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Anais Nin's Under a glass bell : from interior fatality to psychological motion

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ANAIS NIN'S UNDER A GLASS BELL: FROM INTERIOR FATALITY TO PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the criticism on Anais Nin has been an overview of her entire work. Under A Glass Bell is included but, to my knowledge, no one has explored each individual story deeply enough since Nin herself recommends Under A Glass Bell as the book to begin with when reading or studying her works. I believe that her recommendation is correct because Under A Glass Bell contains the nucleus of themes which she concentrates on in all of her works, including the Diaries.

The stories contained in Under A Glass Bell broke the traditional American boundaries of social realism. Nin's primary interest has always been the unconscious, and when she began writing, the theories of Freud and others were still relatively new. She explains in The Novel of the Future how all her work has followed Jung's dictum: "Proceed from the dream outward. . ."[1]

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[1]Nin, The Novel of the Future (New York: Collier Books, 1968), p. 5.

Even though critics have found her stories dreamlike and unreal, she feels that they emphasize the relationship between the dream and reality.[2] Nin discusses in The Novel of the Future a desire by the dreamer "to find the way out, into life, into daylight:"

> The dream was to be the genesis, the birthplace of our life. The novels were to be the constant description of going into life and back into the dream to seek the self when it lost its way. In a sense, I continued to say: the dream is the key, the source, the birthplace of our most authentic self.[3]

Nin has left out of her stories information which she feels is unnecessary:

> I eliminated what I considered misleading factors: age (because age is relative); nationality (because that would immediately implant a certain "type" which I feel people are outside of, beyond); misleading information such as background, education, race, color, status, class. I considered passport identification the most misleading of all simply because the true personality lies outside of these classifications. These are superficial classifications which compound errors about people. Whatever part of our self has been forced to fit into those molds is not the one which, as a writer, I am concerned with.[4]

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[2] Ibid., p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 120.

[4] Ibid., p. 66.

Only each fact which connects the dream to reality is included; all else is discarded as an irrelevancy.

A continuous narrator who either observes or participates and a central image unite the thirteen stories in Under A Glass Bell. The title of the collection, as Oliver Evans has pointed out, suggests the sort of glass bell used to cover china birds or flowers in Victorian parlors. Nin presents characters who encounter a "glass bell" of restrictions which have been imposed on them and which must be overcome. Her central image is apt because it suggests, on the one hand, the negative aspects of artificiality, sterility, and isolation, and, on the other hand, a positive aspect of immunity from the contamination of ordinary life.[5]

The central image of the glass bell is used to convey the experience of interior fatality, an impediment to healthy psychological motion:

> With my habit of going backstage always,
> I did not find that the drama lay in
> tragic incidents of a person's life,
> but in the hidden motivations which
> lay behind these incidents, the "interior

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[5]Oliver Evans, Anais Nin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1968), p. 77.

> fatality." I was more curious as to what prevented a personality from developing, a talent from blossoming. a life from expanding, a love from being fulfilled.6

The novelists' goal, according to Anais Nin, should be to help people overcome their neuroses and to live more fulfilling lives. I will therefore attempt to show how the stories in Under A Glass Bell have been written to achieve a therapeutic as well as a literary purpose. Their quality is what one critic has termed "poetic-psychological."[7] Convinced that the traditional nineteenth - century novel could not adequately express twentieth - century experience, Nin developed her own form of the short story and the novel, a form heavily influenced by psychoanalysis:

> My personal obsession with a human being's potential drove me to seek the handicaps, blocks, interferences, impediments. This meant finding the original wish by examining early dreams and fantasies, their progression, and their withering. All these observations which I had practiced upon myself as the guinea pig in the diary, I now applied to

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6Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 56.

7Deanna Madden, Laboratory of the Soul Diss. Univ. of Miami 1975, p. 180.

> my friends, my characters. This is a different position from most novels which accept the influence of the environment, outer pressures, the effect of incidents and accidents caused by society, history, etc. The tensions I set up (drama) were the tension between potential and fulfillment, outer and inner pressures. For this I could not be content with registering action without reflecting on how this action came about.[8]

Nin's form converts the psychoanalytic case into universal literature. Her language consists of poetic prose which contains symbolism. Why must she use symbolism? Why does she not interpret the symbols? She answers these questions in The Novel of the Future stating that symbolism is necessary since this is the closest method of "dealing with the relativity of truth about character." She does not translate the language of symbolism because each of us must learn the language ourselves.[9]

Nin's objective in her stories is to describe interior fatality and to suggest that movement away from it is through a deep understanding of the self. Nin's diary taught her that human beings reveal themselves most accurately under moments of emotional

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[8]Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 56.

[9]Ibid., pp. 9-11.

crisis. She chose this crisis for her fiction because "[it] is the moment when the real self rises to the surface, shatters its false roles, erupts, and assumes reality and identity."[10]

In Under A Glass Bell we can observe three different types of psychological movement. During the first the protagonist is controlled by his interior fatality. He has become frustrated and usually withdraws from society. His potential remains unfulfilled, either because a world of external reality controls him or else because his own resistance toward external reality prevents change or development.

The second type of psychological development depicted shows the protagonist moving beyond total control by interior fatality. Here the protagonist is able to come to terms with external reality and with his own internal reality. He moves through a relationship of restraint and frustration into a new life of motion, liberation, and fulfillment.

The ambivalent third type belongs somewhere between the other two extremes of interior fatality

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[10] Ibid., p. 160

and psychological motion. Here the situation remains ambiguous because the protagonist appears to have contained his interior fatality but his further development remains uncertain.

"Birth," the final story in the collection, does not appear to fit into any of the three categories which I shall discuss in three separate chapters. This is because "Birth" appears to be a metaphor for interior fatality itself. In fact, this final story appears to represent an only partly successful attempt to combine the themes found in all of the previous twelve.

CHAPTER I

Protagonists Controlled by Interior Fatality

"The Mouse"

The protagonist of "The Mouse," based on a maidservant who worked for Nin on her houseboat, is shown at a period in which she is controlled by interior fatality.[11] An unfulfilled love relationship and a fear of life cause the Mouse's interior fatality. The reader is not given the details of this interior mental suffering but rather the external elements of her life which cause her interior fatality.

Like the animal she resembles the Mouse, described as a woman with "thin legs, big breasts, and frightened eyes" and as one who "dresses in grey fur," lives an existence which is overwhelmed by fear:

> The Mouse emerged from her little cabin
> all dressed in her mouse costume, a mouse -

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[11]For details of Nin's relationship with her maidservant, see Diary II, 179, 206-208.

> colored sweater, skirt and apron. She wore soft gray bedroom slippers. She was always scurrying along as if she were threatened. If she was caught eating, she lowered her eyes and sought to cover the plate. If she was seen coming out of her cabin she immediately concealed what she was carrying as if she were thieving.[12]

The narrator attempts to alleviate the Mouse's fear with acts of kindness, but she is unsuccessful.

Even before her love affair, which culminates in an abortion, life and its ugliness appear to be closing in on the Mouse. Symbolically she lives in "the smallest cabin on the houseboat." Her restricted movement aboard an anchored boat which does not sail symbolizes the restrictions caused by her fear of participation in an active life.

Hoboes hover in the background of the Mouse's story and also appear to be closing in. They are symbolic of the afflicted in society and represent those who suffer from neurosis or interior fatality, those who are unable to move psychologically through life. This suffering comes when creativity and growth are frustrated "either by social conditions, family

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[12]Nin, Under A Glass Bell (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1948), p. 27. All subsequent quotes from Under A Glass Bell will be from this edition and will contain the page number in parenthesis within my text.

conditions, educational conditions, [or] whatever the atmosphere is."[13] The Mouse not only fears them but also fears the limited lives they represent.

Out of fear, while the narrator is away, the Mouse allows her lover to stay with her aboard the houseboat. She becomes pregnant by him, and he later abandons her. The Mouse's whole life becomes shattered by this incident. The Mouse, whose childlike grasp of life is emphasized by her "Child's Reader" with "the stories of the lamb, the cow, the horse" in it, will probably fail to recover. For she decides to abort her own child, the reality of new life within her. The unwanted or feared child symbolizes the lack of desire for rebirth after her psychological death. The child of hope is both realistically and symbolically killed. The death of the child and the possible death of the mother represent the immobile condition of interior fatality.

The Mouse's problem occurs on the water, which is a symbol of both birth and rebirth. Water, a primary symbol used by Nin, also symbolizes the female and her passiveness, central concerns of this story. The houseboat on the water might be considered a metaphor for a child in the womb. The houseboat with its anchor might

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[13]Nin, A Woman Speaks, ed. by Evelyn Hinz (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975), p. 107.

be considered a refuge, containing the possibility of hope and salvation through its power to preserve and ensure rebirth.[14]

What society values and the resulting contradictions are portrayed by the story within the story in which a woman loses her hat in the water near the houseboat. A commotion occurs and the Mouse almost falls into the water while using a broom to attempt to retrieve the hat.

This story lends itself to several interpretations. Since it occurs after the seduction, the attempt by the Mouse to recover the hat might be a symbolic attempt to regain her virginity. The broom could be the phallic symbol and the hat, the womb. A reversal of the above theory would be the Mouse symbolically attempting to attract her lost lover sexually. A non-Freudian interpretation might state that the story reveals a materialistic world which is extremely concerned about a hat but unconcerned about the Mouse, a human being with a child inside her.

The medical profession appears to be unconcerned about the Mouse. The ineffectiveness of medical personnel symbolizes the fact that each individual must

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[14]J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 1, p. 18.

look within himself for the cure to interior fatality. A grand blesse de guerre with a wooden leg states that the Mouse is a lowly servant beneath his stature as a doctor and war veteran. This doctor is not only unable to help but does not desire to. Like Pilate, he "washes his hands of all responsibility"(31).

Medical personnel are also indifferent at the ending in which they refuse the Mouse admission to the hospital. The narrator attempts to get her in hospital after hospital, and each time "the man at the desk" questions the circumstances of the Mouse's condition. The narrator is even accused of having performed the abortion.

The final paragraph summarizes the Mouse's situation:

> The woman bleeding there on the bench meant nothing to them. The little round moist eyes, the tiny worn piece of fur around her neck, the panic in her. The brand-new Sunday hat and the torn valise with a string for a handle. The oily pocketbook, and the soldier's letters pressed between the leaves of a Child's Reader. Even this pregnancy, accomplished in the dark, out of fear. A gesture of panic, that of a mouse falling into a trap.(34)

This ending reveals the elements of the Mouse's interior fatality. Fear causes her situation. She still naively pursues her lover, hoping for a happy ending as in the story from her Child's Reader. Her situation is compared to that of a mouse in a trap. She is overwhelmed

by her personal interior fatality, an unwanted child created in union with her lover who has since abandoned her. Her nearness to physical death and the death of the child within her symbolize her proximity to psychological death caused by interior fatality.

"The Mohican"

In "The Mohican" the protagonist, whose features resemble the American Mohican Indian and who believes himself to be the last of that tribe, is never able to accept the fact that he cannot understand the absolute. This failure of understanding might be described as the germ of his interior fatality since, in his futile attempt, he avoids reality by dwelling in the past and the future. Otto Rank describes this type of internal neurosis as "[refusing] the loan (life) in order thus to escape the payment of the debt (death)."[15] The Mohican is unable to overcome his internal conflict and therefore lives a non-life filled with the symptoms of his interior fatality.[16]

15Otto Rank, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings, ed. by Philip Freund, (New York: Vintage Books, 1932), p. 271.

