schola Cantorum and then was going to study in Berlin, where I was born, as you know, because he wanted to be up-and-up with the

most recent musicological discoveries of Bach and all that. That was his interest. So, when he left for Berlin, he told D'Indy he was going to study there. Then D'Indy suggested, or maybe my father suggested--I don't know, one of the two--that perhaps, in order to open doors for him in Berlin that if he were to be able to say he had been a professor--he was named honorary professor. That was it. So that when I went, obviously my father was known, but he wasn't as well known then as he was, turns out, ten years later.

Crawford: He was decorated by the French government, right? Legion d'Honneur?

Nin-Culmell: Legion d'Honneur, but that was very much later.

Crawford: So his fame grew?

Nin-Culmell: He didn't begin to really publish the Spanish things, the songs and all that made his fame, until, I would say, '24. He was just beginning. In fact, yes. He was just beginning, because his first published work and mine were published the same year.

Crawford: Oh, that's interesting.

Nin-Culmell: And so my father began late and I began early. So there was no overshadowing--.

Crawford: You had the same publisher, did you?

Nin-Culmell: Not for that first piece, no. That first piece was published thanks to Joaquin Rodrigo. The publisher was Nerole.

Crawford: What was Rodrigo's connection?

Nin-Culmell: Nerole was Rodrigo's publisher. He took me there. I played a great deal of Rodrigo's piano music. I used to walk him around before he was blind, and I was his seeing-eye--.

Crawford: You knew him well, then?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Very well. We were very close. He was very good to me. And I to him, also. But in any case, he took me to the publishers and said, "Look, this is Joaquin Nin-Culmell. He's a young Spanish composer. He's very talented. You should publish his work." And he did.

Crawford: But he wasn't your lifelong publisher?

Nin-Culmell: No. Actually, much later I returned to him. Alson published my father's work.

Crawford: Who was on the faculty of the Schola? Marcel Dupré was on the faculty then?

- Nin-Culmell: At the Schola Cantorum? No, he was at the conservatory. He was at the conservatory. No, the ones who were there were Iman, Lyoncours, D'Indy, Ceriex, who had been my father's teacher--
- Crawford: What was the curriculum?
- Nin-Culmell: Very serious. For instance, we went through, in the piano classes, we went through the entire forty-eight Preludes and Fugues of Bach. We went through the sonatas of Mozart, plus all the sonatas of Beethoven.
- Crawford: When you say "went through," you read them?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. We studied them. I studied them with Paul Breaux. He had been an interpreter of Franck, the pianist. He was very serious. That's why, I think, D'Indy liked him because he wasn't the typical conservatory piano teacher who wanted his students to be in first prize. There were no prizes at the Schola Cantorum, only diplomas.
- Crawford: The French are great for competitions.
- Nin-Culmell: But, you know, the conservatory was well away from that point of view. I don't know if I told you how you entered the conservatory by competition. Then you had three years. If, during those three years, you received no prize, you were elegantly shown the door. If you got a second prize and a third prize, that wasn't good enough. If you got a second prize, then got a first prize, that was better. In other words, you remained at the conservatory as long as the prizes you were getting were more important.
- Crawford: Which prizes did you get?
- Nin-Culmell: I got a Prix de Rome in musical composition, which Dukas liked very much, but it wasn't a first prize.
- Crawford: How long were you at the Schola?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, at the Schola I was--let's see, '24 or '25--I can't remember. Until I received what they call the superior diploma in 1930, when I began playing concerts. And then I went to the conservatory in 1932. And got my prize in '35. Or, no—I got my prize in--I can't remember. But Dukas died in '35.
- Crawford: What was he like? What were your studies with him?
- Nin-Culmell: Dukas? An extraordinary, cultivated man who would talk about French poets as well as he could and sometimes better than he could about music, very sarcastic, very nice when he wanted to be nice. Not discouraging, but very sarcastic, and a lot of his students didn't survive. Among his students at that time was Messiaen, who was my age.

- Crawford: Yes, born in 1908, too. I hadn't thought about that.
- Nin-Culmell: And we were very good friends except that his father was a very rigid Catholic and he didn't like the idea that Messiaen should make friends with someone who was not as rigid a Catholic as Messiaen was. I later switched, but that's another story.
- Crawford: You later became more religious?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, more. And a little bit more--snooty. [laughter] I was a little bit smart alec. I mean, I was used to saying what I thought and I didn't have too much background, anyway.
- Crawford: Did you stay in touch with Messiaen through the years?
- Nin-Culmell: During the years at the conservatory--no. He went to the conservatory before I did. He got his prize before I did, so he used to come to class to play his music. But then he was no longer a student.
- Crawford: Music very different from your own.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, completely. Not that I didn't admire it, because I did. But I always felt that he was a little bit too strung up on a certain type of attitude towards music. I think his rigidity as a Catholic accounted for that. He was very rigid and he didn't just discover some--you know, it was very difficult at that time for young composers. I thought he was going to be impressionist, or he was going to be a twelve-tone composer, or he was going to follow Dukas—and I don't know exactly what that meant because Dukas wrote a good deal of music, but I never was completely attracted to it.
- Crawford: About all we know of Dukas' music is the *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, really, isn't it?
- Nin-Culmell: That's right, and it's a wonderful symphony. Those are really wonderful piano variations, piano sonatas. One song, and one opera. The music is performed a lot in France and Germany. But anyhow--where were we?
- Crawford: We're talking about your schooling in Paris.
- Nin-Culmell: But the Schola Cantorum was very serious. The piano classes were good, very serious. He put us through the ropes. And we weren't allowed to bring anything to class unless it was memorized. So when I say all the Bach Preludes and Fugues, it meant we had to play them from memory, one a week.
- Crawford: One a week! Are those still in your hands?

- Nin-Culmell: No. No, that was a long time ago. I've never played the Preludes and Fugues in public. I performed The Italian Concerto, but none of the big pieces, and I'll tell you why. Remember that was a time when the harpsichord was coming into its own and the harpsichordists used to tell us that we pianists shouldn't be playing Bach. That wasn't the proper instrument. I was not one for playing the harpsichord. Too much good music written for piano, anyway.
- Crawford: Other things. You had an annual concert at the Salle Pleyel?
- Nin-Culmell: No, the actual concerts were held in the old Salle Erard. You see the two piano makers were Erard and Pleyel. The old Salle Pleyel was the one where Chopin had played. In the old days Erard was where Liszt had performed. I think our concerts used to be held at Salle Erard, not Pleyel.
- Crawford: Those were school concerts or private?
- Nin-Culmell: No, no. This was run by Paul Breaux, himself. Every year he gave a concert of his students.
- Crawford: Who were other of his students? Ernesto Halffter?
- Nin-Culmell: Halffter? Oh, no. He studied with Falla. Sasha Bronfstein was a student. I think he went to Chicago. I'm not too sure.
- Crawford: Well, let's talk a little bit about your studies with Alfred Cortot.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I'll tell you what happened with him. Cortot was a wonderful teacher as far as learning what the classic repertory was. That was what the Schola stood for. In other words, you played your Mozart, you played your Beethoven, Chopin. But he was very lax on technique. I was beginning to feel that sure, I was playing Beethoven, but it seemed to me that the young pianists that I was hearing had an easier technique, or had more technique than I had.
- Crawford: Who were you hearing?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, young pianists of that time. I couldn't remember the names now. But, Cortot had this school at the Ecole Normale, which he founded, and I had a young girlfriend, Giselle. We met in the class of harmony, in the harmony class that was given by a professor of the conservatory, which, by the way, the Schola Cantorum would frown that I should be studying with a teacher of the conservatory.
- Crawford: Frowned on because there was a rivalry?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, the Schola Cantorum was very snotty. They just thought that they were the only serious school, and that the conservatory was just a factory of first prizes. [laughter] I used to tell Giselle, "It seems to me I'm playing the piano,

but I don't seem to have the facility," and nothing had been ever said to me about technique, and exercises, and all that. And she said, "Well, why don't you take one of Cortot's courses," so I did, and I went there several years. He restored my interest and my being able to get around. He really gave me back the idea that piano technique was not a dirty word. It was not just for virtuosos, it was also for musicians who wanted to play the piano well. That I'm very grateful for, and he was very, very kind to me.

Crawford: Very kind. So he had a different personality than Dukas.

Nin-Culmell: Very different personality. In the first place, he had one tremendously interesting thing which went along very well with my own tendency. He never accepted to hear a student who wouldn't write a paper about what he was going to play. In other words, he felt that the piano students were always thinking of technique, technique, technique, and they weren't always thinking of the form, the musical substance, its place in history, and all that. That went very well for me. I had no trouble with that. What I had trouble with was the technical part. He was very patient. I studied several things with him. The fourth piano concerto of Beethoven which was the first concerto I played in public with an orchestra.

Crawford: Where was that?

Nin-Culmell: In Havana.

Crawford: In Havana, with the Havana Philharmonic?

Nin-Culmell: Before Kleiber went there. Roldan, Amadeo Roldan. A good composer, who died of cancer. I think, two years later. Then Kleiber was a name there. Not the son, but the father. Erich.

Yes, the best orchestra you had any right to have. Kleiber was the one that I went to see about [my] concerto, because the directors of the orchestra wouldn't even hear of it. And so I went to see him and I said, "Maestro, could I play my piano concerto for you," and he said, "Why, certainly." So we went downstairs--he was living in a hotel where downstairs there was a piano. I played the concerto. He said, "Fine. When can you play?"

Crawford: And you did. Was that the premiere?

Nin-Culmell: The premiere. I was at Williams so it had to be after '40.

Crawford: I'm going to take a break here. I want to bring the camera here. [tape cuts off] Well, I'd like to find out what you had written by this time.

Nin-Culmell: One of the things you remember we talked about the fact my mother went to see Falla, and Falla invited me to go to Granada? Well, I did go to Granada

and I did show him the *Three Impressions*. He impressed upon me several important things. One was to be careful of becoming a pianist-composer. He didn't think it was a very good idea. "It's fine that you should play the piano, it's fine that you should try to make a career as a pianist, but don't confuse the two careers because it's not a very good idea." That was questionable--but number two, he said, "These Three Impressions are interesting, but you must learn to confront the large forms of music at your earliest convenience because you have to learn to compose, you have to learn to direct yourself to larger forms, to more important forms." In other words he steered me away from writing just piano pieces.

Crawford: Huge influence.

Nin-Culmell: Well, it was his advice, and it had an influence on my life in the next twenty years because then after the *Three Impressions* I wrote the *Sonata Breve*, the piano quintet, and the piano concerto. Those are three large forms and it was as if I would say to him, "Well, boss. Here I have confronted the three large forms. Now what do you say?"

Crawford: What had you written in Paris up to that time?

Nin-Culmell: I had written the Three Impressions; those were published. I had written some songs that were never published and they weren't really good. That's about it. I may have written other pieces--if I don't remember them, they can't be very good. [laughing]

Crawford: When you were in Paris in the 'thirties, where did you live and what was the household like?

Nin-Culmell: Well, let's see. The first years when I was at the Schola Cantorum we lived on the Rue Schoelcher, which was right across from the Montparnasse Cemetery. Those were very nice studio apartments on two floors in which there was a bedroom and bathroom upstairs, and a small--not even a bedroom, but sort of a bedroom, and then a large studio. Of course Anaïs loved that idea so she got herself one, for herself and her husband. Then she got one for my mother and myself. The piano was downstairs. The first bedroom I had for myself that I can remember is the one I got in Williamstown, in 1940, because I always slept on the couch before that. My mother always had a studio. That was an important place. The place where I got my first diplomas from Schola. Then, we moved from there--I don't know if you know--that's right across from the Bois de Boulogne.

Crawford: In the sixteenth arrondissement?

Nin-Culmell: Sixteenth, that's right. There we moved because Hugo was doing very well at the bank, and they just thought there was a big apartment where Anaïs had her apartment downstairs and then we went upstairs, my mother and I. She had

her bedroom and I had my well-known couch next to the piano. That was very nice until the crash--what was it? '29. Then we moved to Louveciennes. Louveciennes is on the road to Versailles. It's one of those small, delightful little towns. That's where Madame duBarry was picked up to have her head chopped off.

Crawford: One of the impressionist painters painted Louveciennes, I think.

Nin-Culmell: Oh, probably. Yes. Madame duBarry spent her last night alive in the prison in Louveciennes. By the way, our house was the old mayor's mansion. Anaïs and Hugo lived on the ground floor and my mother and I lived on the top floor. There, again, I had my sofa and my mother had the bedroom. [laughing]

Crawford: So you had to make up your bed everyday into a sofa?

Nin-Culmell: Well--someone did.

Crawford: Was that stylish living?

Nin-Culmell: I think so. I know compared to a lot of my classmates it certainly was more stylish than they were living in with their families.

Crawford: Who was your society?

Nin-Culmell: Well, my fellow students at the Schola Cantorum. I can't remember all their names. Didie, Delacroix, Capps, Bronstein. I get confused with the conductor. But anyhow, my first public concert was when we were living in Louveciennes, in 1930, and we all drove to the concert together.

Crawford: The whole family went?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. Well, Hugo, Anaïs, my mother, and I.

Crawford: What was press criticism like?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, they were always very nice. I never had trouble. I never got panned.

Crawford: More positive than the critics here?

Nin-Culmell: Well, I don't know. I wasn't panned in New York either. I first played there. I gave three concerts in Town Hall. One on my first trip to Cuba, and then when I came back in '38, I gave a program that was a smash hit because of the Spanish program--five centuries of Spanish music. No one had ever done that before. The program was mostly the young composers.

Crawford: Town Hall, and during the Spanish Civil War?

Nin-Culmell: That was during the Spanish Civil War, yes. Where Mr. Downes gave me one hell of a write-up. My manager then had it copied and had it sent all over the United States. I didn't get any engagements from it.

Crawford: Olin Downes of the *New York Times*—the best. That's surprising.

Nin-Culmell: Well, yes. But I did get my job at Williams because the dean at Williams was a--his major had been Spanish and, of course, he saw this article in the *Times* and then he saw that I came to be interviewed. So he took an interest and it was really thanks to him that I got the appointment.

Crawford: So a recital can really help. Were you going to Cuba at the time to perform?

Nin-Culmell: I went to Cuba the first time in '35 from France to play. And then, I must have played several times after that. probably ten years later--I can't remember the year. I know we were in Williamstown because my mother flew down to hear the piano concerto. My father was in Havana but he didn't go and thereby created a hassle. "Did you hear the piano concerto?" He said, "Oh, no. My dear boy, I had to teach." I said, "You had to teach? I had to teach, too, but when there's something I want to hear, I put the lesson off."

Crawford: Did he ever hear it?

Nin-Culmell: I don't know. It was a strange mixture of interest and reluctance.

[End Video Tape 2, Part 1, Side A]

[Begin Video Tape 2, Part 1, Side B]

Nin-Culmell: I did all I could to cover the breach, but it was very difficult. He was a very unhappy man and you know he was teaching at the municipal conservatory, which was about as low as you could get. He didn't write a note of music once he got to Havana in 1938 or '39. After the German occupation.

Crawford: You were teaching privately in Paris, I think, and you taught the Menuhin children?