16The circumstances change but the interior suffering of Pierre in "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," Jean in "The All-Seeing," and Hans in "The Eye's Journey" are all similar to the suffering of the Mohican in "The Mohican".

Fear appears to be a major symptom of the Mohican's interior fatality. Like the maidservant in "The Mouse," he fears everything which surrounds him. His fear stems from his vision of the future:

> He was so loaded with memories, cast down by them. Out of all his researches, his calculations, he extracted nothing but the poison of fatality. He saw only the madness of the world, the approach of a great world engulfing catastrophe.(43)

This bleak vision of the future concerns World War II, which hovers over the story and makes the Mohican a prophet of doom. Everything is out of place for him and restricted. He walks somnambulistically and gazes hypnotically, seeming either to fear the explosion of the world around him or to anticipate an explosion within himself. But, as the narrator points out, the Mohican's clairvoyance and mystery "[take] him nowhere. His feet [are] encased in boots of lead. The core of him is like the core of earth, rock, and iron unmelted by raging fire"(43).

Another symptom of his interior fatality is his practice of astrology. His pale complexion is attributed to his long hours in the library consulting esoteric books. On the surface, because of his strange appearance, the Mohican does look like someone extra-

ordinary. But upon investigation he proves to be a failure like most other astrologers:

> Did he really know when disease and madness would strike? Did he really know when we were going to love, unite, separate? The Mohican believed that he knew, and when we were lost or confused we wanted to believe too. What we discovered with time was that he knew no more than we did about the actuality of an event. He could not distinguish between potentiality and fulfillment, between the dream and the actuality. Many experiences and events which he predicted never came to the surface of our life, they only happened in the dream. And many dreams which he expected to remain as myths, took a human form and became actual.(47)

Basically the Mohican is a fraud. He inaccurately predicts the future for others, and he is unable to predict anything about his own future. "His greatest suffering [comes] from his incapacity to interpret his own horoscope"(47). What he needs to envision is not his future but rather his Mohican past and what it has done to him.

The Mohican's vain attempts to live a life of aristocracy are another symptom of his neurosis. The Mohican Indians were forced either to join another tribe or die. But the Mohican refuses to join anyone else's tribe and is, in fact, a tribe of one and the last one. His life is not what it appears on the

surface. He lives in an excellent neighborhood near the Sacre Coeur but his room is "under the roof of a very small hotel, where the ceiling inclined over his bed"(46). On the surface his fastidious dress and manner give an aristocratic air, but beneath his false front there is nothing:

> His coat was handed to you with the care of a man who refused to be weighed by a speck of dust. This coat was hung preciously so that no wrinkle would form on it. His white collar was incredibly starchy, his cuffs dazzlingly white. His buff gloves had never been worn. His clothes showed no traces of having been lived in.(44)

The Mohican lives a living death. His past aristocracy will not allow him to compromise. The world must do his bidding.

Another symptom of the Mohican's condition is his homosexuality. Nin states in The Novel of the Future that her purpose in the story was to describe the feminine element in a man:[17]

> His talk was spherical, making enormous ellipses, catching the Turkish bath in Algeria where the beautiful boy massaged him so effectively that the Mohican had to run away from

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[17]Nin, The Novel of the Future (New York: Collier Books, 1968), p. 103.

> him—the Mohican's whole face expressing that he had not run away, a reminiscent mockery of the experience, something like the criminal's desire to return to the scene. If I pressed him I might discover that he had seen the boy again, but I would never know more than that. Yet while the Mohican talked, his very way of standing, of placing his weight upon one foot, of crossing his arms like a woman to protect the middle of his body, the trellis of shadows tabooing the middle of the body, while the eyes acknowledged perversity, everything helped one to imagine the Mohican and the boy together.(45)

The Mohican is based on Conrad Moricand, an astrologer who lived in Paris.[18] In the Diary Nin explains her interest in homosexuality as a theme: "This quality, the quality of renewal, perpetual youthfulness, which I liked in the artist, I find in the homosexuals. I never see perversion, but rather a childlike quality, a pause in childhood or adolescence when one hesitates to enter the adult world. The relationship based on identification, on twinship, or 'the double', on narcissism, is a choice more facile and less exigent than that between men and women. It is almost incestuous, like a family kinship."[19]

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[18]For details of Nin's relationship with Moricand, see Diary II, 99-101, 165, 275-58 and see Henry Miller's "Devil in Paradise" in Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch (New York: New Directions, 1957).

[19]Nin, Diary IV, p. 188, p. 125-126.

Unlike Nin herself, the narrator does view the Mohican's homosexuality as a perversion:

> The Mohican always talked like a peeper, with imprecisions and a mysterious excitement due to what was passing through his memory at the moment and not at all to what he was saying. But the quick knowing ah! he uttered at the least indication of an adventure was so expressive that one felt the Mohican knew all there was to know or experience.
>
> At the same time I suspected that it was the delation of the incident through his imagination which created the feeling. Every scene he touched was immediately inflated, and the implications of mystery, terror, and perversity were so strong that the incident itself was drowned in them.(45)

The Mohican gives the appearance of truth but, in fact, what he says is closer to a lie.

The Mohican's failure in life and his capitulation to interior fatality is symbolized throughout the story by references to death. "He himself passed invisibly, untouched, unattainable, giving at no time any proof of reality: no stain, tear, sign of wear and death coming. It seemed rather as if death had already passed, that he had died already to all the friction and usage of life"(44).

The Mohican's life moves on a course of eventual destruction. He blames his condition on his attempts to understand the absolute. "Perhaps," said the Mohican, "all those who try to unveil the mysteries always have

tragic lives. At the end they are always punished"(44). The Mohican desires to suffer and to become a martyr. He passively allows the horror he suffers. Appropriately the narrator uses the image of a burnt tree as a symbol of the Mohican's Christ-like suffering: "This spectacle and the loss of all the objects he loved hurt him so much that he felt calcined like those trees one sees sometimes in the south, standing but with their entrails burnt to ashes"(44).

The vicious circle of the Mohican's interior fatality is best summarized in the Ferris wheel image:

> His talk was like the enormous wheel at the Fair, carrying little cages filled with people, the slow motion of the wheel, the little cages traveling spherically and the illusion of a vast circular voyage which never took one any nearer to the hub. One was picked up on the edge of the wheel, whirled in space, and deposited again without for an instant feeling nearer to its pulse. He carried people up and around him always at the same mathematical distance, breaking all the laws of human life which demand collisions and intermarriages.(45)

The above quotation is not only a description of the Mohican's interior fatality but is also symbolic of his living-death life. He is imprisoned within the cage of his interior fatality, and he does not move at all in life, except in circles. He fears all relationships because of the possible consequences.

The ending depicts the ugly external world closing in on the unreal internal world of the Mohican. Astronomers have just discovered "the ruler of the underworld, Pluto," and the Mohican attaches an awesome significance to this which causes great fear within him. His prediction of World War Two comes to his doorstep, and the Germans arrest him as a celestial saboteur and take him to some uncertain fate. The Mohican is a fortune teller whose only fortune has been to predict with near accuracy his own misfortune. His inability to interact with the external world, caused by his interior fatality, eventually leads to his destruction.

"Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealistes"

Like the Mohican, Pierre of "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealistes" strives for the absolute, which is the nucleus of his interior fatality. Both men refuse to live in order to avoid dying. Each lives a living death in order that he might be immortal; since each never lives, he never has to die.

In his refusal to live, Pierre actively seeks failure and disappointment. He finds this in his relationship with the narrator, who states her feelings for Pierre:

> I [the narrator] will follow you wherever you want. I love the pain in you. There are worlds deeper down, each time we sink and are destroyed, there are deeper worlds beneath which we only reach by dying.(53)

As the stories progress, the reader is able to see that the continuous narrator of them all is becoming more involved with their protagonists. The Mohican has many similarities with Pierre but the narrator remained at a distance from him. She allowed the Mohican to go his own way alone. But she desires to be a part of Pierre's life. She wants to follow him and relate to his strange links to other worlds.

The strangeness of Pierre is conveyed in the narrator's description of him as Savonarola, the false prophet who condemned pleasure:

> It was Savonarola looking at me, as he looked in Florence in the Middle Ages while his followers burned erotic books and paintings on an immense pyre of religious scorn. It was the same drawn childish mouth of the monk, the deep-set eyes of the man living in the caverns of his separation from the world. Between us there was this holocaust burning, in his eyes the inquisitor's condemnation of all pleasure.(48)

Pierre takes the narrator to see a statue of Heliogabalus, a symbol of his non-life which is gradually moving toward insanity. As the narrator

stares at the statue, she fuses it with Pierre: "In the face of stone I saw the face of Pierre"(50). Oliver Evans points out that the Heliogabalus description is a surreal overlapping of natural kingdoms (in this case animal and mineral).[20] The purpose of this fusion is to represent Pierre's tortured case of inaction versus action, of animal versus mineral. The animal or life nature in Pierre has become passive because of the circumstances of his life. The final result of this paralysis in life is Pierre's insanity.

The identification by Pierre with Heliogabalus is a good one since Heliogabalus was a priest to the sun-god of Emesa, whose reign as emperor was notorious for indecent rites to the sun-god and for indecency in general. Both Heliogabalus and his mother were killed in an uprising. Like Heliogabalus, Pierre is a priest of sorts whose indecent rites consist of his life of drugs and insanity and of his Theater of Cruelty.

Pierre is based on Antonin Artaud who did invent the Theater of Cruelty:[21]

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[20]Oliver Evans, Anais Nin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1968), p. 80.

[21]For Nin's description of her involvement with Artaud see Diary I, 186-88, 191-93, 225-32, 234-35. A discussion of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty may be found in his The Theatre and Its Double (New York: Grove Press, 1958).

> I am starting a Theater of Cruelty. I am against the objectivity of the theater. The drama should not take place on a stage separated from the audience, but right in the center of it. so near to them that they will feel it happening inside of themselves. The place will be round like an arena, the people sitting close to the actors. There will be no talking. Gestures, cries, music. I want scenes like the ancient rituals, which will transport people with ecstasy and terror. I want to enact such violence and cruelty that people will feel the blood in them. I want them to be so affected that they will participate. They will cry out and shout and feel with me, with all of us, the actors.(48-49)

The purpose of Pierre's theater is the purgation of cruelty in the world. Such is possible, but so is the propagation of cruelty, which appears to be the case with Pierre. Pierre's concept of the theater is ridiculed by others. Instead of purgation, his life masochistically embodies the cruelty of his theater. Ironically he has become a victim of the failure of his own theory of the theater. He has attempted to save the world through his theater but has only managed to crucify himself.

Pierre has defeated and frustrated himself into a state of passiveness and withdrawal. Specifically, he resorts to taking veronal and laudanum. External reality has become too much for him, and he must retreat from it. His desire not to participate at all eventually leads to insanity.

As Pierre reveals himself completely, the narrator has a change of heart about her deep involvement with him:

> I [Pierre] feel a fatigue at this mass of nerves seeking to uphold a world that is falling apart. I feel a fatigue at feeling, at the fervor of my dreams, the fever of my thoughts, the intensity of my hallucinations. A fatigue at the sufferings of others and my own. I feel my own blood thundering inside of me, I feel the horror of falling into abysms. But you and I would always fall together and I would not be afraid. We would fall into abysms, but you would carry your phosphorescences to the very bottom of the abysms. We could fall together and ascend together, far into space. I was always exhausted by my dreams, not because of the dreams, but because of the fear of not being able to return. I do not need to return. I will find you everywhere. You alone can go wherever I go, into the same mysterious regions. You too know the language of the nerves, and the perceptions of the nerves. You will always know what I am saying even if I do not.(53-54)

With this revelation the narrator realizes that she must end her relationship with Pierre: "Would I be drawn towards death, towards insanity? To be touched by Pierre meant to be poisoned by the poison which was destroying him"(54).