Nin-Culmell: Yalta. I was supposed to be her--what do you call that--tutor. She was studying with [her sister] Hephzibah's teacher also. Why she needed a tutor I don't know, because she was as smart as--

Crawford: Oh, tutor not in music?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, no, no. Tutor in music. I was to oversee her practice and to see that she studied the right thing at the right time. I had very little interest in her except that I liked the family very much. I think they liked me. Then they went off

just before we left Paris. I was very depressed because, you know, Paris at that time, with Munich, and all that, it was very--we knew where the hell we were going. We were going towards a world war, and I used to write rather probably very romantic and very depressed letters, and Yalta spoke to her father.

I don't know if you want to hear this, but you can make up your mind whether you want to or not. Mr. Menuhin wrote me letters saying did I want to be Yehudi's accompanist, because if I did, they would take care of all my expenses plus a hundred dollars a month to be at Yehudi's beck and call for all concerts, all recording, all practice sessions. I had no idea, you know, how this would have been for me. They could have said a thousand and I wouldn't have known the difference. But then, a very good friend of mine, Amadeus Maurice Eisenberg, a cellist, helped me. His name mean anything? I think he was from California.

Maurice was very nice to me. I went to see him and I said, "Maurice, Mr. Menuhin had just written this letter," and I showed it to him. He said, "A hundred dollars a month? That's peanuts. You don't pay that little for mail," and he said, "Can you live without having this job?" I said, "Oh, yes." He said, "Well then, don't take it." So I didn't. This is the man who said, "Well, I see that your complex of inferiority has taken over--you don't think that you're worthy of accompanying Menuhin?"

Crawford: What did you tell him?

Nin-Culmell: Nothing. No, I couldn't say anything, and anyway, I gave a concert in Town Hall that same year. Mr. Menuhin was furious. It wasn't the program of Spanish music, so it didn't--it got perfectly housebroken notices, but nothing special. But I showed that I could be on my own.

Crawford: Were you independent financially by then?

Nin-Culmell: Well, what do you call independent? I had to work like hell.

Crawford: Was Hugo still helping the family?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, Hugo always helped, yes. But then I was teaching. I had private students. I used to go up from New York to White Plains and get off the train and stop at all the stops. I had students and I taught them. You know, my mother had a wee bit of an income, but Hugo was my great support up until 1940. We always lived contiguous in those years.

Crawford: In Paris, you must have known Henry Miller. Was Henry Miller a big part of Anaïs' life?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. And I disliked Henry from the start.

- Crawford: You thought he was crass?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Yes, I thought he was crass, I thought he was just--I mean, a man who can write [like that]. Let's see, in 1930 how old was I? Twenty-two, right? All right. Twenty-two at that time, which is not twenty-two today. Twenty-two today I would have known about everything. He came to my first concert--
- Crawford: Go ahead.
- Nin-Culmell: --at the instigation of Anaïs, probably. And then wrote to me the letter, which I kept for years and then finally I threw it away and decided it wasn't worthwhile keeping, to a twenty-two year old saying, "My dear Joaquin, you cannot even commence to play Schumann unless you visit a whorehouse before." This was typical Henry Miller. And the curious thing is that my reaction was, "Oh, boy, he's an old fashioned German romanticist, isn't he?" Did he think that the only experience that is valid is the physical one? That really--that's all Schumann, German Romanticism. [laughter] And I had more of a distaste for him.
- Crawford: Yes. Did you reply to his letter?
- Nin-Culmell: No, I never replied. I kept the letter for a long time and then I finally destroyed it. I didn't think it was worth it. But then, what got through to me was that I realized that he was being kept by Hugo.
- Crawford: Yes. How did Hugo do it?
- Nin-Culmell: Because of his great love for Anaïs. Hugo was a great man.
- Crawford: He was true to her forever, wasn't he?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.
- Crawford: Over fifty years of marriage.
- Nin-Culmell: Until he died.
- Crawford: And there were many, many such affairs in her life.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. I think Miller was perhaps the worst, but there were others. She didn't have very good luck with the men. She always seemed to pick out the weakest, the least interesting. At least, that was my opinion.
- Crawford: Was there a great need to seduce?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know who was being seduced, whether she was being seduced or they were being seduced. I think in the case of Henry Miller, I think she was the

one seduced, yes. And she never got over it. She always liked Henry. She always respected him, even at the end. You know, he never disillusioned her. Well, there must have been something then.

Crawford: Something there. What more would you say about her writing her father?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, that came much later. And that was written in her diary, which her present boyfriend and present literary executor put together.

Crawford: But you think that's fiction?

Nin-Culmell: Well, I think it's like nine-tenths of her diary is fiction. There's something there, but--.

Crawford: Well, let's go to Spain with Falla. Your mother arranged that for you.

Nin-Culmell: And so I went, and that was when he told me to beware of becoming a pianist-composer, beware of folklore, and try to confront the large musical forms as soon as you can. I think I did all three things, because I never did any work in folklore until much later here, when I felt that I had carried out his other suggestions, facing large forms. The piano sonata, the *Three Impressions*--by the way, the piano sonata was considered so--how can I say this--so unpopular, so uncontemporary, that the man it was dedicated to, Ricardo Viñes, who was the man who first played Debussy, and Ravel, and Falla, didn't like it.

Viñes is spelled with a tilde, yes. Viñes, who played, by the way, the *Three Impressions*, he was on tour in Latin America and his niece sent him the music and he played it. Then, when he came to Paris, and I said, "Well, Ricardo, I have news for you. I've just written a piano sonata, and it's dedicated to you." I expected, well, he's played my *Three Impressions*, he's going to play this piano sonata. He didn't like it because it had a fugue at the end. That was considered a no-no by the Impressionists Ravel, Debussy, and even Falla. But the curious thing was it was due to Falla's influence that I tried to face the large musical forms. To face did not mean making a success of it, but it just meant try it.

Actually, I don't think the piece is a bad piece at all. Considering it's my first piece in a large form. But he never played it. I made him face up to it. I said, "Ricardo, how come you play my *Impressions* all the time," which he did, "but you will never play the piece that I dedicated to you?" And he said, "Well, I have to tell you, I don't like fugues." That was it. So you see, there was a challenge--not a challenge, a pulling of traditions. Viñes was Debussy, Ravel, contemporary music in that sense, Impressionistic, free, you know.

Falla was trying to get me to face the large musical forms of all times. Of course, that influence was more important for me because it has led to all

everything else I've written. I have written, since then, piano pieces, and songs, and folksongs, an opera, and two ballets. But nevertheless, it was thanks to Falla's first admonition, challenge the large forms first.

Crawford: You might have just written songs, perhaps?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, just piano pieces.

Crawford: What's been the performance history of the sonata, and how do you feel about it today?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, it's been performed a great deal. It was performed almost right away in London, curiously enough, by a very good English composer. That was why the first edition of the sonata was done by the Oxford University Press. That in itself, you know, was sort of a—

Crawford: How did it come about?

Nin-Culmell: An American fiddler by the name of Jan Hambourg. What was the name? There was a pianist called Hambourg, a cellist called Hambourg, and a fiddler called Hambourg. There were three brothers. The most famous one, of course, was the pianist Michael. But Jan was a very good fiddler who had gotten it into his head at that time that in the same way that Casals had rediscovered the Bach suites for cello, the fiddlers at that time weren't playing the Bach sonatas and he was making a special edition. Since he was a little wobbly on notation and things, he had asked me to go over the proofs for the director of the press. We corresponded, and he was interested in what I was doing, and when I told him I was a composer, he said, "Well, send me some of your music." I did and he published it. But that was the last thing that was published in Europe. Everything else was published from then on by publishers in New York.

Crawford: And how did that come about?

Nin-Culmell: Bradley Brothers was there. I did some editorial work for them. I think it was during the war and you couldn't get any Nerole editions. So he got permission from Nerole to republish them in New York. Then I began, for the first time, to deal with folklore, which Falla had asked me to be careful of, which I was. I had never dealt with folklore, but I wrote the twenty-four Tonadas--tonadas simply means tunes. They can be tunes or they can be dances from all over Spain. I—how can I say--rethought and made them into piano pieces. There were forty-eight of them. He published those.

Crawford: They're beautiful and, of course, recorded.

Nin-Culmell: And those have been recorded, yes. Very well recorded. Then also he published my choral works and commissioned me to edit a lot of the secular choral music, Spanish music, which at that time was very little known. What

was known was the religious music. But the secular music wasn't well known. That also they published.

Crawford: Talk more about your work with Falla. You were there with him from 1930 to 1934, four summers?

Nin-Culmell: Let's see. No, three summers. 1930, '32, '34. Of course '36 it was impossible.

Crawford: What was his method of working?

Nin-Culmell: I had my meals with him because he knew I was short on money. I lived at a little pension. I used to go to his house in Granada.

Crawford: Did you prefer life in Spain to life in France?

Nin-Culmell: It's hard to say. I don't think I was making any comparisons. When I was with Falla, I felt I was sort of on top of the world. In those days I was young. This is true. And very, very inexperienced in the ways of the world, I think. But he was so terribly nice, and his sister was nice. I had my meals with them so that I wouldn't have to pay for them in my pension. They couldn't have been nicer to me. He taught me so many things. I think I've told you the story about when we were discussing some orchestral problem, and this is important for me because it really established my whole philosophy of teaching subsequently. We were discussing some orchestral problem with trumpets, and, of course, I was at the age where if I had any chance at all to sort of show how smart I was, I wasn't going to not take it. So I said to him—and by the way, I never called him Maestro—I called him Don. Don Manuel. He never told me that. It was his sister.

Crawford: He wasn't married?

Nin-Culmell: No, no. He lived with his sister. And she said to me, "Oh, Joaquin, I must tell you. Don't call Matheu," as she called him, "Maestro. He doesn't like it." I said, "But why? He is a Maestro." "Yes, I know. But, you know, he says to look up the Saint Matthew's Passion. There's only one master. There's only one Maestro." And, you know, that just absolutely floored me.

Crawford: He was religious, or was the reference to Bach?

Nin-Culmell: He was religious, but he wasn't about to tell me in order that I would repeat this story and say, "Oh, look. Falla is so religious. He does not allow himself to be called Maestro because of Saint Matthew"--no. That was his belief. He didn't want to be called Maestro. I could call him Don Manuel, yes. That impressed me. That was one of the many, many things that impressed me about him.

Anyhow--where were we before I so rudely--

Crawford: With Falla in Spain. He wrote an *homenaje* to Paul Dukas. Were they close?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Very close. Dukas, I think, was instrumental in getting the *Vida Breve* performed in France. Not in France--in Monte Carlo. They were very close. He was an extraordinary man.

But I didn't finish my story about the trumpet business. So, I was eager to show how smart I was, how well I read. "Oh, Don Manuel, the way you did such-and-such a score," and I quoted chapter and verse. I'll never forget one of the few times when he stopped and he looked at me in a very severe face and said, "If you think that I'm devoting all this time so that you can solve your problems with my solutions, you're very sadly mistaken. I'm just hoping I can get you to solve your own problems your own way." And boy, did that hit me.

Crawford: Not to look for easy solutions.

Nin-Culmell: No easy solutions. And above all, not to try--in other words, he was anti-clone, which is so atypical of the composers who teach today. They love to have students around them who are trying desperately to imitate them. His idea was, "No, I'm not spending this time to show you what I did. I'm showing you all this to see if I can get you to find your own solutions to your own problems."

Crawford: Did he identify problems for you in your work?

Nin-Culmell: Anything that had to do with music, like a problem of orchestration, for instance, or a musical problem. In any case, he was telling me these things to bring out my own reactions. Not to bring out what resembled his.

Crawford: How much time did he give you?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, I used to stay a whole week and he saw me every day. And believe you me, that was a sacrifice for him because he wasn't in very good health and he didn't have a lot of time because he always was having health problems.

Crawford: But he was revered in Spain, and that was a great compliment to you, to take you as a student.

Nin-Culmell: It was. Others studied with him in that way, but that was earlier, when he lived in Madrid. But there are few of us that can really say that we saw him more than once.

Crawford: You went back three summers.

- Nin-Culmell: Oh, sure. Three summers and weeks at a time, every day. I ate at his table. The dining room was so small that my chair was halfway in and halfway out. [laughter]
- Crawford: What were you doing when you weren't studying with Falla?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, let's see. He sent me to Dukas in '32, of course! It was when I wrote the piano sonata, because that was what I brought to show to Dukas. The second time he said to me, "I'm enjoying all of your visits, and our talks, and all that." It was always a mutual thing. He didn't say, "I enjoy teaching you," you know. That was typical Falla, also. Then he said, "But I think you should be seeing someone on a regular basis and I will give you a letter for Dukas." That's the way I got into the conservatory.
- Crawford: What else did you produce? You had written the piano sonata.
- Nin-Culmell: The piano sonata, of course. The piano quintet was the next thing, and the piano concerto. You know, for the exams at the conservatory, you always had to write a song.
- Crawford: A song?
- Nin-Culmell: A song with whatever else you were presenting. But that's all.
- Crawford: Who performed the songs?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, some singer in Paris. I can't remember her name.
- Crawford: Professional singers.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, you got the best singers you could get. I mean, yes. You had to make an impression to the jury.
- Crawford: *You* arranged that?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, sure.
- Crawford: Your mother wasn't singing at that point?
- Nin-Culmell: No, no.
- Crawford: She never sang your songs?
- Nin-Culmell: No.
- Crawford: All right. Anything more about Falla that you want to say? About the musical influence?

- Nin-Culmell: Well, yes--in the case of Falla, it wasn't just his production as an Andalusian composer. Several popular Spanish songs, which is folklore, Fantasia Betica, which was not folklore, but folk-inclined. But it was the large forms--the *Amor Brujo*, the *Three Cornered Hat*, the *Vida Breve*, and, above all, the harpsichord concerto. That was a work that I think had the biggest influence on me. But influence in the sense of "I'm not going to write something like this, but I'm going to see to it that I can make it as good as it is."
- Crawford: Which works of yours from that time were strongly influenced?
- Nin-Culmell: I think the quintet--the piano sonata really was very much influenced. But the piano quintet was very strongly influenced. The piano concerto less because the piano concerto really had nothing to do with the *Nights in Gardens of Spain*, which was still Falla's—
- Crawford: Signature work, perhaps?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Pictorial work. Impressionistic.
- Crawford: When you lived in Paris in those years, did you know the Durrells and some of the famous writers who were there?
- Nin-Culmell: No, those were my sister's friends. I had no time for all that. I was too damn busy.
- Crawford: Too busy. Did you hear a great deal of music?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. An enormous amount. Everything.
- Crawford: You heard everything that was done. And it was an exciting music scene.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. And I played a lot of music, you know. I gave the first performances of Rodrigo, of Messiaen.
- Crawford: Oh, you did? Which work of Messiaen?
- Nin-Culmell: The preludes!
- Crawford: I didn't know that. How did that come about?
- Nin-Culmell: They were published and I played them. I believe it was the premiere.

[End Video Tape 2, Part 1, Side B]

[Begin Video Tape 2, Part 2, Side A]

Nin-Culmell: I know it was among the first times because that's what he told me. He introduced me to Lorient when he came to Berkeley once. [Yvonne] Lorient, his wife.

Crawford: His wife, yes.

Nin-Culmell: And said, "This is one of my first interpreters." And, by the way, he said, "Do you still have my Homage to Dukas?" and I said, "Yes." He said, "Would you give it back to me?" I said, "No." Lorient said to him, "Olivier, how can you possibly ask of Nin-Culmell to return something that you have given to him?"

Crawford: And you didn't? You kept it. [laughter] An original manuscript?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.

Crawford: Oh my goodness. So you were concertizing a great deal in those years before you came over to the states?

Nin-Culmell: Yes, I did a certain amount of playing. A lot of playing in Paris, of course, I did a lot of playing in Spain. My debuts in Paris and Spain were almost the same year. And, of course, in Spain I got a lot of backlash from--"He's as good, or he's better," or "He's not as good"--as my father because my father had been a pianist much more in Spain than anywhere else. Some critics still remembered him. But that was all right. That didn't bother me.

Crawford: More so than in Paris.

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. In Paris, I was on my own. Hugo was helping, as he always did, never in any kind of a sensational way, or telling me what to do, because Hugo was always very understanding and very approving until his death. In fact, he always used to scold me for not being assertive enough.

Crawford: What does that mean?

Nin-Culmell: Well, the thing came up in New York. Somebody was playing something of mine--I can't remember what it was--and I didn't want to get up and take a bow. Hugo said "But, they're asking you to stand up," and I said, "I know, Hugo, but for me--Falla taught me that."

[End Video Tape 2, Part 2]

[End of Interview]

- IV COMING TO THE UNITED STATES: WILLIAMS COLLEGE, 1940-1950
 THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1950-1975
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 Taking the UC Music Department Chairmanship, 1950
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 The Question of “Cloning” Composers
 Founding the Noon Concerts
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 Works Performed by the San Francisco Symphony, *Le Reve de Cyrano*, the Cathedral
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 More about *La Celestina*: The Man Who Came to Dinner

Crawford: You came to Williams College in 1940.

Nin-Culmell: Yes. The dean was a specialist in Spanish literature, and he saw the review of my 1938 Town Hall Concert, and invited me to join the faculty—“Look what I have here. A talented Spaniard!”

Crawford: How were those years?

Nin-Culmell: Williams was a wonderful place. Sometimes I think it was too bad that I left. My first job. There was a wonderful faculty. They taught me how to teach the history of music. I learned by example from that wonderful faculty.

Crawford: You left in 1950 to come here to UC Berkeley. How was the first contact made?

Nin-Culmell: Well, the first contact was made very simply through a friend. Let’s see. She was the wife, then, of the head of the rare book collection at Williams. He had cancer and committed suicide, and she came out here and she served as a secretary to the provost at UC. She kept talking to him of this crazy Spaniard that she knew at Williams who had gotten the job simply because he had been told there was a job available. I said, “Well, fine. Why don’t they invite me to

come up and try out for the job?" She said, "No, no. You have to apply for the job." I said, "Apply for the job? You're crazy. I'm not applying for the job."

Crawford: You never did?

Nin-Culmell: I never did. The provost spoke about me to [Albert] Elkus and said, "Oh, what do you know? He's very up on Spanish music and I think maybe UC might be a good place for him to be. Why don't you invite him to see how you like him?" So they invited me for a summer session. They invited me for another summer session, and then for a whole year. You know, the usual academic sniff-sniff.

Crawford: Sniff-sniff? [laughter]

Nin-Culmell: Is he going to fit around here? And I enjoyed myself.

Crawford: What was your impression?

Nin-Culmell: Well, the impression I got right away, and that was one of the reasons I didn't discourage myself from the idea, was that Williams was wonderful, and they were very nice to me, but that UC would be a challenge, as indeed it proved to be. Nevertheless, I went back and they sniffed, but they didn't sniff enough. I suddenly got this letter at Williams in early September, when classes began, offering me a job at Berkeley. I think I told you that. And I wrote back saying, "Who the hell do you think you are? I've taught for ten years at a college and then, one week before classes begin, because I get an offer from the great University of California, I'm going to drop everything and run to California? You're very sadly mistaken." It was a very offensive letter. I meant it to be offensive.

Crawford: They liked that?

Nin-Culmell: Well, I don't think they disliked it. The answer that came back was, "We understand you perfectly well. Would you please accept the offer and we'll give you a year to finish your time there?" Which is what happened. So, I finished my year at Williams and then at Williams, of course, they did everything they could to keep me. But I really felt--you know, it was a challenge.

Crawford: Who impressed you on the faculty immediately?

Nin-Culmell: Everybody. Roger Sessions and Manfred Bukofzer, but they turned out to have their own little agenda. Bukofzer was very nice to me except that when I finally came to Berkeley, he said, "You know, you are far too intelligent to be just a pianist."

Crawford: Well, of course, he was a musicologist.

Nin-Culmell: And Sessions was a composer. And they both took a liking to me and I think they took a liking to me because it was at the time that Elkus was retiring. But the incomprehensible thing was that they had asked him to resign one year before he retired, which, for me, is one of those idiotic things that universities do. Here's a man who had founded the university music department and a year before he retires they ask him to retire from the chairmanship.

Crawford: Why? Did you ever find out why?

Nin-Culmell: Well, yes. Elkus had been a very, very nice man, and he had organized the whole department. He used to appoint committees and then the committee would say, "We've had our meetings and the consensus of opinion was that we would do such and such." Elkus stuttered very badly--I think I told you that story, about the--didn't I?

Crawford: I'm not sure.

Nin-Culmell: Well, he used to give an introductory course to music and one time he got up and said, "Well, Tchaikovsky was a homo--homo--homophonic composer." But by the time he got to homophonic, the whole class was in an uproar. Well, he was the same with the department. He said, "Well, the consensus of your opinion is--but the consensus of my opinion is that you're going to do this and then you'll do it exactly the way you want it," which, I think was good. The department didn't like that, and they were in a sort of an uproar when I came. Everyone was committed to somebody else. So when I came, they said, "Oh, well, what about this Nin-Culmell guy who's just come?" Maybe Bukofzer said, "Maybe he'll do as I ask him," and Sessions said, "Well, maybe he'll do as I ask him." So they fiddled around and when they both came out, I was elected chair. It was very nice, but I should never have accepted.

Crawford: That's a little threatening, perhaps.

Nin-Culmell: Well, I didn't realize to what extent, but it was. And, of course, when the time came for them to cash in their interest in my candidacy, they found that I wouldn't do as Bukofzer wanted, and I wouldn't do as Sessions wanted, I just would do as I thought should be done.

Crawford: What were the issues?

Nin-Culmell: Well, for instance, the first issue that came up that was important was the question of the Hertz scholarships. You know, Alfred Hertz had left us a lot of money for scholarships, and for building, and all that. And, curiously enough, he was as you know one of the first conductors of the San Francisco Symphony.

Crawford: A very good one.

- Nin-Culmell: And, apparently, a very good one. These were the first scholarships that were going to be awarded and, of course, Bukofzer came in to me and said, "Our first appointment has to be a musicologist because the department is going in for musicology." And Sessions came in and said, "The first candidate you should appoint is a composer because--" You know, the usual.
- Crawford: What did you do?
- Nin-Culmell: I appointed the best candidate that we had at that time. I can't even remember whether he was a musicologist or composer. But it was the beginning of the end, because they realized that they had elected me chairman but I wasn't going to be a patsy. So it went on. It was difficult because I had a lot of advantages in being chairman. I only taught one course a year instead of two or three. And then both men delved into what I would call the business of faculty members when they wanted their way. They would see to it that they'd get offers from other institutions. Bukofzer did. I can't remember where he went, but he went somewhere.
- Crawford: Oh, he left?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh he left, yes. And then Sessions was offended because he didn't get the offer he was expecting from Princeton. So he was sort of, you know, unhappy.
- Crawford: Bukofzer was chairman just after you were.
- Nin-Culmell: That's right.
- Crawford: For one year, perhaps?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know. But, in any case, I was given the gate and that was all right. I didn't mind. I wasn't particularly interested in being chairman, you know. The greeting of the provost when I came to see him was, "Welcome to the society of fallen angels."
- Crawford: Society of fallen angels? [laughter]
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. That was his definition of a chairman. He was right.
- Crawford: He was right. Nobody wants that job.
- Nin-Culmell: Nobody wants that job. But you see, they solve the problem by saying, "Oh, we have to have a minority. Oh, we have to have a woman. Oh, we have to have a composer. Oh, we have to have--" They never really solve the problem of when they appoint someone to the head of the department saying, "We're going to do what the chairman decides." Wendy Allanbrook has had a hell of a time.

- Crawford: Has she?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. I don't know her. But I hear echoes. [laughter]
- Crawford: In what way has she had a hard time?
- Nin-Culmell: By not being able to do really what she wants to do. She has to placate the composers, or placate the musicologists. In her case she's placating musicologists because she is a musicologist herself. Of course the composers are not pleased with that. It's hopeless.
- Crawford: What was the department like politically? Were there other rivalries?
- Nin-Culmell: Want a quick analysis? The composers were jealous of each other. The musicologists were jealous of each other. It so happened that Bukofzer was a very distinguished man, and so was Roger [Sessions], but they were both very small.
- Crawford: Both very small-minded?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Good men in their field, but--
- Crawford: What did they want?
- Nin-Culmell: Power.
- Crawford: They would have excluded the other camp?
- Nin-Culmell: No, that would have been stupid. But they would have dominated the other camp.
- Crawford: Who stood out besides the two? They were the stars, of course.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, they were the stars and I remember when Roger went to Princeton. I told the dean, "Well, we've lost fifty percent of our department," which was true. Roger was a very fine composer, but terribly prejudiced as far as composition was concerned. It was his students, and his students only. He hated Milhaud. He hated anything anybody else was composing.
- Crawford: Milhaud was never here; he was at Mills.
- Nin-Culmell: No, he was at Mills. And, you know, Milhaud dominated the scene whether he wanted to or not.
- Crawford: What did you feel about Sessions' music?

- Nin-Culmell: I like Sessions' music. I thought it was a little bit arid sometimes. But I think my main problem with the students of the big names was the fact that most of these people taught by--what is this system by reproduction--?
- Crawford: Teaching composition. You mean, do what I do?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. What do you call that? There's a name for it. When you produce an exact reproduction of something else--you do that with animals. It's a whole philosophy of teaching, whether you're going to reproduce yourself in your students or whether you're going to teach your students to be independent.
- Crawford: You don't mean cloning?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes! Exactly what I mean.
- Crawford: [laughter] Really? That's very strong condemnation!
- Nin-Culmell: That's what it was.
- Crawford: So you would say Imbrie is a Sessions clone, in a sense?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, exactly. And it's too bad because Andrew has a great deal of talent. But, you know, he was overwhelmed with Sessions. And Sessions was overwhelmed with himself. I mean, you know, that was the best he could do for his students, to show them what he had done, whereas Falla, when he had me come to Granada, the first thing he would say to me, he said, "I'm not wasting my time to show you how to solve your problems my way. I'm trying to show you how to solve your problems your way." That's the contrary of cloning.
- Crawford: What other cloning examples have you seen during the years?
- Nin-Culmell: Most of academic teaching.
- Crawford: What a pity. Well, who stands out for you among the composers at UC?
- Nin-Culmell: Bill Denny, whom I respected tremendously. But the main thing was that the department itself was self-destructive.
- Crawford: Because of that?
- Nin-Culmell: I think so.
- Crawford: That it didn't attract creative people?

- Nin-Culmell: Well, if it did attract creative people, they couldn't have been that creative if they came to a place where they're going to have to follow somebody else's direction, right?
- Crawford: You said that certain composers were of the faculty, and others were of the department.
- Nin-Culmell: That's right, and excellent teachers. For instance, Bill Denny, Charles Cushing, Norton. All were people who did wonderful work in their own fields. They produced wonderful students, but they didn't produce little Nortons or little Cushings, or little—
- Crawford: Not cloners.
- Nin-Culmell: Not cloners. Andrew [Imbrie] has had to fight them himself. He's not a cloner, but he's been exposed to that. And it's a bad thing to be exposed to, because he has a sort of respect. I think now he's gotten away a little bit from that, but I remember when I was chairman, if I ever said or did anything that Roger didn't like, I would have Andrew in my office the next day.
- Crawford: Obligated to do that?
- Nin-Culmell: No, I don't think Roger was that obvious. I think Andrew himself felt the need to support his cloner, his major cloner. I know it's a strong word to use.
- Crawford: Yes, it's very strong. How was your music received?
- Nin-Culmell: My music? Nobody was interested. I wasn't a twelve-tone composer, I wasn't a pupil of Sessions. I wasn't this, I wasn't that. I was just myself.
- Crawford: Was it performed?
- Nin-Culmell: Very little.
- Crawford: What about the noon concerts and so on? Kerman's concerts?
- Nin-Culmell: I started it. Simply because I felt that performance was so much a part of the department and that it had been overlooked.
- Crawford: You didn't program your own works.
- Nin-Culmell: No, that would not have been seemly. [laughter]
- Crawford: So how did you get the budget?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, that was easy. We had no expenses.

- Crawford: Because you had student performers?
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly.
- Crawford: They rarely performed your work?
- Nin-Culmell: No, that wasn't the object. The object was for them to perform, not only their works, but I mean to perform, period.
- Crawford: The Elkuses took an interest in that, didn't they? The series?
- Nin-Culmell: Who?
- Crawford: The Elkuses. Elizabeth Elkus certainly did.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I wish he had. I wish he had.
- Crawford: He wasn't interested?
- Nin-Culmell: Albert had a very difficult time, and I understand it perfectly well, that, when I was elected chairman, he would come in and open all of my mail. I tried to explain to him and to Helen Farnsworth, who was the secretary then, I said, "Tell Mr. Elkus that any mail that's addressed to the chairman of the music department is to be opened by me. Any mail that is directed to him should be opened by him." He had a very rough time leaving. I don't blame him. I think he was let go in an offensive manner, but I wasn't to blame.
- Crawford: He didn't want his retirement?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, above all, he wanted to have his retirement before he retired as chairman. Why would they remove him of the chairmanship a year before that? Give me a good reason.
- Crawford: It had to be very, very difficult. Quite cruel, really.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. He then went to the conservatory [San Francisco Conservatory of Music], and then was made head of the conservatory. Of course, then there was hell to pay because naturally he felt that the conservatory was more indicative of performance and that I was pushing the wrong clockwork when I insisted that performance be on equal terms with composing and musicology.
- Crawford: Where did you go with that?
- Nin-Culmell: Not very far. In fact I had to--I was replaced.
- Crawford: Albert Elkus had wanted to bring the conservatory over to UC?

- Nin-Culmell: That's right. But the conservatory was offered to the department, I think I told you, before he took over. And the department turned it down. That's when they asked him to be the head of the conservatory. But it was only because they thought they would be getting to the university through Albert and they didn't. That was a whole unfortunate situation.
- Crawford: Yes, and that was really why they decided to let him go?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, yes.
- Crawford: What were your other involvements at UC? Did you have university committees, or academic senate duties?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, I had all kinds of committees. There were committees on the appointments of this and the appointments of that. Those were unimportant things. All I wanted was that performance be a part of the major, and not just composition and musicology.
- Crawford: Then there would have had to be a professor for every instrument.
- Nin-Culmell: They didn't have to if they had accepted the conservatory. They could have had the conservatory in the city and the academic departments in Berkeley.
- Crawford: But that would have strained the budget?
- Nin-Culmell: What budget. The state of California? The wealthiest state in the Union?
- Crawford: There was money.
- Nin-Culmell: Come on!
- Crawford: How about Michael Senturia? He did a lot for performance, didn't he?
- Nin-Culmell: He did, but he did it for Senturia. I don't know where he went finally. He left the department.
- Crawford: Did he make good use of the orchestra?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes--so did I. I started the orchestra, too.
- Crawford: You started the orchestra--was it mostly non-music majors?
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly.
- Crawford: A great way to use the talent pool.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, but why discourage performers from majoring in music for Pete's sake?