To save herself from the destruction of Pierre's interior fatality the narrator must make a permanent break with him, and this hastens his insanity. Pierre developes delusions of persecution as he tells the

narrator: "You are going to take my strength away, you had everything ready to take my strength away"(55).

Pierre's insanity also involves the assumption of masks. He states that a white phoenix dwells within him and that the black eagles are envious. The white phoenix appears to symbolize the possibility of rebirth from the death of his interior fatality. However, the envious black eagles appear to represent the finality of his interior fatality and to signify that Pierre will not overcome his interior fatality.

Pierre compares his life with the lives of Peter Abelard and Alfred de Musset, two men who both lost their lovers. Both couples comprise a composite symbol of Pierre because Abelard and Heloise had religious backgrounds while Musset and George Sand had artistic backgrounds. Even in his madness, Pierre sees himself as a persecuted priest-artist.

The ending shows Pierre in a strait jacket within an asylum. Symbolically he is paralysed within the restrictions of his own interior fatality and, as in "The Mouse," the medical profession provides no help: "The doctor let him take two steps with his bound feet and smiled at the way he was tangled and bound. The madman took two steps and fell. He was permitted to fall"(57). The meaning of this incident seems to be that the patient must initially look within himself to

overcome his problems. But in Pierre's case, his neurosis has complete control and his "fall" is inevitable and permanent. He will remain trapped within the confines of his interior fatality.

"The All-Seeing"

In "The All-Seeing" the narrator describes an incident concerning Jean and his mother which is the germ of Jean's interior fatality:[22]

> A violin hung on the wall.
> His violin nailed to the wall and never touched since the day his mother had said to him: "So you failed to get the prize you struggled for? Your're hurt, you're humilated, but I'm happy. Now you will stop playing the violin and wasting your life. You will be a man like your father, not a fiddler. I'm very glad you did not win the prize. You would have gone to Paris to study and become a good-for-nothing. We never had musicians in our family."(72)

The violin nailed to the wall seems to represent the artist as a crucified martyr. The mother does not understand her son's artistic ambitions and symbolically represents society, which quite often is guilty of the same thing. Jean mentally returns to this incident,

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[22]See Diary II, 192, 275-77 for Nin's description of her relationship with Jean Carteret, on whom Jean of "The All-Seeing" is based.

which is the first step in overcoming it. However, he is unable to move or live beyond it and instead lives the life of a failed artist, the life of a neurotic.

Jean cannot bear this world so he creates another dream world to exist in. The narrator describes this dream world in the opening paragraphs:

> When I rang his bell I could hear the parting of the beaded curtains of his room, and I knew he could see me through a little glass eye in his door through which I could not see him. Through this glass eye the hallway appeared immeasurably long and the person standing before the door many miles away and small, but extraordinarily distinct like a personage out of the past seen through the telescope of memory on a day of clear visibility.
>
> As he appeared in the dark hallway he illumined it with his eyes, his own eyes like the aurora borealis, a saving of luminous chiffon, such an immense and deep phenomenon of light like the eye of the universe.(70)

Jean appears uncomfortable in this world, and he appears to have strange links with other worlds. As the title implies, Jean seems to have some type of all-seeing power or vision through his "eye of the universe," yet ironically he is unable to see his own failure in his dream world.

Since Jean is uncomfortable in this world and with himself, he searches for a new self. Disguise and role playing appeal to him:

> He was never dressed, but costumed to suit some mood of a new self. He was in disguise. Whether he wore the black flowing tie of the romantic bohemian, the cap of the apache, the coat of a horse-racing man, the black striped pants of a provincial bourgeois, the bow tie of the second-rate actor, or the bull-red scarf of the professional pickpocket, one knew he would only appear once in this role.(71)

Jean will not play himself, for that is the role from which he is attempting to escape. The cure for his problem seems to lie in a better understanding of himself, the son whose mother nailed his violin to the wall. But he eludes this self whenever possible.

Internally Jean dreams to escape his problem but externally he travels all over the universe to get away from the nailed violin. The narrator tells us: "Each time that he embarked on a new transformation, or disguise, or voyage, he was driven not by pleasure or curiosity, but by the sight of the crucified violin"(73). Jean's external travels are only a temporary escape since he must always return to the nailed violin, which is both a symptom of his interior fatality and a beginning of the cure. Internally, however, Jean is unable to travel beyond that incident.

During his travels Jean visits Lapland, "the country of silence," which is a metaphor for non-involvement, a characteristic of interior fatality. As Jean describes it:

> People gathered together, sat in circles, smoking and smiling, but they do not talk. The reindeer has no voice with which to lament or cry. I looked everywhere for the secret of their speech and found it only in the trees. The trees talked for them. The trees had tortured arms, gaunt legs, the faces of totem poles. They talked and complained and signed and threw imploring arms up towards the silence.(75)

Jean yearns for, and nearly lives in, a dream-like existence in which people are content, as when asleep or under the influence of drugs. He desires that primal situation of the womb in which there are no confrontations with the world.

Jean's life becomes one of non-involvement whenever possible. Jean prefers not to love a real person because of the possibility of suffering, but rather a being with whom he will never be in physical contact, such as "the Unknown Woman of the Seine who had drowned herself many years ago and who was so beautiful that at the Morgue they had made a plaster cast of her face"(74). This drowned woman symbolically represents the dead state of Jean's subconscious, which

remains totally overwhelmed by the incident of the nailed violin. Like the Mohican and Pierre, Jean strives for the absolute, and he believes he can reach it through his love for the drowned woman:

> Her silence permitted the unfolding of all his inventions. In death alone could love grow to such an absolute. One of the lovers must be dead for the absolute to flourish, this impossible, unattainable flower of the infinite. In death alone there is no betrayal and no loss.(74)

Like both Pierre and the Mohican, Jean fails in his attempts to reach the absolute. The narrator tells the reader that Jean is "lonely" and in agony. The dead woman he loves represents the living death that he lives.

The narrator, who became involved before with the protagonist in "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," becomes deeply involved here as well with Jean. Jean views himself freed when he sees the narrator:

> You are also a mirror, a mirror in which people see themselves fulfilled, the free self. I see myself free when I look at you. You are the perfect mirror without flaws which gives the reflection of the future self. But will I be free before it is too late? I feel that other people are sewn together loosely, naturally, with a space in between the stitches for breathing. I am sewn too tightly, with too many stitches overlapping, so that I suffocate.(76-77)

But, even though the narrator attempts to save Jean, he is already suffocating from his problem. He will not retreat from his withdrawal. She tells him: "...at some time or other you will have to accept having a body, a reality, being in bondage. You will have to enter the prison of human life and accept suffering"(76).

Jean seeks to avoid suffering, yet the more he cuts himself off from it in the external world, the more he suffers within:

> The further he cut himself from the ugly, the sordid, the animal, from sickness which he overlooked, from poverty which he overlooked, from his body which he maltreated, from human ties he would not submit to, from protection which he disdained, the more anguish he felt.
> The dream did not give him contentment.
> He was lonely.(74)

In a manner similar to her relationship with Pierre in "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," the narrator is mentally rather than physically involved with Jean. Like Pierre, Jean is not interested in physical sex. In his love for the narrator he seeks an incestuous relationship with himself with her as his twin or double.

The story ends with a description of Jean imprisoned in his predicament:

> Jean stood now before the blurred and covered window which did not open into the street. He said: I am behind the window of a prison. I am a prisoner. There is always a window, and I am always behind it, looking out, and desiring to escape to countries and places which I imagine to be light, wall-less, illimitable.(77)

Life ("the street") is closed to Jean out of choice. His vision of life ("the blurred and covered window") is limited by his failure to transcend the nucleus of his interior fatality, the crucified violin. The restricted movement of his "prison" represents the living death to which he has condemned himself.

The narrator and Jean have in common their attraction for the dream, their escape into their own subconscious. The narrator emphasizes this common bond between them when she says: "But of course, Jean, we have the dream, this drug given to prisoners of distinction"(77). Yet the narrator and Jean have different dream worlds. The narrator is able to withdraw from her dream world at will and Jean is not. Jean retreats from reality into his dreams of the Phantom Lover, of travel, and of role playing. Unlike the narrator, Jean is trapped in his dream world, and so it becomes his interior fatality.

"The Eye's Journey"

The reader learns almost nothing concerning the origin of interior fatality in Hans, the painter, in "The Eye's Journey." Rather than the cause, the reader is given the effects of Hans' suffering. Like the Mohican, Pierre, and Jean of the three preceding stories discussed in my chapter one, Hans is uncomfortable in the world of reality, and he therefore pursues a dream world. His existence consists of painting and of a deep withdrawal into his subconscious. The opening paragraph presents an excellent description of Hans on the brink of destruction:

> He worked on small canvases with a touch as light as a cobweb and coloring made of mirages. He lived there, at the bottom of the sea, but a bottom of the sea cluttered with objects from shipwrecks. Fishes passed through one-eyed towers, anchors, and weeds grew out of hulks. All that could fall from a ragpicker's bag lay heaving restlessly buried by Hans in a shipwreck of broken moods, lost fragments of irretrievable worlds. The green which eveloped the broken objects was the green of mildew, and the browns which shrouded the sceneries was the brown of stagnation.(78)

Consistent with other water images throughout the stories, the "bottom of the sea" symbolizes the

subconscious, which for Hans is "cluttered" and confused. Hans is represented by the image of non-movement of a shipwreck buried in the sea, the subconscious, specifically Hans' own interior fatality. The grotesque image of limited vision ("Fishes passed through one-eyed towers") consistently unites the story of Hans, a painter whose vision does not include the recognition of his own interior fatality. The ragpicker's bag of "lost fragments" represents the mysterious and unknown past which continues to hold back Hans' present. In both this story and in "Ragtime" the past is not lost but returns to haunt the protagonist and may even control him, as in Hans' case. The final image in the above quotation, that of decaying mildew, evokes Hans' stagnant mental condition.

Like the fish of the previous quotation, Hans passes into the limited vision of the "one-eyed towers" of his dream world:

> Aware it was through the Eye that he had passed to reach this other side of the world, he always painted a small human eye in the corner, the secret door of his escape into the deep regions unknown to the surface of the eyes. He had traversed the Eye as through a looking-glass, into its roots into the before-birth and after-death, and there found these layers of light, waves of wrecked

> moods, cells of immobility and pain
> corroded by the rust of stagnation.(78)

As Alice moved through the mirror in Through The Looking Glass, Hans moves through an eye into a dream world beyond reality. Hans escapes to his dream world through his work, which is a reflection of his troubled subconscious. The eye which Hans paints in the corner of his work continues to be a principal image throughout the story. In the above quotation the eye is also a looking glass, which for Nin on the psychological level is a symbol for neurosis.[23] The eye is also used as a symbol for vision. Like the visions of the Mohican, Pierre, and Jean, Hans' vision includes much, but does not contain the solution to his own problems. Psychologically Hans' condition is "immobility" and "stagnation."

Like the Mouse, the Mohican, and Jean, Hans lives a restricted life in a small room. "It was his room that was growing tighter around him, growing smaller, smaller, emptier, and the solitude would strangle him" (79). The small room for each of these protagonists appears to represent the womb-like state of peace and security to which each of these characters is attracted.

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[23]Evelyn Hinz, The Mirror and the Garden (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 12.