- Crawford: They were discouraged? Because they were performers, yes. Was that a major frustration for you, always, in the department?
- Nin-Culmell: And they knew it, and they knew I was frustrated.
- Crawford: Were you able to devote enough time to your work?
- Nin-Culmell: I worked a great deal at Berkeley.
- Crawford: That was a long period. 1950-1974?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, many years, but remember I retired before '74, yes? I don't look at my years at UC as happy years at all.
- Crawford: Not even collegially?
- Nin-Culmell: No, because in the first place, contrary to Williams, you made no friends in other departments.
- Crawford: Why? Too big?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, of course. The music department was big enough to keep you busy for the rest of your life.
- Crawford: Yes. But you made friends within the music department?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. I think so. I thought I had a lot of good friends. I must say that Denny was one, and Norton was another. Cushing was special. Cushing was a sort of the conscience of the department because he had been a student there.
- Crawford: That's interesting. How did that manifest itself?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, in his die-hard attitude.
- Crawford: About?
- Nin-Culmell: About performance and composition. And he was a student of Nadia Boulanger.
- Crawford: Oh, yes. You weren't, but it seems that every young American pianist had to go to her in Paris. She only took Americans?
- Nin-Culmell: They were the only ones who could pay.
- Crawford: What was her magic? I guess Mr. Imbrie didn't have a great experience with her.

- Nin-Culmell: I don't know. No, no. I think I sympathize with Andrew on that count. Andrew did not have a good time with her, and that's why he turned to Roger. Roger started with Nadia, too. But Denny was a free spirit.
- Crawford: We're saying that Cushing's music is more performed than Denny's.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, and I'm saying it's as surprising because Denny's is infinitely more interesting.
- Crawford: How do you figure?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, by what he's written!
- Crawford: Why then, why?
- Nin-Culmell: Because people are stupid. [laughs] I don't know. Is he really more performed? I don't think so. Because he's never performed at the symphony. And neither is Denny.
- Crawford: We haven't talked about the Grillers. Do you remember the Grillers?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh God, yes.
- Crawford: What's the truth about the Grillers?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, the truth about the Grillers is very simple. Griller was a very ambitious man who tried very hard to manipulate the chairman, in this case your honorable servant. But to manipulate it so that the Grillers would be accepted as tenured people. And when he wasn't accepted, at least as I see it--my idea of having the Grillers was I wanted that the principle of having a string quartet on campus be accepted by the campus. I used to say that we could have the Grillers, or we could have any of the other quartets, because quartets are like people. They are limited in what they play, how they play, what they do. Griller wanted a tenured position. When he couldn't have a tenured position—
- Crawford: Four tenured positions?
- Nin-Culmell: That's right. Then he tried to get it for himself and really said distasteful things about his colleagues. That was after my chairmanship. The same person who had defended them against my dreadful actions against the Grillers was the same person who had them thrown out.
- Crawford: Who was that?
- Nin-Culmell: Boyden.
- Crawford: Oh, Boyden--he was chairman from '55-'60.

- Nin-Culmell: The curious thing is Boyden never recognized that the problem had started with me. It had started when I was proposing the Griller Quartet to the university, that Griller made all kinds of political connections with people, not in music, to get support. So that when I came up, he had already taken over. I said to him, "I'm sorry, but I can't see it. I can't see it. I can't see our being stuck with the Griller Quartet for the rest of our natural lives. I can't see ourselves being stuck with having *a* string quartet." And, by the way, there were a half a dozen, if not a dozen, first-rate string quartets who were willing to come and teach for a year, teach for two years, but not ad nauseam.
- Crawford: Was there a resident quartet again?
- Nin-Culmell: No. No, because Sidney made it impossible.
- Crawford: Oh, yes. I see. But then, they were let go in the fifties. Myra Hess was supposed to have asked Jonathan Elkus, "Is your father still being Grillered?" [laughter]
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Well, I don't blame her.
- Crawford: What about ethnomusicology?
- Nin-Culmell: That came later. That came later, as a sort of development of musicology, but only to keep the performers out. In other words, you had to develop the wing of musicology in order to make sure that you kept everybody busy.
- Crawford: Well, it led to some performance, didn't it, in Eastern music?
- Nin-Culmell: Very little, very little, yes. Come on. How many American students were going to learn how to perform the music? Come on, that was nonsense. But, at least it was musicology and it wasn't performance.
- Crawford: I see. So that was a push by the musicologists. Bonnie Wade, I think, was involved in that area. So you think that that was a bit of a waste?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. And not only I thought it, but I said it. I wasn't popular.
- Crawford: Well, let's talk about what you taught.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I only taught what I was asked to teach--any of the compositional things, I taught some history courses. I never taught piano.
- Crawford: Did you teach theory?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Fugue, harmony, orchestration.
- Crawford: Did you enjoy that?

- Nin-Culmell: Yes, but I always felt that Neptune's trident was missing one prong. Performance.
- Crawford: Was there pressure to publish?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, Bukofzer did tell me--he said that I shouldn't expect any recognition for performance, but that if I composed, then that was something else. That, I must say, pushed me a little bit in the right direction. I started to compose, which I had always done, but I was so busy doing other things that I hadn't thought of it. But I began to do more composing, yes. And most of my works, my important works, date from that period.
- Crawford: Yes. What period, exactly?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, let's see. When I came to UC, I had the piano sonata, the piano quintet, and the piano concerto. So I guess it was the two ballets and the opera, or the piano pieces.
- Crawford: Quite a lot.
- Nin-Culmell: And songs.
- Crawford: Well then you were quite prolific, really.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, considering I had so little time to compose, yes. But see, I had always composed. I mean, composing for me was not a special thing that I had to pull out and use. I started out as a composer.
- Crawford: Yes, of course. When you were teaching, you didn't teach composing.
- Nin-Culmell: No, I was never asked to, because there were more cloners available.
- Crawford: You were discouraged, then?
- Nin-Culmell: No, I wasn't discouraged. I just wasn't asked.
- Crawford: You mentioned the music librarian Duckles
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. He was a sweetiepie. Very good. The one who was wonderful there was Harriet Nicewanger. She made out the labels for the books. What do you call that?
- Crawford: Cataloger? Was the collection good? Better than Williams?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. There's no comparison.
- Crawford: Who did you use when you were teaching theory?

- Nin-Culmell: Not Schenker. That's Roger Sessions. No, no. I used Piston.
- Crawford: And were the students good quality, good level?
- Nin-Culmell: I--oh, yes. I had good students.
- Crawford: You kept in touch with them?
- Nin-Culmell: I have, yes. I have a whole bunch. And they're very nice. They come to see me, with some exceptions.
- Crawford: We haven't talked about Joe Kerman.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, well, Joe Kerman was one of my appointees, which I regret very much--not because he's not a very capable, but he's a musicologist from here to the tips of his toes. [gestures] That doesn't say anything else.
- Crawford: What? What is he lacking?
- Nin-Culmell: He's lacking being a musician.
- Crawford: Is he a musician, in fact?
- Nin-Culmell: No. I don't think so. No, he's a musicologist. And worse than a musicologist, he's a music critic! I always say, when I'm not feeling well, "I don't wish this on anybody, not even a music critic!"
- Crawford: You know what Shaw said?
- Nin-Culmell: No, but I can imagine.
- Crawford: They asked him, "How can you be a music critic?" And he said, "In the land of the deaf, the one-eared man is king." [laughter] And he's my favorite music critic, anyway.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, well--. But at least he writes English well.
- Crawford: Were the critics kind to you?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. I never bothered to find out. They were kind to me when I was a performer, which was when it counted. As a composer I wasn't particularly moved one way or the other.
- Crawford: What about the critics here? What did you think?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I thought [Alfred] Frankenstein was a very bright man. I don't know how much of a music critic he was. I think that they have some dreadfully incompetent people now on the *Chronicle*.

- Crawford: Negative?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, incompetent.
- Crawford: You don't think they know?
- Nin-Culmell: No. And one of them is Octavia Roca.
- Crawford: He comes from dance, I think.
- Nin-Culmell: He comes from dance and he comes from Cuba. He has two strikes against him.
- Crawford: [laughing] Los Cubanos?
- Nin-Culmell: Los Cubanos.
- Crawford: Porque?
- Nin-Culmell: Porque no son muy musicos. Popular music, yes. But the point is that Roca doesn't know anything [else]. And it's a little bit hard to take.
- Crawford: Back to Berkeley. Did you take sabbaticals?
- Nin-Culmell: I took one sabbatical when my mother died. My mother died in '54, right? I think I took my first sabbatical, my first and only sabbatical, in '56 and stayed until '59. In fact, I almost didn't come back.
- Crawford: When you went to Spain.
- Nin-Culmell: To Spain.
- Crawford: To Barcelona. Why did you come back?
- Nin-Culmell: Because the offer of the job that I had in Bilbao paid me yearly what I was paid here monthly. That's why I came back.
- Crawford: Could you have lived on the salary?
- Nin-Culmell: I could have lived, but it would have been difficult.
- Crawford: What was the musical climate like there?
- Nin-Culmell: I think it was good. It was good, but it was essentially performance. I'm not talking about academics.
- Crawford: You would have been teaching piano?

- Nin-Culmell: No. I would have been conducting.
- Crawford: Orchestral work.
- Nin-Culmell: Which I like very much, but I didn't think I liked it that well to live on nothing.
- Crawford: How much conducting had you done?
- Nin-Culmell: I started in Williamstown, started an orchestra which was called the Berkshire Community Orchestra. It was at the time when I performed my piano concertos with Erich Kleiber, not the son--the father. And Erich Kleiber was conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. I remember going to him and saying, "Maestro, could I attend your rehearsals?" He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, I would like to learn how to conduct." He said, "Do you know how to read a score?" I said, "Yes" "Do you have an orchestra?" "Yes." "Conduct!" [laughs]. So I went and I learned an awful lot from him. He taught me how to rehearse and he was very nice to me.
- Crawford: Who else influenced you that way?
- Nin-Culmell: I can't really think of anyone else. No.
- Crawford: Which orchestra did he conduct in Cuba?
- Nin-Culmell: The Philadelphia.
- Crawford: That was a big trek.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, he was a big conductor.
- Crawford: But the audiences were big enough?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.
- Crawford: Wealthy enough to afford that. Who else went down there?
- Nin-Culmell: Let's see. Who followed him? Massimo Freccia, an Italian, and I used to call Minimo Freccia. I don't know what happened to him, but he was what I would have called the non-conductor.
- Crawford: The non-conductor. Lots of charm?
- Nin-Culmell: Lots of Italian hoopla, yes.
- Crawford: Tell me how your mother adapted when she came out here. She was here for several years.

- Nin-Culmell: Well, she adapted herself before I did. She was sent to school here as a child, you know--as a young woman from Cuba.
- Crawford: In Long Island, I knew. But when she came to California, I mean. Was it all right for her?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, she didn't like it.
- Crawford: She left cousins and family.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, no. She left--no, what she left was Williams, which was wonderful to her. My mother never went out shopping by herself. She was a very spry, very bright person and she made friends in Williamstown with all the people who took her out shopping. She liked that life very much. She came here and she knew no one and no one came to see her.
- Crawford: Sad. Was Anaïs here then, in Los Angeles?
- Nin-Culmell: No, Anaïs was always on her own. Anaïs was married, you know.
- Crawford: Yes, so there wasn't a great relationship there?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, Anaïs used to come on visits. But, I mean, no. The relationship wasn't that good. She came here the day my mother had a heart attack. Let's see--my mother died in '54. She came here in '54.
- Crawford: After she died, or to visit--?
- Nin-Culmell: No, no. She came the Sunday that my mother had the attack and my mother died on a Tuesday. She was living in Los Angeles at that time.
- Crawford: Los Angeles. What had prompted her move?
- Nin-Culmell: Her boyfriend.
- Crawford: Who was that?
- Nin-Culmell: Don't you know?
- Crawford: Miller?
- Nin-Culmell: No, after that. Rupert Pole.
- Crawford: Yes, that's right. And Thorvald?
- Nin-Culmell: No, Thorvald was living in Mexico at that time.
- Crawford: So you really took care of your mother?

- Nin-Culmell: All my life.
- Crawford: Your devotion to her was unerring.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, and hers to me.
- Crawford: How old was she when she died?
- Nin-Culmell: Let's see--eighty--. She died in 1954, she was born in 1871?
- Crawford: Long life.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes.
- Crawford: Well, what students have remained with you, close to you?
- Nin-Culmell: [sighs] That's awfully hard because there are so many. All of them have been very nice and very--I have students from Williams who still correspond and telephone me. I have students from Williams who later taught here.
- Crawford: Who came from Williams here that you remember?
- Nin-Culmell: Howard Hugo. Comparative lit. And at Williams, I still have Gibson, my first Quaker student. Very nice. We still telephone, write. I had a bunch of students--I really can't remember all the names.
- Crawford: You had some composers visit UC from time to time. Dallapiccola came. Were you involved with that?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, sure. Through Milhaud.
- Crawford: What did that do for the department?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, it didn't do very much. I mean, you know, as long as people were interested in Dallapiccola it was fine. The department didn't warm up to having composers from elsewhere--
- Crawford: Whose idea was that? Was it your idea?
- Nin-Culmell: It was Milhaud. Milhaud said, "My friend, Dallapiccola is going to come to--" and he wanted to know if I was interested in having him stay. Yes, of course. Sessions liked him very much, but Sessions was leaving. Sessions wasn't one to support the people he liked. I think he was a little bit jealous.
- Crawford: Yes, I would think that could be a little threatening.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, yes. I liked him. Very silent, very--I enjoyed his visit very much. I wish we could've had more like him. We didn't have that many.

- Crawford: What advice did you give your students?
- Nin-Culmell: Be yourself. No matter whom you're studying with, don't let yourself be cloned. I always felt that very strongly. That was Falla's advice to me and that became my philosophy as far as teaching was concerned. The object of teaching is not to impress upon others your way of doing things, but you impress upon others the importance of them finding out their own solutions.
- Crawford: What positive voices have come out of the department along those lines?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't see very many. Andrew had a hell of a time surviving. By surviving I mean being Sessions' star pupil here. He had some blows with Sessions. And Sessions complained about him not being a real student, that is to say. My reaction was purely inside, and I was saying to myself, "Good friend, or good friend. I hope he keeps it up." Perhaps he wouldn't admit it, but Sessions felt that somehow Andrew had slipped beyond his influence.
- Crawford: What was the feeling about women composers?
- Nin-Culmell: If they were good, they were good. If they were bad, they were bad. [laughter] I don't think we really gave it too much thought. We had some very good students.
- Crawford: Who stands out? Pauline Oliveros has made her living as a composer--
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. But, you know, I'm not so sure that a place like the University of California would have been the ideal place for a woman to study composition. I had loads of women composers who were colleagues of mine at the conservatory. My best and oldest friend was--if I can get the name straight--Elsa Barraine, who was the first woman Prix de Rome. It was never a question of whether she was a woman composer. It was a question of how good she was.
- Crawford: She was in Europe with you?
- Nin-Culmell: In Paris, yes. Sure.
- Crawford: But there you don't study composing at a university?
- Nin-Culmell: Of course not. That's the wrong place. You study composition at a conservatory. That's where the Prix de Rome is. The Prix de Rome is what Debussy had, what Ravel had, what all the French composers have had. Elsa was the first woman, and she didn't get it because she was a woman. She got it because she was the damn best composer that they had produced that year. [laughter] That's the important thing. I was very fond of her.
- Crawford: And you kept in touch?

- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Until she died.
- Crawford: Whom else did you keep in touch with?
- Nin-Culmell: [sighs] Oh, a lot of people. Messiaen, who was a pupil of Dukas. He was strange, but his wife humanized him. I told you the story about his wanting the manuscript back of his *Hommage* to Dukas.
- Crawford: We talked about Messiaen a bit, yes, and your feelings about his music.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Well, you know, the principal thing about your colleagues when you're young is that you have definite impressions that they give to you. You don't know how far they're going to go. There was no question in my mind that Messiaen was gifted. How far those gifts were going to take him, I didn't know. And I still don't know.
- Crawford: His work is being performed more, I think.
- Nin-Culmell: I know. Because of a lack of composers in France.
- Crawford: We will do the American premiere of *St. Francis of Assisi* this fall. Five hours.
- Nin-Culmell: Five hours? [phew] For a man who didn't like opera? [laughter]
- Crawford: I want to talk about your work. What would you say about your body of work if someone said to you to describe it?
- Nin-Culmell: I try not to think about it. [laughter]
- Crawford: Mr. Nin-Culmell is making a gesture indicating "I can't deal with that," or "I don't deal with that."
- Nin-Culmell: No, I will deal with that. But, you know, I've never had an agenda, if that's what you're looking for. I've always loved the opera as a form. I determined I was going to write an opera on the subject I wrote all my life because it's a book that I read when I was fifteen years old. It's an extraordinary book. It's called *La Celestina*. And I've written two ballets, one of them performed and the other one never performed. The opera was not yet to be performed. I've done a lot of work in Spanish folklore.
- Nin-Culmell: I've tried to follow the indications of Falla. This is not cloning. These indications of Falla to me are as to my way of solving problems, so I've tried to face to larger forms. I think I told you I wrote a piano sonata, a piano

quintet, piano concerto. I've written orchestral music, I've written guitar music. I've written more songs than I care to think about.

- Crawford: What comes most naturally to you? What form, if you could say?
- Nin-Culmell: I really don't know.
- Crawford: Which of your works now stand up best for you?
- Nin-Culmell: None.
- Crawford: None? You don't accept any of them as your children?
- Nin-Culmell: I hope I can write something else. Oh, they're my children. Of course they're my children, sure.
- Crawford: But what's your feeling about them? If I said to you, "We have fifteen minutes. I want to focus on the work that you want to talk about."
- Nin-Culmell: And I would say to you, "You haven't given me enough time."
- Crawford: Well, then. We have fifteen hours.
- Nin-Culmell: Ah! Then I just saw all my works! [laughter] No--I just don't quite understand the question because there are certain things that I've written with great--how could I say that--internal combustion.
- Crawford: Yes, good.
- Nin-Culmell: Others I've written for other reasons, which are just as good.
- Crawford: Well, talk about the internal combustion.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I think the *Celestina* is certainly one, my opera. I think that both of my ballets were works of internal combustion. My songs--particularly the songs that are inspired of folk music--because my big thing with folk music is its transformation, not my harmonizing them in a pleasing way so that people can sing them and say, "Oh, that song, yes." Am I making sense?
- Crawford: Explain that a little bit more.
- Nin-Culmell: For me folk elements are much more important than folk songs. I'm terribly interested in the folk elements and will do practically anything to hold onto them, but also to transform them. But not to harmonize them in a pleasing fashion so that they will become part of the Spanish repertoire, which my father did. And he did it very well. So therefore, only more reason for my not doing it.

- Crawford: You wanted to take those elements to another level.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. In other words, I wanted them to be part of myself, not nice harmonizations that everyone would--
- Crawford: Sound pretty.
- Nin-Culmell: Exactly.
- Crawford: So you're proud of those. You like those?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. And I like the piano pieces based on folk elements even more because in those, sometimes the elements are hard to discover. But the songs, of course, are more readily apparent as to where they come from. The piano pieces no, because I don't have to sing them anymore. I've written some orchestral music. I like the *Variations for Orchestra*, not because they're variations and because they're supposed to be smart-ass music. There, again, the variation from me was the thing. In other words, more important than harmonizing a folk tune was my making some variations that you couldn't tell where they came from.
- Crawford: Where did they come from?
- Nin-Culmell: My living with them.
- Crawford: Did you hear something that was the genesis of the idea?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know.
- Crawford: Well, let's talk about the ballets.
- Nin-Culmell: Those were strong pieces, at least for me. Both of them were commissions, curiously enough, which only goes to show that all commissions are not bad. One was a commission by a famous dancer. When I first went back to Spain in 1956--my mother died in '54, so I guess I went in '56--he just knocked me for a loop as far as dancing was concerned. And he asked me if I would write something for him and I said, "Sure. Give me a subject." And he said, "Well, I'll give you the most difficult subject that no composer has wanted to touch." I said, "Well, composers can be very stupid." So naturally I said I would do it. And that was Don Juan, *El burlador de Sevilla* in the old Spanish title. That was a hard piece because, you know, Don Juan, what his life was. But he was a very good dancer and he didn't like the idea that there were any women in the ballet. And I said, "You're asking me to write about Don Juan and there are no women?" You know, come on! Please! Well, the principal subject has to be Don Juan. I agreed, but Don Juan is only Don Juan because of the women in his life.

- Crawford: The catalog aria.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, exactly. And so he never did it. I still feel it's the best ballet I wrote.
- Crawford: You wrote it for him, for his company?
- Nin-Culmell: I wrote it for him and it lasted a half hour, which is longer than most ballets, I suppose, and he didn't like it. So it was never done. It's been performed as a concert piece, but not as a ballet.
- Crawford: Who performed it as a concert piece?
- Nin-Culmell: Krips. [San Francisco Symphony]
- Crawford: Was Krips generally supportive?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, to a degree. As long as the right people pinched him?.
- Crawford: Who were they?
- Nin-Culmell: Mrs. Agnes Albert--.
- Crawford: Oh, Agnes Albert, of course. [laughter] She liked the piece, so she--did she push it for you?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know if she liked the piece. I've never known what Agnes likes or dislikes. She commissioned also a dedication mass for the new cathedral in San Francisco, dedicated to her mother.
- Crawford: I didn't know that she commissioned that.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. It was dedicated to her mother. I never knew whether she liked it or not. But then, the other ballet was commissioned by the San Francisco Ballet, called *Le Reve de Cyrano*. The Dream of Cyrano. That was quite interesting, at least for me.
- Crawford: When was that and who brought that about? Smuin?
- Nin-Culmell: [sighs] I can't remember. No, it was Smuin's sidekick, and that was one of the problems, that Smuin's ballet that he commissioned didn't have the success that mine did. That was the problem. He was supposed to have done it the following year, but he soon didn't like it and so it wasn't.
- Crawford: What a shame. But it was well received. How much music?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, a half hour.
- Crawford: How did you approach it?

- Nin-Culmell: Gingerly. [laughter]
- Crawford: Well, that's a wonderful subject for a ballet.
- Nin-Culmell: It's a terrific subject. I loved it. And particularly, I liked the idea that Cyrano has this dream about being Cyrano. No, no, no--it was a good subject.
- Crawford: Tell me how you wrote it. What was the process?
- Nin-Culmell: Quick. It had to be done for the season, but it was done very quickly, and scored very quickly. I think it's a good work.
- Crawford: How did you score it? Do you work at the piano?
- Nin-Culmell: At the piano, but not at the keyboard. I work standing up. You know where the piano comes around? That's where I work.
- Crawford: The place where the divas lean.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. [laughter] Sometimes I can go and consult the keyboard.
- Crawford: You were writing a full orchestral score?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. I've always liked writing for orchestra.
- Crawford: So you were standing as you're sitting today, with music paper. So that to you is not a daunting thing? You put that on the piano and you go.
- Nin-Culmell: I go.
- Crawford: Not like Schubert walking in the woods, or Mozart composing while traveling--
- Nin-Culmell: No walking in the woods, no. No. I go walking right here. Close enough to the keyboard to try something out if you have your doubts. I shouldn't quote this because I don't really feel that way, but Milhaud once told me that Stravinsky was once asked if he had any doubts. He said, "Doubts? I don't have any doubts. I only have certitudes!" Well, I can't honestly say that, but I think it's sort of funny because I don't see how you can have certitude about something that isn't even born. I mean, it's being born.
- Crawford: I read somewhere that Stravinsky said every time he sat down to compose he was terrified.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, that probably is closer to the truth. But he said in this instance, when he was asked if he had any doubts, "No, I have no doubts. I have only certitudes!" That sounds good.

- Crawford: It seems that you're very secure as a composer.
- Nin-Culmell: I guess so.
- Crawford: When you finish a score, you give it to the performers. Then what happens?
- Nin-Culmell: Then I pray! [laughter] Then I start praying. No, you never know what's going to come out. The first rehearsal [of the ballet] was interesting. I must say that I thought it came out pretty well.
- Crawford: Who conducted?
- Nin-Culmell: Jean-Louis LeRoux.
- Crawford: Oh, good. You had a good man.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. A very good man. And very nice, and very patient. In fact, he was the one who got me the commission. I wanted to do something on a French theme, and that's when he said, "Well, what about *Cyrano*." And I said, "Well, what about *Cyrano*." He said, "Well, the *Reve of Cyrano*." I said, "Oh, sure." I bought that hook, line, and sinker.
- Crawford: How much was the score revised--how much input do you have [during rehearsal]?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, I'm not that difficult, and I always feel that if the orchestration isn't right, it's my fault, not the fault of the oboe.
- Crawford: The performances pleased you?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, I think I was tickled. It was my second longest--well, my third longest work, and it went well. It was well received. The audience--[laughter] I don't know if I should say this, but I was taken out for the usual bows along with the electrician, the costume-maker,
- Crawford: The choreographer?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, the choreographer, that was okay. But I mean, come on--the electrician?
- Crawford: The lighting designer.
- Nin-Culmell: The lighting designer. And I felt, oh, all right, have it your way.
- Crawford: Good audience reaction?
- Nin-Culmell: I think it had a good reaction. That's why we were so surprised when it wasn't done the following year.

- Crawford: And why wasn't it?
- Nin-Culmell: I assume that it was too successful.
- Crawford: It was never done again?
- Nin-Culmell: No.
- Crawford: When was that?
- Nin-Culmell: I was living in Hillcrest. I really can't remember. I bought Hillcrest when a friend of my mother's left me a little present in her will and I was told that the best thing I could do with that was to put it down as a down payment for a house, because I owned this one already. I lived here then I moved to the city. Then in the city I received this check and so I bought this house on Hillcrest. I can't remember. And then after that I sold that house, which was the smartest thing I've ever done, and moved back here, because this is a house I can handle. I couldn't have handled the other house.
- Crawford: Where did you live in the city?
- Nin-Culmell: On Francisco. An apartment on the third floor. It was nice. I used to hear the fog horns.
- Crawford: Yes. [laughter] A lot of fog. Well, let's talk about the Mass.
- Nin-Culmell: Well now, the Mass is a sort of mess. And I'm not making a play on words because *messe* is Mass in French. But it was just at the time they were changing from Latin to the vernacular. The Archbishop McGuckin and I saw eye-to-eye on that. He wanted it in Latin. But the young guard, the organist of the cathedral, was not very good--in fact the performance was almost ruined by the fact he came in wrong so many times it wasn't funny. So I was getting these translations as they were being turned out because, you know, they had a hell of a time getting translations past committees and theological this and that. It was hell on wheels because I would work and then suddenly there would be a phone call from the Father--I hope he's in heaven, but--saying, "Oh, we've had to change the text again." But, you know, having your text change while you're working at it, it wasn't my idea of heaven at all.
- Crawford: They weren't very sensitive to musical quality?
- Nin-Culmell: They didn't give--excuse me--shit about the music. I mean, for them, the big thing was that they were reverting to the vernacular. That was the party line, and that was it. And the poor archbishop, who didn't agree with it at all, but agreed with me, said, "I'd much rather it be in Latin."
- Crawford: What's your feeling about it now?

- Nin-Culmell: I want to rewrite it. And I will rewrite it someday, in Latin.
- Crawford: Yes. Was it produced again?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. It was just done that one time and never done again for a very good reason. It didn't make any sense. I mean, there were so many things out of kilter.
- Crawford: Because of this scramble to revise it?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, because of the changes in the text. They still have changed it since. So I would have to rechange it again. Agnes wasn't pleased with it.
- Crawford: What was her part, Agnes Albert?
- Nin-Culmell: She had commissioned it. She chose me because I had written a mass in Latin for chorus and brass. I thought that was really what I wanted to do for the mass at the new cathedral. But that was a problem with regard to the language. They wanted it for organ and not brass. I loved the idea of a mass in Latin with a brass ensemble but that didn't work. And she didn't like it. She never thanked me for it. It wasn't very happy.
- Crawford: Was she in touch with you while you worked on it?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, sort of, yes. But not very much in touch.
- Crawford: So not a nice experience, all in all.
- Nin-Culmell: No. It should have been a good experience because all the ingredients were there. I was eager to do something. But I got so many negative reactions.
- Crawford: You were glad to let it go?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. And particularly as the poor archbishop wasn't able to control his own forces. What made it worse was that Heyburn, who played the organ, got mixed up on more than one occasion. The chorus was sung by the UC Chorus and they did a very good job, but how could they do a good job with an organist who gets lost. It was very maddening. Then Mrs. Agnes Albert didn't like the piece--
- Crawford: Rewrite it, the way you wanted to in Latin.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I will someday. I have to think about it. If I can write music again.
- Crawford: Perhaps you can find someone to help you with it. Well, let's talk about the opera because that's a big project.

- Nin-Culmell: Yes, that's a biggy. Yes.
- Crawford: You said you read *La Celestina* as a child--
- Nin-Culmell: I read it when I was fifteen years old, and maybe I shouldn't have. It's a very racy book, as you probably know.
- Crawford: What is the story?
- Nin-Culmell: The story is the story of a she-pimp and her bad influence on two young lovers who are impatient. It's as simple as that. You know what a she-pimp is?
- Crawford: A nymph?
- Nin-Culmell: The same as a male pimp, except it's a she-pimp. [laughter] A she-pimp is a go-between.
- I hope you didn't mind my saying this about the Griller quartet, but it was a big problem with the Grillers was that they wanted to be *the* string quartet in residence. I wanted the principle of the string quartet in residence being approved by the university. Do you get the difference?
- Crawford: Definitely. You wanted variety.
- Nin-Culmell: In other words--variety, and different people. I mean, the Grillers were good in certain things and they were terrible in others.
- Crawford: Repertoire, you mean?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. They weren't good at contemporary repertoire. They were good at Mozart, and Haydn, and all that. It was one thing that Griller never understood, that my being for a quartet in residence was not being against the Grillers. It was just the principle.
- Crawford: I think you made that clear before, but we'll put this part in.
- Nin-Culmell: I just wanted to make sure, because I would hate to leave that in the air. Boyden, of course, maintained that I had misrepresented the Grillers and I had given them a bad short change and all that. He never understood the fact that I was for the principle of the string quartet attached to the university, but not the Griller string quartet, that's all.
- Crawford: We're clear about that.
- Nin-Culmell: I just wanted to make that clear, that I felt the Grillers were really important, because I don't want to do them any harm, but at the same time, I don't want

them to get away with this idea that I oppose them as a quartet. I oppose them as the quartet.