Hans also attempts to escape from reality through drink:

> It was then he sailed out shiftily and insecurely, towards drink. In drink he might find again some of the lost warmth, the lost incandescence, the lost dilation. As soon as he drank, the sky melted and the clouds galloped, the dampness ceased to gnaw and became like some gentle shower, and the cramp in his stomach from lack of food, dissolved. Warmth and color and dilation of the heart and bowels into an infinite world.(79)

Through drink Hans gains the temporary illusion of motion beyond his problem. But when the effects of alcohol wear off, he finds himself back in his life of non-movement: "but when the glass was empty and the bartender refused to fill it, then he fell into an abysm again, his legs weakened and his eyes blurred. He lost everything then, the world shrank again, and the solitude was deeper because now people were laughing at him, people were talking about him"(79).

Like the Mohican, Pierre, and Jean, Hans has great difficulty dealing with reality and prefers a life of semi-involvement. Hans retreats to his dream world, where he forgets such real things as paying his rent for a year. He must approach life indirectly and at a distance. "He could not walk directly home either, he must catch it obliquely, tangentially:

the friend, the glass of wine, home, they would all escape from his grasp if he reached for them directly"(80). He suffers an interior mental anguish over something about which the reader can only speculate.

The Diaries and Under A Glass Bell should be criticized separately. However, if the reader reads the following statement in the Diaries made by Hans Reichel, on whom Hans is based, he may get a suggestion of the cause of Hans' problem in "The Eye's Journey":[24]

> No one has ever told me: 'I love you.' I am full of anguish and anxiety. Everybody is against me. You are hiding the wine.[25]

Based on this excerpt from Hans Reichel's life, and on the love theme which is present in some form in almost all of the stories, the reader might speculate that an absence of love might be the cause of Hans' problem. For since here the problem is an absence of love, the author has simply left any discussion of it out of this story to dramatize that fact.

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[24]See Diary II, 162-63, 265 for a description of Nin's relationship with Hans Reichel on whom the painter in "The Eye's Journey" is based.

[25]Nin, Diaries II, p. 265.

Hans' interior suffering causes paranoia. He refuses to go out for meals so that he can protect his paintings from art thieves. He fears that the concierge, who is actually worried about him, has poisoned his soup. Hans identifies his situation with that of a mouse who awaits being devoured by a snake at the zoo. Hans possesses the same mouselike fear of life as the maidservant in "The Mouse:" "Hans felt he was the mouse, and watched his own fate every day, his own passivity. His own eyes bulged like those of a perpetually frightened man"(81).

Hans' paranoia is confirmed when two strange men come to take him to an asylum. To Hans, they are the thieves he has feared. The men remove Hans to a cell, where he is allowed to paint and drink. But the drinking slowly destroys his eyesight. The doctors operate on Hans, and Hans loses one eye which is replaced with a glass eye. The failure of the doctors is consistent with their failure in the other stories and symbolizes again the need for the patient to look within himself for a cure from neurosis. The loss of Hans' eye reaffirms the failure of his vision which has consisted of escape through drinking and living in a dream world.

Hans has now made his final journey. The eye, or his means of temporary escape from his interior

fatality, has journeyed away from him forever. He is now completely overwhelmed by his interior fatality, as evidenced by his solitary existence in a cell in an asylum. His vision of himself both symbolically and realistically has now become blurred into almost total darkness. Hans is now trapped and unable to "move back and forth through the Eye." Without his dream world he is all but dead. A fire breaks out in Hans' cell. Hans now lives in a hell from which, by definition, there is no exit. He has become so passive and indifferent that he merely stares at the flames around him rather than attempt to escape.

CHAPTER II

Protagonists Freed From Interior Fatality

"Houseboat"

"The Houseboat," based on Nin's own experiences aboard a houseboat in Paris, contains many of the ideas on which Under A Glass Bell is based.[25] The narrator, an unnamed universal character, decides to withdraw from the world of reality by living aboard a houseboat:

> The current of the crowd wanted to sweep me along with it. The green lights on the street corners ordered me to cross the street, the policeman smiled to invite me to walk between the silver-headed nails. Even the autumn leaves obeyed the current. But I broke away from it like a fallen piece. I swerved out and stood at the top of the stairs leading down to the Quays. Below me flowed the river. Not like the current I had just broken from, made of dissonant pieces colliding rustily, driven by hunger and desire.(11)

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[25]For Nin's experiences on the houseboat, see Diary II, 112-114, 117-119, 125-131, 162, 168, 176, 303.

"Houseboat," the first story in Under A Glass Bell, is also one of the collection's more positive stories. The narrator withdraws from her past life in Paris into a life of contemplation aboard the houseboat. The city, represented by the policeman, the green lights, and the silver-headed nails, symbolizes a life of restriction which she leaves. That life could also be said to represent neurosis, or a lack of psychological flow which is counterbalanced against a theme of flow contained in the river to which she comes. The boat on the water is a symbol of the flux, freedom, and individuality, the psychological motion away from neurosis. This flow is both the form and the content of the story.

Paris, which represents past neurosis, begins to recede as the protagonist approaches the flow of water. The protagonist moves, the water moves, and the houseboat eventually moves at the end of the story, symbolizing the fact that the protagonist is psychologically unblocked. She can now think, feel, dream.

In contrast with the protagonist hoboes, who are paralysed in their predicament, reside along the river banks:

> At the bottom of the stairs lay the wrecked mariners of the street current, the tramps who had fallen out of the crowded life, who refused to obey.

> Like me, at some point of the trajectory, they had all fallen out, and here they lay shipwrecked at the foot of the trees, sleeping, drinking. They had abandoned time, possessions, labor, slavery. They walked and slept in counterrhythm to the world. They renounced houses and clothes. They sat alone, but not unique, for they all seemed to have been born brothers. Time and exposure made their clothes alike, wine and air gave them the same eroded skin. The crust of dirt, the swollen noses, the stale tears in the eyes, all gave them the same appearance. Having refused to follow the procession of the streets, they sought the river which lulled them.(11)

The hoboes along the river are controlled by their situations. Like the protagonist, they have withdrawn from the city and have begun the voyage to the water. Unlike her, they have not taken the final step. They are trapped in between the city and the water and are now unable to make a connection with either. In contrast to the healthy protagonist, the hoboes are afflicted with blindness, deafness, and muteness.

The hoboes have failed to reach the psychological level of motion which the protagonist has. They seek freedom from their condition through the celebration of their religion on the shore. They baptize themselves in the fountain and dip their combs in the river. Each day along the banks of the river they consecrate a "Mass" in which they are their own

sacrificial victims. They drink wine and pray drunkenly for release from their condition. Their prayers consist of newspaper thrown into the river. They are helpless, pathetic creatures, who resemble in many ways all of the dream world characters discussed in my chapter one who are unable to do anything about their neurotic situation.

In contrast to the hoboes, the protagonist begins to find release through her new life aboard the houseboat. The water clearly represents the symbol of life, and in this story it also represents the possibility of rebirth, which is what happens to the protagonist. She is reborn in life on the houseboat, an ark of salvation. The houseboat is biologically the symbol of the womb or heart and symbolically the symbol of a vessel which has the power to preserve and ensure rebirth. The water, a passive and female symbol, contains the houseboat like a child in the womb.[26] A series of wombs within wombs exists as the reader moves from cabin to boat to water.

As Freud and others have stated, persons who have withdrawn from the world are capable of making deep probes into their subconscious. Rebirth for Nin's narrator occurs after such a period of withdrawal and

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[26]J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 18, 1.

discovery aboard the houseboat. She finds the self by losing it aboard the houseboat, which serves as a possible link to the infinite. She fumbles nervously with her key as she contemplates an entry into the unknown:

> The noises of the city receded completely as I stepped on the gangplank. As I took out the key I felt nervous. If the key fell into the river, the key to the little door to my life in the infinite? Or if the houseboat broke its moorings and floated away? It had done this once already, breaking the chain at the prow, and the tramps had helped to swing it back in place.(13)

A barrier exists between the protagonist and her unconscious. The key at the door incident symbolizes crossing into the subconscious. She must unlock the doors which she has placed between herself and her unconscious. Once inside this mysterious world the protagonist can begin all voyages. She describes her sense of being lost aboard the houseboat:

> As soon as I was inside of the houseboat I no longer knew the name of the river or the city. Once inside the walls of old wood, under the heavy beams, I might be inside a Norweigian sailing ship traversing fjords, in a Dutch boyer sailing to Bali, a jute boat on the Brahmaputra. At night the lights on the shore were those of Constantinople or the Neva. The

> giant bells ringing the hours were
> those of the sunken Cathedral.(13)

The quest which involves the protagonist losing herself inside the houseboat has begun. "The river or the city" which she confronts is her subconscious. She is totally lost, but through this experience she begins her discovery of the self. As a neurotic, she must confront herself and her past in order to cure her suffering.

During her withdrawal the protagonist spends a lot of time alone on the houseboat. She watches the world outside go by, and she concentrates on objects within the houseboat. She dwells on a revolver given to her and fires it into the water.[27] She is afraid that she "might kill the Unknown Woman of the Seine again—the woman who had drowned herself here years ago and who was so beautiful that at the Morgue they had taken a plaster cast of her face"(14). There are several things which this incident might symbolize. If the reader takes all the stories of the collection as a whole, as I believe he must, he learns later in "The All-Seeing" that the painter, Jean, is in love with the Unknown Woman of the Seine, so here the

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[27]In Diary II, 126 the reader learns that Moricand, the model for the astrologer in "The Mohican," gave Nin the revolver.

protagonist could be attempting to alleviate Jean's suffering in some way. But the incident also seems to represent the protagonist's own confrontation with her subconscious. The revolver, with its natural association with evil and death and/or the Unknown Woman of the Seine might be said to represent that unknown past incident which has caused the protagonist's own neurosis. Later in the story, the protagonist becomes an Unknown Woman of the Seine herself as she takes a dream-voyage to the bottom of the Seine. Her dream-voyage seems to represent her desire for a return to the womb and the possibility of rebirth. She awakens in the night with wet hair and states that she is not cut off altogether, having been able to look through the water at all things. The music she hears inside a snail symbolizes her attraction to the womb.

Evolution back to some primeval existence is a key element in this surrealistic dream of a trip to the bottom of the Seine. Plants turn into flesh, and birds sing the soft chant of metamorphosis. Time and space lose all significance. Past and future become identical. Swordfishes pierce towers and birds decompose into snakes.[28] "Fish, plant, woman,

[28]In "The Eye's Journey" Hans' "bottom of the sea" or subconscious is described in the following way: "Fishes passed through one-eyed towers, anchors, and weeds grew out of hulks"(78).

equally aware, with eyes forever open, [are] confounded and confused in communion, in an ecstasy without repose"(18).

Images of air and breathing are also used to convey a metaphysical existence during her surrealistic dream. She ceases breathing in the present. Her breathing is lighter than breathing. Wind is nonexistent, and her lungs become leather urns. Most importantly, she breathes out "into the infinite, exhaling the mist of a three-quarter-tone breath, a light pyramid of heart beats"(19). She inhales the air of the unborn. She exists in a metaphysical state beyond reality and her body is "outside the blue rim of the nerves"(19). She rests in a deep and restful sleep free of anxiety and neurosis. She has gained the freedom of flow. She has touched the infinite and the absolute, and this experience has filled her with ecstasy. She loses the self in the dream to discover the self.