Crawford: Right. No, I think you made that clear.

Nin-Culmell: It's something I couldn't get over to Sidney. He was very peculiar. Boyden was too, and when he was dying, I went to see him, saying to myself, "Well, maybe he has something to say to me." I went to see him, and he didn't say any word about our misunderstanding. He could have said, "Look, I'm sorry we didn't get along," and, after all--and I'm afraid that the Grillers were responsible for that.

Crawford: That's too bad.

Nin-Culmell: I called Sidney after that and I got him on the phone. I said, "Sidney, this is Joaquin." He said, "Yes."

Crawford: So it was just a grievance that never got resolved.

Nin-Culmell: A grievance of his own making that he never was able to overcome. And he blamed me for them not staying at UC. And he blames me.

Crawford: Why were they let go though, then, if everyone else approved?

Nin-Culmell: Well, they were let go when I wasn't chairman. Boyden was chairman and Boyden was horrified when they [were let go]. Sidney tried to get tenure for himself, but not for the others. So he spoke badly of Jack O'Brien and Phillip--I can't remember the name. It was as if they were to blame and they weren't to blame at all. It was very unfortunate and he did nothing to sort of smooth things over.

Crawford: I didn't ask you about this, but there was quite a fiery political climate at the time of the loyalty oath. Did it have anything to do with you? How did you react to that?

Nin-Culmell: I reacted very simply. I had signed a loyalty oath at Williams.

Crawford: Just a matter of course.

Nin-Culmell: Exactly. And was I a citizen already? I can't remember. I was always on the verge of swearing something.

Crawford: There were a few faculty in the music department who gave salary to those who had been let go, those who refused to sign.

Nin-Culmell: I question that.

- Crawford: It wasn't a large sum, but it was something.
- Nin-Culmell: For how long?
- Crawford: You don't think it was very significant?
- Nin-Culmell: No, I think this is posturing. I'm sorry.
- Crawford: That's your right to say.
- Nin-Culmell: I was not worthy of that because coming from Williams, having just sworn at Williams, what was I going to do--? If you become a citizen, you are spared a whole bunch of things.
- But I don't think that anyone in the department behaved badly. I think sometimes they didn't bother to get the record straight, and I always had to sort of defend myself, which I think is a hell of a way to deal with your colleagues, but--.
- Crawford: You would think university, you wouldn't have to do that.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, well, what bothered me more, I think, was the dean--not the dean, but who was over the dean? Provost, I guess it was, who was very nice to me, and then who just wrote me a letter about my being an ex-chairman without any explanation, which I didn't think was right.
- Crawford: I thought there was a set term after Albert Elkus' chairmanship.
- Nin-Culmell: No. The impression I got was that I had mishandled the Grillers and that was the reason. Considering that, you know, somebody else succeeded me who was on the Griller side. It doesn't make any difference now.
- Crawford: Is it Celestina.
- Nin-Culmell: Thelestina.
- Crawford: I was saying Celestina because I learned Spanish in South America, where they speak with not as beautiful an accent as yours.
- Nin-Culmell: Sure.
- Crawford: So, she-pimp and lovers? Tell the story briefly.
- Nin-Culmell: Let's see if I can get this straight. He meets Milibea. And what had never been explained, and I'm sure there must have been theses and things written about this, is that when he was of noble family and she was of noble family, why he couldn't have proceeded normally, asking her hand in marriage, but he

doesn't. Someone tells him that they know an old hag who is very wise in the ways of getting young women in trouble. So that's what he did. That's really the whole story.

Crawford: Was there a commission for the work?

Nin-Culmell: No. I just launched it and I wrote my own text.

Crawford: That's difficult. You knew the story. Did that make it easier?

Nin-Culmell: No, I used the text, had some very good translations, and also some very good editions. I felt somehow that I wanted to do that, and no, there are no musical implications. I just did it.

Crawford: And how long a process was that?

Nin-Culmell: Long.

Crawford: Long. It's a full-length opera?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. [phew]

Crawford: How long did it take you and what were the years?

Nin-Culmell: I'm sorry. I'm trying to think. I started in Barcelona in '56. I went after my mother died and I took that sabbatical. I started then because there was a *Celestina* by [Filipe] Pedrell that I was very intent on studying, which I did. I don't know whether this is publishable or not, but I thought it was a pretty awful work. The professor of Albeniz, Granados, and Falla.

Crawford: Not a good work?

Nin-Culmell: Well, he must have been a very good teacher, but I don't think the work is good.

Crawford: Who else treated the subject of *Celestina*?

Nin-Culmell: Puccini had *la Celestina* as a possibility. And Verdi.

Crawford: Similar to *Azucena* in *Trovatore*, possibly?

Nin-Culmell: No. No, but they both were [thinking of it], and if Verdi had done it, I wouldn't have had the same reaction.

Crawford: How did you know about this?

- Nin-Culmell: In an article that was written about Verdi by somebody, some American--I can't remember who it was. It was on the list of works he wanted to do. And Puccini also. That would have been something else, again.
- Crawford: Very theatrical.
- Nin-Culmell: Verdi for me is still the greatest opera composer of the nineteenth century.
- Crawford: What difficulties did you encounter?
- Nin-Culmell: What difficulties didn't I encounter?
- Crawford: Tell me about the process of writing it.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I must say that I started by writing some arias first. I just started and I must say that as I proceeded, then the thing became clearer to me. You know, I didn't have too many difficulties. I had terrible difficulties, yes, with the text, which of course was mine and his.
- Crawford: Which language did you write in?
- Nin-Culmell: Spanish.
- Crawford: It must have made it easier that you were setting your own text.
- Nin-Culmell: I wish I could remember the changes I made. I know I made some. It's very curious. I know there must be a lot of traces in my work, as to what I did. I tried to be as literal as I could.
- Crawford: When you were working on this, was it pretty much dominating your time?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.
- Crawford: What hours do you work?
- Nin-Culmell: Morning. I was home at some friend's house in Barcelona. I was the man who came to dinner. I went to Barcelona and received a phone call from a wonderful family called Roses, from the grandmother. She said, "Both my husband and I were great friends of your parents. I will not accept your staying in Barcelona at a hotel. I will have my chauffeur pick you up and your suitcase this evening and you come and stay with me." So I went to her house and stayed three years. The man who came to dinner. [laughter]
- She was a poet. She encouraged me very much. I encouraged her. I used to write some parts of the opera, and then she would come down, and I would play it for her. Then I would go up to her room and then she would read me her poetry. And there went three years.

- Crawford: And Berkeley said this was all right?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I think--I'm going to be nasty now. I think Boyden was hoping I would resign. So, since I was asking for a leave of absence without salary--I mean my sabbatical was over--I said, "Could I stay another year?" "Oh, yes. Of course." No salary, of course. And then still another year. Maybe I'm being malicious, but I think that he hoped that he would get rid of me without drama.
- But just at the end of that my very good friend, who since has died, who was the conductor of the symphony in Barcelona, said to me, "You know, if you really want to stay, I can get you the job of conductor of the Bilbao Symphony. They're looking for someone and I would be very pleased to have you." I must say I was very tempted. So I said, "Yes, fine. What are they paying?" That's when I learned that they would be paying me for the year what I was earning a month at UC. And I said to myself, "This is ridiculous." And so I came back.
- Crawford: But you took this time to write your big opus.
- Nin-Culmell: Three years. I didn't finish it in three years, but yes, I was able to. Then I came back and started again. By that time it was easy. Then things the university did didn't bother me anymore because I had this project going.
- Crawford: How much more did you work on it?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, a considerable amount.
- Crawford: And it's published?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes.
- Crawford: How long did it take you, the whole work?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, My mother died in 1954 . I would off-hand say three to four years, maybe five.
- Crawford: You've never heard it?
- Nin-Culmell: No. I heard it with all the young people who tried out. They all had to sing parts of it for the performance in Madrid. That's why I went in January. So that was good. I heard it then. I thought it was a pretty damn good work.
- Crawford: You heard an orchestra play it, or did they have a piano run-through?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. It was just piano.

- Crawford: How did that come about?
- Nin-Culmell: This was a young group that were very disappointed because they could never get a contemporary opera done in Madrid. So they said, "Well, we're going to do it ourselves." So they picked mine up. They had a government grant and a grant from the Spanish Society of Authors. That's what we're proceeding on now. I think it's going to be done. We don't know whether it will be done in Granada first, in the summer, and then in Madrid.
- Crawford: Good. Something really to look forward to.
- Nin-Culmell: We'll see. We'll see.
- Crawford: When you wrote the opera, you said you picked out arias right at first?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, I picked out obvious things that I thought I wanted to do.
- Crawford: For instance, Celestina. What did you conceive musically for her?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, she had to be a pretty nasty person, and pretty enticing. I really can't remember now how I began that. I picked out some pretty obvious moments where I felt I knew her, and knew what she had to do. It's awfully hard to talk about it now because it's all gone.
- Crawford: What was the biggest problem that presented itself while you were writing it?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know. I had a lot of choruses.
- Crawford: When you thought about, for instance, the character of Celestina, did you say contralto? Did the vocal range seem obvious to you?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. She was going to be the mezzo/contralto. Milibea and Calixto were going to be the two stupid lovers, the way lovers always are. Young lovers who should have seen what was going to happen, but didn't.
- Crawford: Lyrics?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, if you wish. And that way, that problem was solved.
- Crawford: It's quite a delightful situation in some ways.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Whereas Celestina really knows exactly how to handle it. Wise in the way of this world.
- Crawford: And not too scrupulous?
- Nin-Culmell: No. Why should she be? She's getting paid.

- Crawford: Say you get a call from this company, what do you do?
- Nin-Culmell: Decide whether I'm going or not.
- Crawford: Oh, of course you're going!
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know. I'm not so convinced about that. I'm really not.
- Crawford: Too difficult a trip?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, the idea of my sitting in a chair and listening to music, and I can't see anything on stage. For me an opera is a theater work. It's a visual thing.
- Crawford: You can't see colors and get an idea of staging?
- Nin-Culmell: No.
- Crawford: But of course the story is in the voice.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Yes. I think it's an opera. I really do. I'm not being facetious or pretentious. I do think that *La Celestina* is an opera.
- Crawford: But my point is I think we make much too much of staging and visuals, because opera isn't about that.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, it is about that, and other things.
- Crawford: For instance, love. If you want to express love, I think of *Desdemona*, or I think of *Othello's* aria, and I don't really care what *Othello* looks like.
- Nin-Culmell: Ah, but you're lucky. I do.
- Crawford: If they called you tomorrow and said, "All right, in eight weeks, this work will be on the stage." Would you change it?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. I wouldn't change it. In the first place, I couldn't because I can't see. Second place, no. Whatever it is, that's what it is. I don't think I would change it. That's what worries me a little bit about going to the theater. If I wanted to change it, I couldn't.
- Crawford: There'd be no way that you could work with it with a musician, with another composer? To say I want less here, and more here?
- Nin-Culmell: No. It's got to stand where it stands. And maybe it's just as well. Apparently, they are all very impressed with the work, which is more than I can say, because I haven't heard it.
- Crawford: What's the name of the company?

- Nin-Culmell: I don't remember. I really don't know.
- Crawford: But what they will do is to hire a theater, engage a theater?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. All of this has gone through a lot of changes, but now the whole project is in the hands of the minister of culture, what we'll call the secretary of culture. He's committed himself. He can't change the order of things. Anyhow, I don't know exactly how to explain this. It's in his hands now. The cost is in the hands of the society that I belong to because I changed my membership from [SASEN?] to the Spanish society. These societies have a lot of money so there's no problem about financing. The other thing is that the queen and the king himself have taken an interest. When he made me an honorary Spanish citizen. They want to sponsor it themselves.
- Crawford: The king?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes.
- Crawford: That's promising.
- Nin-Culmell: So it looks as if it's in good hands. The people who are still running the show are the people who wanted to do the opera in the first place. They're the ones who keep saying it's such a magnificent work, and all these exaggerated phrases, and all that, which they must have a feeling for because they've been studying the work for over a year now.
- Crawford: They got it from your publisher?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. That was my luck, to be published. To have an opera published today. [laughter]
- Crawford: Your publisher took it because of everything he's done of yours.
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know why he took it. I think he took it because of everything else he's done.
- Crawford: Yes. And he likes your work, obviously.
- Nin-Culmell: I presume so, yes.
- Crawford: Well, we must write the king!
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Of course.
- Crawford: I'm going to let you go today, because I think our time is up and you're dozing.

Nin-Culmell: I'm a little--I'm not dozing, but I'm a little bit--.

Crawford: Are you a little under the weather.

Nin-Culmell: Yes, I haven't been feeling very well.

Crawford: I'm sorry. I hope I haven't worn you out.

Nin-Culmell: No, no, no. You haven't worn me out. It's just that I'm not very--

Crawford: A good nap in the sunshine.

Nin-Culmell: Oh, a good nap anywhere.

Crawford: Well, I hope the opera is performed, and I hope we're both there.

Nin-Culmell: Well, if I'm there, you'll see me.

Crawford: [laughs] Thank you.

- V WORKS, COLLECTIONS, AND LEGACIES
 Songs of Mystical Poets and Other Works
 Remembering Henry Miller, Rupert Pole and Hugo Guiler
 Anaïs Nin Collections at the Dominican Priory and USF's Gleeson Library
 Anaïs and Psychotherapy
 The Anaïs Nin Estate and Legacy

- Crawford: You pronounce the name of your opera, Thelestina--the Castillian accent. I've been listening to a young Spaniard singing operatic arias. His name is Giacomo Aragall.
- Nin-Culmell: Aragall, oh, yes. Of course. I know him. Jaime.
- Crawford: Jaime. That pronunciation that he gives to the Italian is something very different.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, yes.
- Crawford: Beautiful. Well, let's talk about some of the work that we didn't talk about. The song cycles--
- Nin-Culmell: [laughter] Lots of them.
- Crawford: Lots of them.
- Nin-Culmell: Could I just try to rescue something from the past which I know don't exist anymore--but I did write, in Paris, before '38, a series of songs in Castilian, in Spanish, based on mystical poets. They were performed. I accompanied them and at that time I thought they were pretty damn good. But later on I realized they were--pretty fluff. They weren't as good as I thought they were. They sort of disappeared and I don't quite remember if I destroyed them, if I burned them, or if they just disappeared. More likely, they just disappeared, as so many things did when one changes from living in Paris, to living in New York, to living in Massachusetts, to living in California.
- Crawford: They were not published?
- Nin-Culmell: They were not published, no. But they were performed.
- Crawford: Could you find the music?
- Nin-Culmell: I doubt it. I wouldn't know where to begin to look.
- Crawford: If you tried now to rewrite them, which would be an interesting exercise--no? Not there?