Another example of surreal fusion of the real and the dream occurs during the towing of the houseboat into exile. The King of England, who represents external, social order, is scheduled to visit Paris, and the houseboats are ordered to leave the area they inhabit. The Cleaning Department bureaucrats cut algae, the life around the green world of the house-

boat. They foreshadow the end of the dream world and the beginning of a return to reality. But the protagonist resists having her dream world taken away: "I was the last one left, still believing I would be allowed to stay. Every morning I went to see the chief of police. I always believed an exception would be made for me, that laws and regulations broke down for me"(22).

But in the end she too must remove her houseboat. Like the surreal world of the night, the surreal world of the day during the houseboat towing is represented by the fusion of real incidents and dreams. The tugboat Captain drinks wine and his wife fixes lunch in the real world while the houseboat moves down the river in a dream world:

> Now we were gliding along. I was running all over the houseboat, celebrating the strangest sensation I had ever known, this traveling along a river with all my possessions around me, my books, my diaries, my furniture, my pictures, my clothes in the closet. I leaned out of each little window to watch the landscape. I lay on the bed. It was a dream. It was a dream, this being a marine snail traveling with one's house all around one's neck.
>
> The dream rolled on again. We passed under a second bridge with the tugboat bowing down like a salute, passed all the houses I had lived in. From so many of these windows I had looked with envy and sadness at the flowing river and passing barges.

> Today I was free, and traveling with my bed and my books. I was dreaming and flowing along with the river, pouring water out with pails, but this was a dream and I was free.(23-24)

The protagonist moves but does not move. The houseboat travels down the river as the protagonist lies motionless on her bed. Her movement from her neurosis to psychological motion is represented by the flow of the dream, both in this dream and in the night dream. As in the surreal dream of the night, she travels primevally back in time to "being a snail traveling with one's house all around one's neck," and she passes "all the houses" she had lived in. The overwhelming image is that of freedom and flow, images of psychological motion.

Now that she has overcome her neurosis, the houseboat is no longer needed. The "Noah's Ark" that freed and saved her is taken to a cemetery for such things. She compares the discarding "to bringing an old horse to a slaughterhouse"(24). The "old horse" has carried her into a state of freedom and flow. She must now reenter the world of reality, and she must allow the houseboat to pass "into exile."

Contrasted with her new freedom, an elderly couple are described near the end of the story. They live in the cemetery for old houseboats, and they,

like most of the background figures in the story, represent those who lack psychological motion. They live in their dream of the past:

> The old man and woman who were the keepers of this cemetery had turned their cabin into a complete concierge's lodge to remind themselves of their ancient bourgeois splendor: an oil lamp, a tile stove, elaborate side-boards, lace on the back of the chairs, fringes and tassels on the curtains, a Swiss clock, many photographs, bric-a-brac, all the tokens of their former life on earth.(24)

As the protagonist moves out of her neurosis into a state of hope, she passes this pathetic couple trapped in the past. They, like all of the protagonists in my chapter one (including "The Mouse," "The Mohican," "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," "The All-Seeing," and "The Eye's Journey") represent those who will not compromise with the reality of the world around them and who never move beyond their own interior fatality. But the protagonists in my chapter two (including "Houseboat," "The Labyrinth," "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth," "The Child Born Out of the Fog," and "Hejda") do achieve a compromise between their own reality and the reality around them, and therefore they are able to move beyond their interior fatality.

"The Labyrinth"

Both "The Labyrinth" and "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" contain a protagonist-narrator who overcomes her interior fatality, and the stories must be taken together in sequence for complete understanding. "The Labyrinth" describes the experience of interior fatality and "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" celebrates the victory over interior fatality.

The reader finds himself in a labyrinth, unless he correlates the Diaries with these two stories. In both the diary itself represents interior fatality. A diary contains the life story of the recorder, and this past life of the narrator contains the events which have caused the interior fatality. The acts of recording the diary and of reading and rereading it represent both the symptom and the cure to interior fatality because the afflicted must relive his suffering and then move beyond it. As in "Houseboat," the reader is not given the specific events which have caused interior fatality and psychological paralysis. In both "The Labyrinth" and "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" the diary, the dream, the labyrinth, and the city are all interchangeable symbols for each other and for interior fatality.

The opening sentence of "The Labyrinth": "I was eleven years old when I walked into the labyrinth of my diary"(63) sets the stage. As in "Houseboat," the narrator reveals herself by discussing her personal life. In "Houseboat" the withdrawn narrator discussed a period of self-discovery during maturity. In "The Labyrinth" she discusses and probes the volatile age of puberty:[29]

> I wanted to remember in order to be able to return. As I walked, I walked with the desire to see all things twice so as to find my way back into them again. The bushes were soft hairy elbows touching mine, the branches swords over my head. They led me.(63)

This description of the "bushes" with "soft hairy elbows" and the "branches" which act as "swords" probably refers in Freudian symbols to puberty and the many painful sexual problems during that period.

But there seem to be complications other than puberty:

> I did not count the turns, the chess moves, the meditated displacements, the obsessional repetitions. The repetitions prevented me from counting the hours and the steps. The obsessions became the infinite. I was lost. I only stopped because

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[29]As in "Ragtime," the narrator here discusses her exposure to love.

> of the clock pointing to anguish. An anguish about returning, and about seeing these things but once. There was a definite feeling that their meaning could only be revealed the second time.(63)

Here the narrator undergoes the repetitive process, the desire to relive events which have caused interior fatality. Much like the narrator during her dream segments in "Houseboat", the narrator of "The Labyrinth" is lost during her voyage into the past through the diary. In my chapter one we saw protagonists of the stories who never get to, or else never go beyond, that point. But here the narrator has begun the first step in overcoming interior fatality, which is to confront the cause.

This confrontation involves a deep exploration of the subconscious. As in the dream sequences of "Houseboat," the narrator fuses animal, mineral, and vegetable, as in a surreal painting, to represent the voyage through the subconscious:[30]

> Fragments of the dream exploded during my passage through the moats, fell like cutting pieces from dead planets without cutting through the fur and cotton of this silence. The flesh and fur walls breathed and drops of white blood fell within the sound of a heartbeat. I did not want to advance into the silence, feeling I

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[30]Evans, Anais Nin, p. 69.

> might lose my voice forever. I moved my lips to remember the words I had formed, but I felt they no longer articulated words.(65)

As in "Houseboat," "The Mouse," "The Child Born Out of the Fog," and "Birth," the theme of birth is a central concern of "The Labyrinth." Also as in "Houseboat," the narrator appears to have regressed through dreams to the womb state as she describes how "the flesh and fur walls breathed and drops of white blood fell within the sound of a heartbeat." The child in the womb is symbolic of potential and hope for the future and of the possibility of rebirth or salvation in this life.

Earlier in "The Labyrinth," the narrator speaks of a "demon" that "devours." She does not clearly explain that the demon is the diary itself until "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth." But in "The Labyrinth" the narrator describes her experience of overcoming the demon—interior fatality—as if it were a birth:

> I was not moving any more with my feet. The cave was no longer an endless route opening before me. It was a wooden, fur-lined crib, swinging. When I ceased feeling the walls around me with fingers twisted like roots, seeking nourishment, the labyrinthian walk became enlarged, the silence became

> airy, the fur disintegrated, and I walked into a white city.(66)

The narrator continues her experience of overcoming the interior fatality, finding in it mystery, joy, and motion:

> It [the white city] was a honeycomb of ivory-white cells, streets like ribbons of old ermine. The stone and mortar were mixed with sunlight, with musk and white cotton. I passed by streets of peace lying entangled like cotton spools, serpentines of walls without doorways, veiled faces and veiled windows ascending, dissolving into terraces, courtyards, emptying into the river. I heard secret fountains of laughter, hooded voices.(66)

Her dream is interrupted. "I [the narrator] was awakened by a sound of paper unrolling. My feet were treading paper. They were the streets of my own diary, crossed with bars of black notes"(67). The narrator moves psychologically, walking through the diary of her interior fatality.

The experience of a diary can be both positive and negative. The positive aspect is to gain something or to learn from the past and to move on to the future. The diary, with its pages unnumbered, as the narrator tells us, can only give the partial truth since the absolute is elusive. The negative aspect of a diary's return to the past is the need to dwell there,

which is experienced by those who are overcome by interior fatality. The journey to the past is a dangerous one, but it cannot be avoided. The experience of the narrator, as indicated by the ending, is that, in spite of the past's horror and danger, the girl-woman survives:

> My feet touched the leaves of intricate flowers shriveling, paper flowers veined with the nerves of instruments. Enormous rusty keys opened each volume, and the figures passed armless, headless, mutilated. The white orifice of the endless cave opened. On the rim of it stood a girl eleven years old carrying the diary in a little basket.(67)

"Rusty keys," reminiscent of the key necessary to open the houseboat in "Houseboat," open the diaries and the demon is controlled. The story ends as it began, with the narrator controlling the diary within the basket. The narrator has moved out of the cave of interior fatality into the world.

"Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth"

"Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" is a continuation of "The Labyrinth" and both stories must be taken together in sequence for complete understanding. The second story of the set is a celebration by the narrator of her victory over her interior fatality, which she described in "The Labyrinth."

She states: "In the city of Fez I became aware that the little demon which devoured me for twenty years, the little demon which I fought for twenty years, had ceased eating me"(68). This demon, as the reader finds out in the final paragraph of the story, is the diary itself which contains the events that caused the interior fatality.[31]

As in "The Labyrinth," here in "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" the diary, the dream, the labyrinth, and the city are all interchangeable symbols for interior fatality. The narrator returns to Cadiz, and a change has taken place in her: "When I landed in Cadiz I found the palm trees, the Cathedral, but not the child I was"(68). Upon her return she becomes aware that her maturity has allowed her to overcome interior fatality.

The narrative shifts to a description of the city of Fez, which like Cadiz is a symbol for the interior fatality of the past. She discusses this city of the interior which she has overcome: "The last vestiges of my past were lost in the ancient city of Fez, which was so much like my own life, with its tortuous streets, its silences, secrecies, its labyrinths and its covered

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[31]A major part of "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" can be found in Diaries II, pp. 79-81. The trip to Cadiz and Fez is described in Diaries II, pp. 71-81.

faces"(68).[32] The voyage through interior fatality has been difficult but successful: "I was at peace walking through the streets of Fez, absorbed by a world outside of myself, by a past which was no longer my past, by sicknesses one could touch and name and see, visible sicknesses, leprosy and syphilis"(68). She has been cured of her interior fatality, and she attributes the cure in part to God: "I walked with the Arabs, chanted and prayed with them to a god who ordained acceptance. I shared their resignation"(68).

This story simply celebrates the joy of her cure: "Through the streets of my own labyrinth I walked in peace at last, strength and weakness welded in the Arab eyes by the dream"(68-69). And the past, though not completely forgotten, does not control the future:

> The blunders I made lay like the refuse on the doorsteps and nourished the flies. The places I did not reach were forgotten because the Arab on his donkey or on naked feet walked forever between the walls of Fez as I shall walk forever between the walls and fortresses of my diary. The failures were inscriptions on the walls, half effaced by time, and with the Arabs I let the ashes fall, the old flesh die, the inscriptions crumble. I let the cypresses alone watch the dead in their tombs, I let the madnesses be tied in chains as they tie their madmen.(69)

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[32]Nin's continuous novel is entitled Cities of the Interior.

The "blunders" and "madmen" which must be controlled are the interior fatality of the past. The narrator is shown in motion walking away from the problems of the past into the hope of the future. The images of death and decay common in most of the stories also symbolize the past which must be overcome. And she celebrates her personal victory over it: "I walk with them to the cemetery not to weep but carrying colored rugs and bird cages for a feast of talk with friends—so little does death matter, or disease, or tomorrow"(69).