- Nin-Culmell: I couldn't even remember the texts. But it was my mystical period. I was very fascinated by the Spanish mystical writers, poets, and that was the reason why. [laughing] I'm laughing to myself because I should remember what I do! They were sung by a French singer who was the in-law, I think, of a very good French pianist who performed my piano music very well. Her name was Peneau. She sang them, but she had an awful accent in French so that my mystical poems went out the window. Maybe that's why I destroyed them. I don't know. It's hard--I shouldn't blame her. I don't think they were very good songs. They were wonderful texts.
- Crawford: Wonderful texts. Who did you say wrote them?
- Nin-Culmell: I can't remember. You know, Spanish mystical poets in those days were a dime a dozen.
- Crawford: Which interpreters of the songs did you like best?
- Nin-Culmell: I liked all the good ones! Teresa Berganza and Victoria de los Angeles sang my father's work—never mine, and I'm wondering why Victoria de los Angeles didn't, as she was so nice to me .
- Crawford: Alicia de Larrocha has been such a good friend, hasn't she?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. I call her the saint of the saints. She phones me every other day.
- Crawford: You knew Lorca well—did you ever work with Lorca?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, I knew him well. No, I never worked with him. After his death, I did work with his poetry after his death. I did all those songs that I called the Barraca songs, the name he used to give to that theater group that he toured with all over Spain. He was extraordinary. I knew him just before he was killed by the army. As an avant-garde poet during the Spanish Civil War, he was thought to be subversive. That is why he was killed. A great poet.
- Crawford: What about Jorge Manrique?
- Nin-Culmell: I never had the pleasure of meeting him. I set two poems of Jorge Manrique for string quartet and soprano. And those still exist. Those were published. Everything that gets published by a publisher still exists.
- Crawford: What about the performance of those?
- Nin-Culmell: They weren't performed as much. You know, songs for voice and string quartets are not apt to be performed. Let me backtrack a little bit. At the conservatory, you had your competition, or your exam twice a year. In that two-year period, you were allowed to write anything you damn please, but

you had to write a song, what they called a melodia. Those were two of the melodias that I wrote and which I worked over with Falla afterwards.

Crawford: He approved of those?

Nin-Culmell: Well, after I made some changes. [laughs] Yes. He just wanted me to be sure I just got the number of syllables right. That I should respect the work, the accents, that I should respect the meaning of the text. There are a lot of things that young composers don't always think about. You know, think about when you write a song, write a melody. You don't think about the poem.

Crawford: What did you write for Julia Hanes Hurley? *Celebration for Julia*. Was she a patroness?

Nin-Culmell: Oh! Those were [laughing]--I don't know. I do know that I wrote some American folk songs--I mean Stephen Foster songs--in honor of my Uncle Gilbert Chase, the father of Gilbert Chase, my cousin.

Crawford: What do you mean you wrote some Steven Foster songs? You rearranged them?

Nin-Culmell: I rearranged them. I have those someplace, but God knows where.

Crawford: You are such a gringo!

Nin-Culmell: I know. Unbeknownst to myself. [laughs]

Crawford: That's probably as close to the American folk idiom as you ever got.

Nin-Culmell: Well, I thought it was a kind of a lark. In the first place, she was an American singer--I don't think that was her name. That may have been the name of the person we gave the concert for. She had been a student of Emilio De Grogosa. Does that name mean anything to you? He was a famous baritone at the Met

Crawford: You also set one of your sister's poems to music--

Nin-Culmell: Oh, much later. She had always wanted me to write some music for her poems. After her death, I don't know what took me, but yes, I did.

Crawford: I'd like to talk about your relationship with Anaïs in later life. You wrote the prefaces to the diaries?

Nin-Culmell: Yes, that was after her death. That was at the request of--I can't remember who it was, but someone asked me. I was a little bit reluctant, but nevertheless, I did it.

Crawford: You write very well, as you speak.

- Nin-Culmell: Well, I wish I could see the same.
- Crawford: You called her, in one of the prefaces I read, a “steel hummingbird.”
- Nin-Culmell: That’s right. She was indestructible, but she was very delicate. I don’t know if a steel hummingbird fits the picture, but that was the image I had of Anaïs.
- Crawford: Why did it take her diaries so long to be published?
- Nin-Culmell: Ah! Because her novels--she wrote novels before. Her first book was that book on Lawrence, right, which she published at her expense, in Paris. I think it was only when she left Paris and came to New York and they found a very pushy agent who pushed for the diaries. Now the trouble with that was that sometimes they pushed by asking Anaïs, “Couldn’t you emphasize this more, or emphasize that more, or--.” In other words, it stopped being a diary, an account of a certain time about a certain something, and became more memoirs.
- Crawford: Who was that?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I shouldn’t really say the name.
- Crawford: So the published diaries were quite edited?
- Nin-Culmell: Very edited. So edited, in fact, that sometimes we--and by the way, my nephew reminded me that both my brother and I used to tease Anaïs by saying, “Oh, you know Anaïs, your best novel is your diary.” She didn’t disagree with it, but that wasn’t exactly literary, either. There was always the bias. It was the truth but she had a fabulous imagination, and was a very gifted writer. After all, gifted writers are supposed to write, and whether they invent things or not, that’s nobody’s damn business.
- Crawford: She wrote in one of the diaries that you were the model for the men in her life. You were the ideal man, because you were so kind.
- Nin-Culmell: [pew] Well, I question that because--I was so kind?
- Crawford: She thought you were kind and gentle--
- Nin-Culmell: Oh well, because I always made up and always said I was sorry. You know a little boy of three or six who pulls your hair and tells you he’s sorry.
- Crawford: You always say three to six, as if that was the last period you were with her.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, that’s the period when we arrived in Barcelona, in 1914. I was born in 1908, so--what would that make me? Six.

- Crawford: But then in the years after you were together as well in New York, in Paris?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh yes, of course. But she was in charge--not so much in Barcelona because then we were living with the grandparents and we had the grandparents around. But in New York, for instance, when my mother decided that she couldn't make a living with singing or singing lessons and started being a purchasing agent for all the stores, she used to go off early in the morning, come back late in the afternoon. Anaïs was in charge and of course in 1914, well, I was what? We said six. And Thorvald was a little bit older, therefore a little less--but she still had to hold the three of us together.
- Crawford: But you were closer to her, I think than Thorvald.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I may have been close but I was very naughty. I didn't do what I was asked to do. Thorvald, on the other hand, was always doing the right thing. He always had good grades. He always did well in school. He was always the exemplary student. I was the--
- Crawford: Thorvald went to live where? In Cuba?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, Cuba first. First Cuba with his aunt, who was his godmother, Antolina, who was one of the Culmell sisters, a quite extraordinary woman. She being a--what do you call that? It's almost like having a son. She found Thorvald in Paris, having met his father, and then the relationship between those two was sort of a disaster, and he couldn't get a job in Paris and so she said, "Well come with me to Havana and we'll get you a job." And she did. Then he went from there to Colombia, then from Colombia, I think, to Mexico. But it was thanks to his aunt. The curious thing is that he called his son after this cousin of his, who was so close, Charlie, so Thorvald's first son, and only son, was called Charlie.
- Crawford: Where are his children?
- Nin-Culmell: Probably somewhere in Miami, some of them, but most of them have died.
- Crawford: You've lost track?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Antolina--I know all of her sisters have died. All of my mother's sisters. I know the baby, who was the youngest of the girls, died. Charlie died, so all my generation on the Culmell side.
- Crawford: Back to the diaries for a moment. The originals were purchased by Joan Palevsky for UCLA. Is that right?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, you mean the manuscripts. I don't remember what they wanted me to do, but they wanted me to give them something and I didn't.

- Crawford: Perhaps the books, the first editions?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, well the thing was that once Anaïs died, and once Hugo died, the person that Anaïs appointed as her executor and literary executor was not well.
- Crawford: Was that Rupert?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes.
- Crawford: Rupert Pole. The man that she had been with in Los Angeles.
- Nin-Culmell: My humble opinion is that he was not good.
- Crawford: Well, he was a curious choice for her, wasn't he? Not literary?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, but that was Anaïs' problem. She was always choosing people that were not so good for her. Except for Hugo. Hugo was the only man in her life because the other--what's his name? The guy who uses the four-letter words?
- Crawford: Henry Miller.
- Nin-Culmell: Henry Miller used the four-letter words. That was his literary distinction, and that isn't much of a distinction. I never wanted to read much about him because I felt that she was so besotted by him, at that time, and he was a man who--let's see. I gave my first concert in Paris. We were talking about that because of my cape I was wearing because of the cold weather. In 1930 I gave my first concert as a pianist in Madrid. 1930 I was what?
- Crawford: Twenty-two.
- Nin-Culmell: Twenty-two? Well, I wasn't exactly a baby, but I was twenty-three in those days, which is not twenty-three twenty years later. I remember I gave this program and one of the pieces was Schumann's *Three Romances*, and Henry Miller wrote me a letter saying, "My dear Joaquin, you can't expect to play any Schumann Romances unless you visit a whorehouse before." And I remember my reaction. My reaction, my total reaction was, "This is a real old-fashioned German romanticist, isn't he?" He thinks that in order to feel things, you have to experiment. That was the opinion I had of him.
- Crawford: You told me that story, and that you didn't respond?
- Nin-Culmell: Nothing. I kept the letter for many, many years and then I destroyed it because I didn't think it was [worthy].
- Crawford: It would have been worth a small fortune, wouldn't it? What about the books that she gave you?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, Anaïs made me read a great deal from then on. I still have my copies of Proust that she made me read. She also made me write reviews of everything she had me read.

Crawford: She was serious.

Nin-Culmell: She was serious.

Crawford: She loved Proust?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. That was her Proustian epoch. But anything else that she read, and was fascinated by, she would pass on to me. She sometimes gave me the book, but sometimes just passed on anything she heard [about]. “Oh, you must go and hear somebody,” or “You must go and see somebody,” or “You must go and see somebody’s painting.”

Crawford: She shared that with you--all her life?

Nin-Culmell: All her life. Well, practically, yes, until she and I sort of began to have different lives.

Crawford: She lived for a time on Roosevelt Way in San Francisco?

Nin-Culmell: Well, I think she lived there before I came.

Crawford: The late forties, when Rupert Pole was in school here.

Nin-Culmell: That’s right. In the late forties when I was at Williams.

Crawford: Yes, that’s right. And then she moved to Los Angeles.

Nin-Culmell: That’s right. She liked Los Angeles--I guess she did. But, you know, women love places where their men are happy.

Crawford: How did Hugo put up with it? I’ve asked you before.

Nin-Culmell: Good question.

Crawford: He had to know.

Nin-Culmell: He had to know, and he was an extraordinary man. I have a great deal of affection for him. It’s very curious. At the end of her life, when she was dying of cancer, she was telephoning Hugo. The last crisis took place in Los Angeles and that’s why she died there. She could have died in New York. She could have died with Hugo. That’s what’s so curious about this. I’m just trying to straighten this out. Things sometime skip my mind. It can’t come back now. Sorry.

- Crawford: You told me that she gave you copies of her books and they were inscribed to you. I'm curious about that.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, in fact I just received from Saint Albert's a list of the books that I gave them, which I thought they should have. They are books on theology, and philosophy, and things like that.
- Crawford: Here at Saint Albert's Dominican Priory?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Because all the other books, all the music books, and my manuscripts are going to UC. But I felt that the books on theology and philosophy, which were books that I had a special attachment to, should go to where they would be best used.
- Crawford: This is your personal library?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. All my library is personal.
- Crawford: What is your connection with Saint Albert's?
- Nin-Culmell: I've been going there ever--I moved here in order to be able to go there. It's a Dominican center, it's a Dominican priory . I used to know someone there who was a poet. Oh dear, come on, help me--. Brother Antoninus.
- Crawford: Is he still living?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. He died. He left the Order, and then married, and then was not reinstated. In other words, his resignation was--yes, I don't think he had taken his last vows. And [I knew] one of his friends, Mary Fabilli, when I first was looking around for a place for my mother to live, because she had had a stroke and had to live in a place where she could walk. She was the widow of the very famous Austrian playwright who lived in Berkeley? Oh, God. Names! He had a son who was also a playwright.
- Crawford: I know Mann's son lived in Berkeley, but he was a musician.
- Nin-Culmell: No, no, no. But of that generation. She said, "Oh, you know. There are some wonderful Dominicans who sing chant in Latin." And that has attracted me.
- Crawford: How many volumes are there in that library?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, a whole sheet full.
- Crawford: Is that accessible to the public?
- Nin-Culmell: Anyone can use that.

- Crawford: What about the Gleeson Library at the University of San Francisco?
- Nin-Culmell: Well, the Gleeson Library has my copies of Anaïs' first editions.
- Crawford: She inscribed those to you.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Those are in the special collection. Anaïs always used to send me her first editions, and I felt that they should have a first edition.
- Crawford: What was the connection at USF?
- Nin-Culmell: The connection was mine, that when I retired, one of the very nice priests there who ran a series of symposia [asked me to be] the person who kept track of people, kept them from blabbing too long.
- And I was flattered that he would have considered me intellectually capable of doing it. It was lots of fun because they did a lot of Latin American writers and we became good friends. He died, and subsequently I felt it was natural that people should come to his library [for the collection].
- Crawford: Yes. And then Alberto Guerrero is a friend, I think.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Guerrero was good friend. We were all friends at the same time. He teaches literature, I think, at USF.
- Crawford: We met him after he had been with Graham Greene's widow, and he had written a book about Greene--do I have the right person in mind?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. Oh, sure.
- Nin-Culmell: We--when you say we, you?
- Crawford: My husband and I. Did he work with your sister?

[Begin Tape 6]

- Nin-Culmell: No, Rupert Pole wouldn't let her because he was scared. It was Father Antonio Moreno who wrote a book, and he wanted to talk to my sister. I remember saying to Anaïs, "You know, I have a very good Dominican friend who would love to talk to you about Jung." She said, "I'd love to talk to him." Pole was afraid that if he got a Dominican in there, that the first thing that would happen would be that he would be out of the window. Which was hardly a priest's style. He felt threatened, so Anaïs called and said, "I don't

think I'd better see your Father, Antonio Moreno." And she died a few months later.

Hugo was still alive and died shortly after that, and I felt that I hadn't handled the problem well. That she really wanted to talk to Father Antonio Moreno, who, by the way, was a Spanish Basque Dominican. A wonderful person. My favorite story about Antonio Moreno was that he used to come and have coffee with me very often, and sit here and talk. And he said, "You know, I believe as a church teacher that there is a hell. Hell does exist." Like I've just found out something and I'm going to let you know, but you mustn't let anybody else know. He said, "There is a hell, but there's no one there."
[whispering]

Crawford: [laughter] No one there?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. And, you know, that coming from a doctor, and not only a doctor in theology, but he was one of the six Dominicans who had a special doctorate. He was outstanding in his field. He was professor of theology here. So that always interested me.

Crawford: A wonderful story.

Nin-Culmell: But anyhow. He really wanted to meet my sister because he was interested in what she had to say about Jung.

Crawford: She had done psychotherapy herself. She had practiced it.

Nin-Culmell: Exactly.

Crawford: I think with Otto Rank in New York, didn't she?

Nin-Culmell: Anaïs and Otto Rank, and also Rene Allendy in Paris, who was a jerk, but that's another story. Allendy was a vet who became an analyst. Anyhow. And then she died. I remember sitting here, in this room, saying to Father Antonio, "I sure goofed on that one. Yes, Anaïs wanted to see you; she wanted to talk to you. Who knows what she wanted to talk to you about--that's not my business, it's your business, but not mine." And he said, "Well, don't give it a thought. The intention was there. She wanted to see me. She wanted to get a church?" But, you know, she didn't get it.

Crawford: At the end of her life, did you go down at some point when she was ill?

Nin-Culmell: No. Rupert telephoned me and that was at the end. I used to go down to see her and we used to spend a great deal of time, she and I, because Rupert used to go out and take a walk, which was just as well. Rupert is a very sweet man, but he's awfully stupid. I mean, with all due respect, he's not very bright. He wasn't at Anaïs' level at all.

Crawford: What was the attraction?

Nin-Culmell: He looked like Hugo. A younger Hugo. And he didn't behave very well with Hugo. Well, anyhow--that's beside the point. Where were we? Oh, when she was dying. I used to go down there and, you know, she was on her deathbed. She was dying! And cancer's not much fun. We were at the point where--do you remember such and such a thing? or do you remember when I read such and such a thing? Do you remember? One of the things I said to her, was, "Do you remember when you sent me to Allendy?" She said yes. I said, "Well, can I ask you a question?" Nothing like a death bed confession.

When Anaïs discovered psychiatry, I had to discover it because, you know, anything she discovered, I had to discover. I was the younger brother and I'd gotten used to that. Sometimes it was interesting, sometimes less interesting. In terms of psychiatry, it never took with me. I was never much of a psychiatric fan. Anyhow, I went to see *him* because Anaïs asked me to, and whenever Anaïs asked me to do something, I did it.

Crawford: Older sister.

Nin-Culmell: Sure. Five years older, smarter, prettier. And I had no idea what a psychiatrist was. He came in the room with covered lamps and shades and so forth. Big, big chairs. And he said, "You know? I'm in love with your sister and it's very complicated because I'm a happily married man. And being a happily married man, in love with your sister, you must realize that this makes my life very complicated." And I sat there. I can't remember what year it was. It must have been, oh, it must have been before I was thirty, and I was saying to myself, "Golly, these psychiatrists--this is very interesting." Because when you go to confession, you hear a lot of the nonsense you do, but you don't every nonsense other people do. But this guy's telling me all of the--[laughs]--all of the nonsense he's doing. So I thought it was fascinating.

Crawford: How many times did you go?

Nin-Culmell: Once. I never went again--what for? To hear him say that he was in love with Anaïs? So tell me something new. I had never met a man who hadn't fallen in love with Anaïs! So, I told Anaïs that. I said, "By the way, I have to ask you a question. Did he ever send you a bill?" And she said, "Oh, yes. He sent me a bill for double the amount because it was your first time." Now, the idea that Allendy would have talked about his love for her to me during the fifty-minute period, and then charged her for it! I told her [about it]and we started laughing, crying, everything. [laughs]

Crawford: She loved that everyone was in love with her, of course.

Nin-Culmell: Well, yes. But, I mean, come on. That was really something!

- Crawford: Did she ever give you advice about love?
- Nin-Culmell: No. She had tried. She tried very hard.
- Crawford: Was religion always so important in your life, throughout your life?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. It is now. And it was then. At that time it was beginning and the point is that I met Jacques Maritain, the French philosopher, when Anaïs met Henry Miller. So those are two different ways.
- Crawford: What was the relationship with Maritain?
- Nin-Culmell: He was the great Thomist, pupil of--I can't remember what the French philosopher's name is. But in any case, he was the real reason I became religious.
- Crawford: I meant to ask you before, and now that you bring up Henry Miller: Miller said that Anaïs' diaries would stand next to St. Thomas' and Proust's.
- Nin-Culmell: That's nonsense. She was a good psychologist and a wonderful writer--well, let's let it stand there.
- Crawford: Right. Well, let's go back to collections for one moment. Rupert was her literary executor. What happened to all that material, photographs, letters--?
- Nin-Culmell: He has it. He inherited everything, royalties included.
- Crawford: Everything. Hugo didn't? So surprising.
- Nin-Culmell: It's not surprising. It's shocking. She'd never have been that way. Moreover, Anaïs left in her will that Hugo should get all her books. And Rupert said, laughing, to me, "Oh, I know Anaïs said that in her will, but I told Hugo that Anaïs had given them to me."
- Crawford: And Hugo--?
- Nin-Culmell: Hugo accepted.
- Crawford: But where are they now, because Rupert is not living?
- Nin-Culmell: I don't know.
- Crawford: I assume he's not living.
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, no. He's living in Silver Lake.
- Crawford: In Silver Lake. And he, I think, determines who has use of the materials?

- Nin-Culmell: He determines everything. What is published, how it's published, who does the publishing, including himself. The terrible thing is that literary experts like Deidre Bair, who wrote the best book on Anaïs there is, can't stand him. She said he's made so many changes. Pole tried to help her, but when he saw that he couldn't influence her, he fought her all along the way. I saw her all along the way, too.
- Crawford: You supported her?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes, because I felt that she was the only one who had any sense left.
- Crawford: Her portrait of Rupert is not very sympathetic.
- Nin-Culmell: No, of course not. How could it be? He's a dummy. He's a nice dummy, but he's a dummy.
- Crawford: Does he control the original manuscript diaries at UCLA, then?
- Nin-Culmell: Oh, absolutely. Anything pertaining to my sister, you have to go to Rupert. He's not very flexible. As long as Rupert Pole turns out to be the great love of her life, he doesn't care. And that is false. Anaïs' great love of her life was Hugo, period. Her great lover may have been Henry Miller. Her young squire may have been Rupert. But with those three differences.
- Crawford: You have made that distinction here, for the history.
- Nin-Culmell: Anaïs had a weakness. She was very weak as far as men were concerned. But a lot of very smart women have been very weak, as you well know.
- Crawford: She's criticized for that by women who feel she was so focused on men she wasn't a real feminist.
- Nin-Culmell: Well, I would hate to think that she was a real feminist.
- Crawford: Why?
- Nin-Culmell: I'm not a masculinist.
- Crawford: Didn't she portray herself as a feminist?
- Nin-Culmell: She certainly didn't want to portray herself as an anti-feminist. I mean, you know, what's the difference? So women are attracted to men and men are attracted to women. Are we going to change the whole shebang because of that?
- Crawford: What's important is how she felt about herself.

- Nin-Culmell: Exactly. And what attracted her and what was meaningful to her. Anaïs was a man's woman, and the fact that she wasn't a feminist, that, for me, is a double negative. It has no meaning at all, for me. I think you understand what I mean.
- Crawford: I do. Why do you think she is so popular? There is no undergraduate student today, and particularly women, who don't know Anaïs Nin.
- Nin-Culmell: I know. Well, because they have this ill-begotten idea that she broke all ties. In the first place, she was supposed to have had an incestuous relationship with her father, which she didn't. Secondly--
- Crawford: You think there's no truth to that, as she wrote it in the diaries? We've touched on that before.
- Nin-Culmell: No. I feel very much that Anaïs, being a gifted writer, and surrounded by psychiatrists, who said, "You're a writer, and you're a psychiatrist. Why don't you write about your experiences about your father and how you feel about him really, and see how it comes out?" And this is what she did.
- Crawford: So you feel that that would all have been fabricated?
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. Anaïs was a great fabricator.
- Crawford: For her to simply say that that was the ideal love affair?
- Nin-Culmell: No, that was pure fabrication. In the first place, if you had known my father, he would have been running a hundred and fifty miles away from any kind of thing like that.
- Crawford: Why?
- Nin-Culmell: Because he was very old-fashioned!
- Crawford: He was old-fashioned.
- Nin-Culmell: Yes. He was very conservative, my God! Compared to--oh, well listen. Conservative doesn't mean that he didn't have sixty-four mistresses. That was the European way. That was the men's way in those years. No, I think it's a pity. It's a pity that she did this, and she did this after his death so he could have no way of defending himself. She wouldn't have written it during his lifetime.
- Crawford: Did you ever discuss that with her?
- Nin-Culmell: No.
- Crawford: When she was dying, what did you talk about?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, we used to talk about--I really don't know--how she was feeling, what she was reading, what I was doing. She wanted to know what I was doing. I would tell her. But Rupert wasn't there. Rupert was in the house, but he wasn't with us.

Crawford: He gave you that time to visit?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes. We were alone. And she, several times, when Rupert used to come in with some stupid newspaper article, somebody praising her, he used to stand in the middle of the room and recite this as if it were an ode by Shakespeare. Anaïs would look at me--

Crawford: So you knew him well?

Nin-Culmell: Oh, yes.

Crawford: But you're not in touch at all now?

Nin-Culmell: No, because I've felt that he's handled things not well. And he's given permission for publication--he's changed the diaries. He's made radical changes. In fact, Deidre says that it's hard to know when you look at the diaries what is Anaïs and what is Rupert.

Crawford: Oh, so she's been able to go compare the diaries with the originals at UCLA.

Nin-Culmell: Oh, sure. Yes.

Crawford: That's very interesting. Is she still working on a project? On a book?

Nin-Culmell: I hear from her from time to time. She has been working, but she has been working on peripheral things. But, you know, that was a devastatingly difficult task that she had. Particularly as he was all gung ho at the beginning, until he saw that she wasn't buying his story.

Crawford: Were you surprised that you weren't the inheritor?

Nin-Culmell: Well, I wasn't surprised because I was amazed. It wasn't a question of being the inheritor. There were several. For instance, we always had a standing joke, even when Hugo was alive. Hugo was wonderful--Hugo wanted very much that his share become my share before he died. And Rupert wouldn't let him. He said, "No, Anaïs wanted him to have it." I mean him being Rupert.

I don't need the money. That isn't the point, but I am frustrated to think that I have absolutely no say in the publication of any of Anaïs' works. I have never been consulted. I find that sometimes harder to take than others.

The money isn't the issue, although thank heavens Hugo was able to live on the proceeds. He received until his death eighty thousand dollars a year from royalties. Now the royalties were from those books that Pole manipulated to make them best sellers. The books on, you know--what do you call that?

Crawford: The erotica. The first best sellers that she had.

Nin-Culmell: Yes.

Crawford: What was your opinion of those?

Nin-Culmell: She didn't want them published, but that isn't the point. The point was that they should have been published, but they should have been published in a different way. And not, "I, Rupert Pole, have decided this should be published." It should have been decided by a group of Anaïs' admirers, literary admirers, women literary admirers who are many and very gifted. I could mention a lot of them who could have made a committee. I know that committees, generally what they design--do you know what the definition of a camel is?

Crawford: A horse by committee? [laughter]

Nin-Culmell: Exactly. So, I'm not saying that committees will always do the right thing, but they had a committee of great Anaïs admirers and they should have been consulted. And not Rupert deciding.

Crawford: What will happen to all of these things when he dies?

Nin-Culmell: His half-brother will take over. His mother married the son of Frank Lloyd Wright, didn't she? So he's a Lloyd Wright and an architect. Doesn't know anything about literature, never did. But he'll be in charge of that stuff. If that's the way Rupert wants it, that's the way it's going to be.

Crawford: That is surprising and sad.

Nin-Culmell: It is sort of surprising because it isn't a question of money and royalties. That doesn't bother me. I don't need the money. I mean, good heavens. I have my retirement. I have my own royalties. I'm in no hard times. But I think I should have had some kind of a say, or at least consultation. Or at least kept in touch, even though my ideas may have been different from his, which they are. But we can all make adjustments. He can make adjustments, I can make adjustments--

Crawford: Well, perhaps that will happen if it's not too late.

Nin-Culmell: It's too late. Ninety-three for me and he's worse off than I am.

Crawford: He's not well?

Nin-Culmell: I don't think so. I haven't heard from him. I told him I didn't want to hear from him again, as long as he was continuing to treat Deidre Bair with--I don't know. It wasn't elegant at all. And also, to have introduced his half-brother as heir to Anaïs. You know, it's sort of ridiculous. Oh, well. That's the way it is. There's nothing you can do now to change that. You know, half-brothers have ways of discovering the other half.

Crawford: That's a very important legacy for readers and scholars--

Nin-Culmell: Yes, I know, but this young man has nothing to do with it, and Rupert even less.

Crawford: I wonder if he'll just turn it over to UCLA. The collected manuscripts, and let them administer it.

Nin-Culmell: Yes, but who will tell them who's going to administer it? Because if it's UCLA, they'll do whatever they think is right. And whatever they think is right is what Rupert thought was right. No, it's a mess. It's a mess.

Crawford: I agree. Let's talk about tributes and prizes. Last time you told me the king of Spain made you an honorary Spaniard.

Nin-Culmell: Well, that's unimportant. The important thing is this came in the mail today-- [rustling of papers] I think this is it. This is the document from the Museum of Catalan Art in Madrid.

This represents all the paintings, all the family paintings that were given to the Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona by me, in name of the three children of Joaquin Castellanos, of Rosa Culmell. By the way, I'm not a feminist, but I insist that my mother have her name.

So that my father is not just Joaquin Nin, but Joaquin Nin-Castellanos, his mother's name. My mother's name is Rosa Culmell-Beauregoux, her mother's name. And I'm Nin-Culmell, my mother's name. I just thought I'd point that out so that I don't get a bad grade as far as being a feminist is concerned. [laughs]

Crawford: What is this retrato? [looking at catalog] Joaquin? An oil painting?

Nin-Culmell: Yes. Two oil paintings of the great-grandfather who was married to a Tудо. So my grandfather's name was Nin y Tудо and my father's name was Nin y Castellanos. There are not only those two portraits, but the portrait of Anaïs' madrina, her godmother! Juana is there. That was done by a very good Spanish painter who had been a companion of Picasso in Paris in 1905. And then there's a drawing of Anaïs by a very famous sculptor. A drawing.

Those things are there, and they've been given to the museum in the name of Joaquin Castellanos and Rosa Culmell-Beauregoux' children, Anaïs, Thorvald, and Joaquin. So there's no jealousy. Those pictures can be copied. You can have copies of those if you can prove that they are your family. There's another document coming and it's my second membership in the society.

Crawford: You said the King was interested in your opera?

Nin-Culmell: The Queen. But I don't know if she can do anything. It should be performed in Spain first, either in Madrid or in Barcelona.

Crawford: Do you consider *Celestina* your greatest work?

Nin-Culmell: I think so. I worked on it for such a long time. I like it best because of the subjects and Milibea, Calixto, which is based on the oldest novel in European literature.

Crawford: You've said that the first third of your life was spent being a son, that the second third of your life was spent being as brother, and that you wanted to spend the last third doing just what you wanted to do.

Nin-Culmell: I've often thought of that, and yes, it stands.

Crawford: Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]

At our last meeting in Joaquin's Berkeley home, he was in bed, quite ill. He asked if he could describe the framed photographs on the nearby dresser, which, although completely blind by now, he was able to do. "First my mother before she was married. Then my mother in a long white gown—that was just after my birth. Then a photograph of my father as a young man and as a man of 70, still dashing, still a ladies man. The picture in the middle is of my niece, Thorvald's daughter, and finally, by the crucifix, a photograph of me and Alicia de Larrocha, who called me yesterday from Barcelona to see how I'm doing. I'm not feeling well—and I wish the doctor could tell me why!"