Fez is filled with pain, suffering, disease, and death. The narrator is able to walk into and out of this city, this symbolic city of the interior, representing her ability to walk into and out of her interior fatality. Though she is able to accomplish this psychological movement, the agony of past suffering can never be completly erased. The final sentence of the story contains the image of this mixed accomplishment: "The little donkey—my diary burdened with my past—with small faltering steps is walking to the market..."(69). The narrator, though burdened with the suffering of life, casts off her demons as best she can and moves beyond her interior fatality.

"The Child Born Out of the Fog"

Sarah's life in "The Child Born Out of the Fog" seems to foreshadow the narrator's own future. Sarah, who is rejected by her first lover, falls in love with a black man and has a child named Pony, a name which creates the image of movement.[33] In the final story, "Birth," the narrator will also attempt to have a child. The opening paragraph of "The Child Born Out of the Fog" contains the image of the narrator in motion toward Sarah:

> Walking towards the river, walking through circles of children playing, walking under the arch of loitering men's eyes, walking into torn newspapers petaling upward, walking over sliced tin cans, walking past broken windows (the stones are lying on bare floors), walking over charred doorways (the fire did not last long, there was not much to feed on), walking past meager grocery stores, sleepy bars, passing people with concave stomachs of hunger.(82)

This story might be contrasted with "The Mouse," which opens with the image of the anchored and restricted houseboat. "The Mouse" is a story of abandonment, of a love relationship which ends, and of

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[33]Nin states in Diary IV, p. 145: "I went to see Nancy, the Negro guitarist, and their child. Their life touched me so much I sat down and wrote a story, "The Child Born Out of the Fog." I also had in mind Richard Wright and Helen, and their child."

abortion. Sarah is also abandoned by her lover but is reborn in a new love relationship, which is the beginning of a dream (symbolized by the fog) come true. The Mouse's dream ends in an abortion. Sarah's dream produces a child.

In the opening paragraph the narrator moves through a labyrinth of "loitering men's eyes," "sleepy bars," or background figures much like the hoboes of "Houseboat" who are controlled by interior fatality. They are helpless victims who lack any motion, in contrast with the narrator who is in motion. The narrator moves "towards the river," the constant symbol throughout the stories for the subconscious. Balanced against the possibility of the paralysis of interior fatality (the background figures) are "children playing" who represent the hope for a future of potential and development.

The narrator is attracted to Sarah because she has moved beyond her interior fatality of the past, a love affair with a blonde boy which ended. Sarah's dream for love and a family is realized with Don, a black man" with whom she had attended a political meeting." Sarah is able to realize her dream because she propels herself into life, despite setbacks, rather than withdrawing from life like the protagonists

described in my chapter one. The narrator admires Sarah and will, in fact, imitate her somewhat in "Birth."

Living in their isolated, private world Don and Sarah play a "game" much like the brother and sister in Cocteau's Les Enfants Terribles, a game which consists of tempting fate by daily trips into the city, the world of reality which persecutes them for miscegenation. A safe reunion at the end of the day is never a certainty. In reality the dream fog becomes a fog of restriction which society forces on them.

The important aspect of this story is that it shows the positive possibilities of overcoming interior fatality. In the sequence of stories the continuous narrator has progressed as an observer from the ugliness of the abortion of the maidservant in "The Mouse" to the beauty of having children in "The Child Born Out of the Fog".

"Hejda"

The veil, which symbolizes the confusion and restriction of interior fatality, is the consistent and detailed image which unifies "Hejda."[34] The story

34"Hejda" is the only story for which I am unable to find a corresponding model in the Diaries. The name Hejda, like many of the feminine names used by Nin (Djuna, Lilith, Sabina) is often pronounced more than one way, indicating the complexity of the female.

opens: "The unveiling of women is a delicate matter. It will not happen overnight. We are all afraid of what we shall find"(86). This unveiling is an understanding of the self through control over interior fatality and any other forces which may paralyze or destroy a person psychologically.

The interior fatality which Hejda must overcome is the restrictions placed on women. On one level Hejda is an Arab who is restricted for no other reason than being a woman. On a more important universal level Hejda represents all women who have been historically restricted by men down through the ages. Hejda is initially presented to us at the height of her primitive freedom:

> Hejda was then a little primitive, whose greatest pleasure consisted in inserting her finger inside pregnant hens and breaking the eggs, or filling frogs with gasoline and setting a lighted match to them. She went about without underclothes in the house, without shoes, but once outside she was heavily veiled and there was no telling exactly the contours of her body, which were at an early age those of a full-blown woman, and there was no telling that her smile had that carnivorous air of smiles with large teeth.(86)

The desire for nakedness, according to Rank, is stimulated by a desire to return to the paradisiacal

primal state before birth within the womb.[35] Within the womb the child is not confronted with society and such problems of restriction as symbolized by the veil. Hejda's early exhibitionist tendencies emphasize her desire for sensuality. This desire is also made evident by the quick development of her figure and the description of her large teeth. These desires are contrasted with society's desire, both literally and symbolically, to veil her.

At seventeen, the age for physical and emotional development for a woman, Hejda, leaving the veil behind, abandons the restrictions of the Orient for the freedom of Paris. But she maintains some of her mystery and "the impression of restraint" since "no one could feel sure of having seen her neck, arms or legs"(87). Her speech is described as "labyrinthian." The narrator also conveys the road to understanding Hejda as a labyrinth: "The passageways that led one to Hejda were as tortuous and intricate as the passageways in the oriental cities in which the pursued women lost themselves, but all through the vanishing, turning streets the eyes continued to signal to strangers like prisoners waving out of windows"(87). Her complexity is paradoxical. The elusive woman

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35Rank, The Trauma of Birth (New York: Robert Brunner, 1952), p. 33.

wants to hide like a prisoner, but she also wants to be rescued by a stranger if necessary. In other words, she desires both the security of a prison and the freedom of running away with a stranger.

Hejda's desire for freedom appears overwhelming: "Her desire to be noticed was always manifested, as in the Orient, by a bit of plumage, a startling jewel, a spangle pasted on her forehead between the eyes (the third eye of the Oriental was a jewel, as if the secret life so long preserved from openness had acquired the fire of precious stones)"(88). She is burning with desire to be seen by others. Her third eye represents her vision of freedom away from the restrictions of life placed on women by society.

Hejda, "who wants to be a woman of tomorrow"(88) is "always being thrust back into the harem, on a pillow"(88). Finally she does break through the "centuries of confinement and repression"(88) and becomes a painter. She becomes a new free woman.

But as Hejda wins one battle with restraint, she becomes involved with a second restraining force, her husband Molnar, who is shy, timid, and withdrawn much like Hejda herself. Molnar's name is very close to molar, which is the tooth used for grinding. Molnar, in fact, grinds the life out of Hejda.

Molnar denies his wife a separate existence and is not really in love with her but with himself. Their relationship together is nearly incestuous, and their life together is depicted as non-life, a life without motion:

> Their life together is stilted, windowless, facing inward. But the plants and fountains of the patio are all artificial, ephemeral, immobile. A stage setting for a drama that never takes place. There are colonnades, friezes, backgrounds, plush drops but no drama takes place, no evolution, no sparks. His women's figures are always lying down, suspended in space.(92)

This condition of non-motion represents Hejda's interior fatality, the nucleus of which is her relationship with Molnar. As she once moved beyond the veiling or restrictions placed by society on her womanhood, so she must now move beyond the restrictions placed on her by Molnar.

> In Molnar's hands she is being remolded, refashioned, stylized. He cannot remold her body. He is critical of her heaviness. He dislikes her breasts and will not let her ever show them. They overwhelm him. He confesses he would like her better without them. This shrinks her within herself and plants the seed of doubt of her feminine value. With these words he has properly subjugated her, given her a doubt which will keep her away from other men. He bound her femininity, and

> it is now oppressed, bound, even ashamed of its vulgarity, of its expansiveness. This is the reign of aesthetic value, stylization, refinement, art, artifice. He has established his domination in this. At every turn nature must be subjugated. Very soon he polishes her language, her manners, her impulses. He reduces and limits her hospitality, her friendliness, her desire for expansion.(90)

This is Hejda's "second veiling." She has gone full circle and returned to a restricted life. She must dissolve her relationship with Molnar in order to regain her freedom.

Molnar's world is a static one described by Nin as "a world of stage settings, static ships, frozen trees, crystal fairs, the skeletons of pleasure and color, from which nature is entirely shut off"(91). Hejda is "castrated" by this relationship as he denies her any freedom.

Because she is injected each day with Molnar's "poison," the poison of interior fatality, Hejda becomes ill. She needs to grow and expand. She must either break away from Molnar or become paralyzed in her psychological development by remaining with him.

Hejda's marriage deteriorates as she and Molnar fall into poverty. Because of Hejda's illness and because of this growing calamity, "the curtains turn

grey," "objects grow rusty," "food turns sour," and "the paints dry." Finally, Hejda is abandoned by Molnar, linking this story with "The Mouse" in which the maidservant was abandoned by her lover.

Free from Molnar, Hejda is now able to pursue a life of growth and of psychological motion. The veil once again is symbolically lifted and unwrapped. Nin encapsulates the entire story in the following paragraph:

> Several people help her to unwind the binding wrapped around her personality first by the family life, then by the husband. Someone falls in love with her ample breasts, and removes the taboo that Molnar had placed upon them. Hejda buys herself a sheer blouse which will reveal her possessions.(94)

Hejda moves beyond her interior fatality into a life of motion. Possibly strict moralists might criticize Hejda for her reaction against her past repression. But she has moved beyond a past which was repelling in its lack of activity, growth, life. In this next-to-the-last story the narrator has found a woman whom she will most likely imitate. The narrator may even be describing herself and the evolution of herself into a woman free from the restrictions of interior fatality. The evidence of this freedom is the action of bearing a child which occurs to the narrator-protagonist in "Birth," the final story of the collection.

CHAPTER III

Protagonists' Development Beyond Interior Fatality Uncertain

"Under A Glass Bell"

"Under A Glass Bell," the title story of the collection, contains the image of a glass bell which is used to convey the restraint and restriction imposed by interior fatality:

> The light from the icicle bushes
> threw a patina over all objects,
> and turned them into bouquets of
> still flowers kept under a glass bell.
> The glass bell covered the flowers,
> the chairs, the whole room, the pano-
> plied beds, the statues, the butlers,
> all the people living in the house.
> The glass bell covered the entire
> house.(36)

The image of the imposition of a glass bell suggests a sterile and artificial world withdrawn from ordinary life, both for this story and for the collection since each of the protagonists of the various stories experiences interior fatality and its "under a glass bell" effect.

Jeanne, the protagonist of "Under A Glass Bell," suffers an interior fatality which consists of psychological incest with her two brothers.[36] She and her brothers live in a dream world of their own creation, and the narrator reflects this unusual world in her description of the house:

> It was also a house that seemed about to vanish. The tip of the labyrinthian stairway leading to the gate lost itself among the potted plants, the turrets dissolved into the overhanging branches of old trees. The glass doors and windows opened without sound, the floors were so highly polished they looked transparent. The ceilings were powdered white, the demask curtains were still like mummy costumes.(35)

This house is different from the average dwelling. The need for continuous silence is a key element in its makeup. Things are not what they appear. There is an air of non-life. Sorrow seems to overwhelm the house, as symbolized by the chandelier's "shedding teardrops."

The house and its surroundings suggest and reflect the immobility of those who live in it: "On the mantelpiece, the shepherdesses, the angels, the gods and goddesses of porcelain, all seemed to have been caught while in motion by a secret enchantment and put to sleep with a dust of white sleep like those secret

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[36]Evans, Anais Nin, p. 77. Jeanne is described in Diaries I, pp. 167-73.

enchantments of nature enclosing the drops of water in dark caves and turning them into stalactite torches, candlesticks, hooded figures. That delicacy of design only created in a void, in great silence and great immobility"(36-37). The inhabitants, Jeanne and her brothers, appear to be under a spell and to be paralyzed in their predicament.

Jeanne and her brothers interact and create their world of psychological incest. Their non-life together is a living death which apparently all three desire. The story gives a dreamlike description of their strange relationship:

> Her face seemed stemless and drooped listlessly as she monologued endlessly: "Jean, Paul and I . . . nothing exists beyond our alliance. My own children do not mean as much to me as my brothers. I am devoted to my children only because I have given my word, I owe them that, but what I do for my brothers is a great joy. We cannot live without each other. If I am sick they get sick, if they are sick I get sick. All joys and anxieties are tripled."(36-37)

Jeanne, the reader finds out, has broken away from her relationship with her brothers to have children. She left the glass bell long enough to taste reality but she also returned. She states that she has an obligation to her children but that her real joy lies in her relationship with her brothers. Her brothers,

therefore, are more important extensions of herself than her children. This commitment, which is a reversal of the ordinary, is caused by her involvement and devotion to her own interior fatality, a relationship of psychological incest with her brothers.

Jeanne describes this devotion and world:

> I [Jeanne] am not living on earth. Neither are my brothers. We are dead. We reached such heights in love that it made us want to die altogether with the loved one, and so we died. We are living in another world. Our having bodies is a farce, an anachronism. We were never even born. We have no ordinary sensual life, no contact with reality. My marriage was a farce, my brothers' marriages meaningless.(37)

Jeanne seems to prefer her strange existence with her brothers over the reality which exists outside that existence. But she does venture into the outside, so much so that she has a husband and children. Although she has "a terrific fear" of the outside and becomes "blind" and "deaf in the street", the impression is given in the story that she is attracted to the outside and will periodically return to it. Ambiguously she lives in two worlds, with the world of interior fatality taking precedence.

The possibility of love for someone other than her brothers attracts Jeanne to the outside. A

Georgian Prince falls in love with her, and she attempts to reciprocate, but from the beginning he is unable to "say the magic phrase which would open her being"(39). On Christmas morning, symbolically the day celebrating the birth of the Saviour and the possibility of rebirth, Jeanne attempts a rebirth of her own by leaving her brothers. She carries a glass bird, which emphasizes the fragility of her separation from the glass bell-cage. Jeanne, even while on a taxi ride to meet the Prince, weakens and must return to her source of strength, her relationship with her brothers.

Jeanne needs encouragement for her break from her interior fatality, and she gets it from the narrator who, as the stories progress, takes a more and more active part in others' lives. In this case, the narrator sends Persian prints to Jeanne, who gets the impression that they are from the Prince. The device by the narrator works and is repeated. Jeanne actually visits the Prince several times but finally discovers that he is unable to dream. Jeanne must return to her life under the glass bell, yet she has proved that she can leave her paralyzing environment, leading the reader to speculate that she may leave again.

Jeanne returns to the garden where her brother Paul is asleep. She kisses his shadow, and then "Jeanne [walks] into the house and [enters] the room of mirrors. Ceilings of mirrors, floors of mirrors, windows of quicksilver opening on windows of quicksilver . . . Women imprisoned in the stillness of mirrors washed only by jellied colors"(40). For Nin the garden represents nature, fulfillment, or psychological motion.[37] Therefore, Jeanne appears to make some motion in her involvement with her brothers under the bell. In Rankian terms the shadow she kisses is the soul of her brother and her celebration with him in the garden appears to be a metaphysical one. But the shadow itself could possibly represent Jeanne's preoccupation with illusory relationships rather than real ones. Jeanne's mother lived such a life, planning dinners for Napoleon and living within a world of dreams and drugs.

Although Jeanne broke briefly from the world under her glass bell, she returned to it. The mirror, which is prominent under the glass bell, is used to symbolize the state of neurosis or interior fatality that exists in Jeanne's relationship with her brothers.[38]

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[37]Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 110.

[38]Ibid., p. 110.

Her situation is ambiguous. She both lives and dies with her brothers. Her psychological incest with them provides both a life of paralysis and a life of motion within the restraints of the glass bell.

The narrator gives the reader a surreal description of Jeanne's existence within this world:

> On her breast grew flowers of dust and no wind came from the earth to disturb them. Flowers of dust hung serenely. Around her waist a crinoline without its cover of lace and satin, a round crinoline like a bird cage. On her throat a brooch without stones, with its little silver hooks clutching emptiness. The fan in her hand was laceless and featherless, open and bare like winter branches. She breathed on the mirror. The dew of her breath on the mirror vanished. The mirror held nothing.(40-41)

As in "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," this surreal segment contains the fusion of animal, vegetable, and mineral for the same purpose of depicting the immobility which results when disparate elements neutralize one another. The objects which Jeanne wears (the shirt, the brooch, the fan) are all incomplete symbolizing the emptiness of life (her breath itself) under the glass bell:

> She wanted to be where she could not see herself. She wanted to be where everything did not happen twice. She walked, following the deep caverns of

> diminishing light. She touched ice and was bruised. To watch she must pause, and so what she caught was never the truth—the woman panting, dancing, weeping—it was only the woman who paused. The mirror was always one breath too late to catch the breathing.(41)

Her expressed desire "to be where everything did not happen twice" is her positive statement of confrontation against the endless cycle of her psychological incest with her brothers, her personal interior fatality. She appears to desire to divest herself of such complexity and to escape from her neurosis. "She [wants] to smash the mirror and be one"(41). She realizes that the mirror, or neurosis, means death. "She bowed nearer [to the mirror] to catch the immobility, the death"(41). But her vision of the self is limited by her neurosis: ". . . the caverns within the pupil of the eye diminish and close at the sight of death. The eye dead could not see the eye dead in the mirror"(41).

The story ends with a repetition of the scene with Jeanne and her brother in the garden:

> She ran into the somnambulistic garden. Her brother was still asleep like one enchanted. The glass bell which separated them from the world was visible in the light. Would Jeanne see it? Would she smash it and be free? She did not see it? She kissed the shadow of her brother. He awakened. She

> said: "Let me touch something warm. Save me from reflections. The mirror frightened me."(42)

Jeanne constantly returns to her brother, which is a repetitive symptom of her interior fatality. The garden, ordinarily a symbol of potential life and psychological motion, is here described as "somnambulistic," being preserved under the glass bell. Jeanne is frightened by her mirror vision of her neurosis. But her vision is only partial for when she is comforted by the warmth of her brother, she fails to see the glass bell which has now become visible.

She relates her vision to her brother: "I am afraid that of the three of us I will be the first one to die. I am the lightest. I saw in the mirror, not my death but the image of myself in the tomb. I was wearing a brooch without stones, a crinoline with all its silk covering eaten away"(42). The incomplete image of herself again emphasizes Jeanne's partial existence, her life-in-death under the glass bell. Jeanne has been frightened by her partial vision of truth which like a dream foretells the future.

However, the reader's interpretation of her vision includes several possibilities. She envisions "not [her] death but the image of [herself] in the tomb." She may remain with her brothers, and this

image of herself could predict her future of limited psychological motion resulting from the constraints of her existence under the glass bell.

Yet the final two sentences of the story may create another possible reading of her vision and future: "Her guitar was lying at her feet. As she said this [told of the vision] the string broke"(42). This ending seems to connect Jeanne with reality outside the glass bell. The possibility of her breaking away from the glass bell is symbolically indicated by the guitar string breaking. If she were to leave her brothers permanently, she would effectively kill her former life and her interior fatality as depicted in her vision.

However, the reader is only able to speculate on Jeanne's outcome with respect to her life with her brothers. The ending and the entire story are ambiguous. Jeanne appears to oscillate between succumbing to her interior fatality, like the protagonists of my chapter one, and overcoming her interior fatality, like the protagonists of my chapter two. Her situation remains ambiguous.

"Ragtime"

The hobo, a background figure in "Houseboat," "Mouse," and "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists," comes to the foreground in "Ragtime" as the figure who forces the narrator to confront her past. "Ragtime" is like "The Labyrinth" another story about the narrator's memory of her own exposure to love at the age of seventeen, her personal interior fatality.

The ragpicker-hobo appears to symbolize the subconscious which is capable of reactivating memories of the past. This ability is conveyed in a song which he chants at the end of the story:

> Nothing is lost but it changes into the new string old string in the new bag old bag in the new pan old tin in the-new shoe old leather in the new silk old hair in the new hat old straw in the new man the child and the new not new the new not new the new not new (61-62)

The song means not only that matter can neither be created nor destroyed but also that absolutely nothing—an idea, an emotion, a phrase, a relationship—is lost in the universe.[39]

The ragpicker and his philosophy are described by the narrator:

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[39]Evans, Anais Nin, p. 68.

> The ragpicker worked in silence and never looked at anything that was whole. His eyes sought the broken, the worn, the faded, the fragmented. A complete object made him sad. What could one do with a complete object? Put it in a museum. Not touch it. But a torn paper, a shoelace without its double, a cup without saucer, that was stirring. They could be transformed, melted into something else. A twisted piece of pipe. Wonderful, this basket without a handle. Wonderful, this bottle without a stopper. Wonderful, the box without a key. Wonderful, half a dress, the ribbon off a hat, a fan with a feather missing. Wonderful, the camera plate without the camera, the lone bicycle wheel, half a phonograph disk. Fragments, incompleted worlds, rags, detritus, the end of objects, and the beginning of transmutations.(58-59)

The ragpicker's philosophy is ambiguous and complicated. The story implies that he celebrates the fragment and despises complete objects. Yet the whole object could represent the person overcome by interior fatality: "A complete object made him sad. What could one do with a complete object? Put it in a museum"(58). Only things which are dead are kept in a museum. The "complete" whole object has reached a final point of stasis and can no longer grow and change.

Fragments which can deteriorate and decay into nothing could also represent the interior fatality, as they do in Jeanne's vision of her death and in the

narrator's description of Jeanne's existence in "Under A Glass Bell." There Jeanne is shown with an incomplete shirt, brooch, and fan to represent her incompleteness under the influence of interior fatality. In "Ragtime" the fragments appear to represent interior fatality of the past which, if overcome, can be transmuted into something worthwhile.

The city, a symbol used previously by the continuous narrator to represent the subconscious and interior fatality, is described in the opening paragraph of "Ragtime" again symbolically to represent the experience of suffering caused by interior fatality:

> The city was asleep on its right side and shaking with violent nightmares. Long puffs of snoring came out of the chimneys. Its feet were sticking out because the clouds did not cover it altogether. There was a hole in them and the white feathers were falling out. The city had untied all the bridges like so many buttons to feel at ease. Wherever there was a lamplight the city scratched itself until it went out.(58)

Like a comic visionary, the ragpicker clambers over the body of the city, a sleeping giant:

> Trees, houses, telegraph poles, lay on their side. The ragpicker walked among the roots, the cellars, the breathing sewers, the open pipe works, looking for odds and ends,

> for remnants, for rags, broken bottles, paper, tin and old bread. The ragpicker walked in and out of the pockets of the sleeping city with his ragpicker's pick. In and out of the pockets over the watch chain on its belly, in and out of the sleeves, around its dusty collar, through the wands of its hair, picking the broken strands. The broken strands to repair mandolins. The fringe on the sleeve, the crumbs of bread, the broken watch face, the grains of tobacco, the subway ticket, the string, the stamp. The ragpicker worked in silence among the stains and smells. His bag was swelling.(58)

The city over which the ragpicker walks is the universal subconscious, the city of the interior. The bits and pieces he finds made up the interior fatality of the past. He attempts to awaken the ailing city from the sleep of interior fatality, and the keys to this are the fragments of the past which must be constantly transmuted.

In The Novel of the Future Nin explained that the discarded objects in "Ragtime" suggest a relation to the past. These fragments of our lives are invested with emotional values. They are also used, she states, as visions of life which are often broken and incomplete. The objects are those we carry through life because of their meaning, or those we discard in order to move into the future.[40] In other words, the

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[40]Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 111.

objects represent interior fatality which must be discarded but can never be completely forgotten. The interior fatality of the past is a part of the present.

The story shifts from the ragpicker's confrontation with the city to his meeting with the narrator:[41]

> His shadow walked after him, bent, twice as long. The bag on the shadow was the hump of a camel. The beard the camel's muzzle. The camel's walk, up and down the sand dunes. The camel's walk, up and down. I sat on the camel's hump.(59)

The reader enters a surreal world of dreams as the narrator rides to the camp on the shadow of the ragpicker's bag, which becomes the hump of a camel. This scene seems to foreshadow a solution to the narrator's problem. Riding "up and down" could, in Freudian terms, symbolize sexual intercourse. The ragpicker seems to be taking the narrator on a trip "over the bump" of interior fatality, her exposure to sex at the age of seventeen.

During the visit to the ragpicker's camp the narrator encounters the ragpicker's wife, who has children and is pregnant. The narrator constantly

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[41]Nin actually visited a ragpickers' camp close to Paris in August, 1936 as recorded in Diary II, 104-106.

seems to come in contact with women with children, perhaps symbolizing a future for the narrator if she is able to move beyond the abortive love affair she experienced at seventeen. The final story, "Birth," proves that she will, but the reader is not certain until then.

Strange things happen while the narrator is at the ragpicker's camp. Life is lived with fragments. "The woman cuts her thread with half a scissor. The ragpicker reads the newspaper with broken specs. The children go to the fountain with leaky pails"(60). Action takes place with objects which are being transmuted, but the transmutation is not yet complete.

One such object is a clock with no hands. The ragpicker's wife determines that the object is a clock, yet the "tick, tick, tick, tick, tick" makes it seem like a time-bomb. This incomplete clock like a bomb seems to symbolize ragtime, the potentially destructive time of interior fatality which exhibits no definite forward motion.

The narrator comes in contact with another image of interior fatality, "a torso on stilts, with his head twisted to one side"(60). Like most of the hoboes and cripples throughout the stories, this torso represents the remnants of society who have been overcome by interior fatality.

The ragpicker acts as a prophet to save the narrator. He brings back an important fragment from her life, a blue dress that she wore on the night she kissed her "loved one deliriously" at the age of seventeen. The reader is not given any more details, but he can safely speculate that that night, with its sexual overtones, was an extremely important one to the narrator, one that she thought had died long ago. But, according to Freud, memories are not lost and details long forgotten may reappear in dreams.[42] The importance of that long past night at the dance is still alive for the narrator.

The ragpicker gives her a wisdom tooth and her long hair which she had cut, two objects which could symbolize the wisdom of maturity gained by experience. In returning these, the ragpicker might be trying to restore the narrator's virginity and lost innocence. He is attempting the impossible in giving her both innocence and wisdom.

The story ends: "All night the ragpicker sang the new not new the new not new until I fell asleep and they picked me up and put me in a bag"(62). The

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[42]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 54.

ragpicker does paradoxically know and not know things. But has he succeeded with the narrator?

This placing of her in the bag could be interpreted as symbolically placing her in the trash with other dead objects. Or the bag could be a womb symbol and his placing her there could mean her rebirth after achieving a personal victory over interior fatality.

The narrator has recalled some awareness of her past, but the reader learns nothing of its effects after her visit to the ragpicker's camp. Her falling asleep at the end maintains the story's ambiguity. It could represent a symbolic paralysis exerted over her in the form of psychological death caused by the memory of the night she wore a blue dress and encountered love. Or the ending could symbolize the feeling of satisfaction and contentment about her overcoming interior fatality which she has gained because of reliving it through the ragpicker.

CHAPTER IV

"Birth"—
A Metaphor for Interior Fatality

Although the final story, "Birth," does not fit neatly into any one of the three divisions of my previous chapters, it is an extremely important story which attempts to tie up all the loose ends by combining the primary themes of the other twelve: love, birth, and death. But such an undertaking may be impossible.

"Birth" is a revision of Nin's Diary which contains a segment describing her own stillbirth.[43] The story itself, the story of a stillbirth, seems to be a metaphor for the interior fatality of the others. The story opens with "The child," said the doctor, "is dead"(96), and throughout the stillbirth the narrator expresses fears of her own death so the reader becomes involved with the survival of the narrator herself rather than that of the child. This

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[43]The stillbirth incidents may be found in Diary I 338-349 and Diary II, 167-232.

theme of survival is present in all the stories which are about the personal life of the narrator ("Houseboat," "Ragtime," "The Labyrinth," "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth," and "Birth"). Despite the suffering which she has endured herself and has seen in others, she seeks to live and to have children.

The reader is told near the end of the story that a "demon lies inert at the door of the womb, blocking life"(100). "Demon" was the name used to describe the diary which was the cause of the interior fatality of "The Labyrinth" and "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth." In "Birth" the demon is a dead girl-child which will kill its mother unless it is removed. In both stories the demon symbolically represents an experience of interior fatality which will kill psychologically unless it is removed.

In "Birth" the child is referred to as a "dead fragment" and "a fragment of a life like a fragment of the past"(96), images which were used in "Ragtime" to show that the past is never lost. Death and the possibility of death, as already mentioned in discussions of the previous stories, represent the immobilized psychological condition which is caused by interior fatality. But the narrator survives the ordeal, which seems to represent a symbolic rebirth for her.

But the reader learns very little about the narrator, either before or after the stillbirth. The father of the dead child is never mentioned. The dream sequence of some of the previous stories is absent in this story of a reality so stark that it is almost unbearable. The story simply ends with the "birth" of the dead child. In a letter to Nin I asked her why she had entitled a story about a stillbirth "Birth". She replied that the title was used because of the rebirth of the mother.

After Nin's real stillbirth, she wrote the following in the Diary, which might have been used as the conclusion to "Birth":

> I tired of thinking. I fell asleep with my hands folded on my breasts as for death. And I died again, as I had died other times. My breathing was another breathing, an inner breathing. I died and was reborn again in the morning, when the sun came on the wall in front of my window.
>
> A blue sky and the sun on the wall. The nurse had raised me to see the new day. I lay there, feeling the sky, and myself one with the sun, and abandoning myself to the immensity and to God. God penetrated my whole body. I trembled and shivered with an immense joy. Cold, and fever and light, an illumination, a visitation, through the whole body, the shiver of a presence. The light and the sky in the body, God in the body and I melting into God. I melted into God. No image, I felt space,

> gold, purity, ecstasy, immensity, a profound ineluctable communion. I wept with joy. I knew everything I had done was right. I knew that I needed no dogmas to communicate with Him. By living my life, my passions, my creations to the limit I communed with the sky, the light, and with God. I believed in the transfusion of blood and flesh. I had come upon the infinite, through the flesh and blood and love, I was made whole. I cannot say more. There is nothing more to say. The greatest communions come so simply.[44]

This quotation from the Diary, omitted from "Birth," might have made an excellent ending to the short story in terms of the rebirth of the narrator which Nin, in her letter to me, described as the central purpose of the story. This quotation involves a profound relationship that Nin had with God: "God penetrated my whole body." She has a communion with Him which she describes in physical, sexual terms. Yet this description of a metaphysical relationship suggests an intimate rendering of spirituality more appropriate to the narrator of the Diaries than the narrator of Under A Glass Bell, which is possibly the reason for its being excluded from that collection's final story, "Birth".

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[44]Nin, Diary I, 347-348.

In Art and Artist Rank discusses the importance of the birth theme as it relates to the metaphysical:

> Already, in that earliest stage of individualization, the child is not only factually one with the mother but, beyond all that, one with the world, with a Cosmos floating in mystic vapours in which present, past, and future are dissolved. The individual urge to restore this lost unity is an essential factor in the production of human cultural values.[45]

The concentration of most psychologists has been on the child and his development. But Nin shifts her emphasis from the child to the mother's search for her lost unity in the universe and beyond. The circumstances of suffering which accompany this birth seem to magnify the narrator's perception of the universe.

The indifference of the doctor and nurses and their inability to help the narrator in "Birth" is consistent with the depiction of the medical profession throughout the stories. Nin is not attempting to disparage all medical personnel but rather to show that the victim of interior fatality must cure himself. The cure for interior fatality consists in returning to the troubled past, accepting it, and

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[45]Rank, Art and Artist (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), p. 113.

moving beyond it into new regions of experience which appear not in this story but in Nin's diary.

CONCLUSION

The overriding theme of the thirteen stories in Under A Glass Bell is interior fatality, and the individual reaction of each protagonist to this theme enables the stories to be divided into three groups: the protagonist is contained by his interior fatality (my chapter one), the protagonist overcomes his interior fatality and moves beyond it (my chapter two), and the protagonist acts ambiguously with respect to his interior fatality so that the reader is uncertain of the outcome (my chapter three). Nin views neurosis as a universal condition: "There is no denying that we are suffering from a collective neurosis and the novel which does not face this is not a novel of our time."[46] In The Novel of the Future Nin gives her definition of this neurosis: "For me neurosis is the contemporary expression of romanticism, where the ideal wish was unfulfillable and ended in withdrawal."[47] Through her work,

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[46]Nin, Realism and Reality (New York: Gemor Press, 1947), p. 19.

[47]Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 35.

which is concentrated on man's battle with neurosis, Nin attempts to help the reader overcome his own interior fatality.

One experience that can be used to overcome neurosis, or interior fatality, is the dream, which is an important part of Nin's writing. She explains:

> Now I place you in a world which is like the world of the dream, sparingly furnished only with the objects which give us our daily gravitational security. It is because I assume that the world of the dream like the world of my books is actually the way we re-experience our life, and I expect people to recognize its contours or its lack of contours without fear (the most disturbing element of the dream is that it has no frames, no walls, no doors and no boundaries . . . like my novels). Whatever anxiety my writing may create can only be the anxiety people feel in the presence of an incomplete but highly significant dream.[48]

The "anxiety" is caused by an encounter with interior fatality which is the first step toward the cure. The protagonists in my chapter one either never make this encounter or they never move beyond it. They are controlled by their interior fatalities, whereas the protagonists in my chapter two confront their interior fatalities, overcome them, and move beyond them into fulfilling lives.

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[48]Nin, Realism and Reality, pp. 16-17.

Another cure for neurosis (which may also be a cause) is love, another theme which unites the collection. Love is presented in many forms. Incest and homosexuality, both of which Nin views as a love of the self and as related directly to one another, appear respectively in "Under A Glass Bell," and "The Mohican."[49] In "Under A Glass Bell" Jeanne and her brothers live a strange withdrawn experience of psychological incest. But Jeanne has broken away from her brothers long enough to marry and have children. She has also been involved with a Prince, and the reader is led to believe that Jeanne's salvation from the restrictions of her relationship with her brothers will come from some other love or it will not come at all. The astrologer in "The Mohican" is trapped in his failure to reach absolute knowledge and in his homosexuality.

The consequences of lovers who have been abandoned are also treated by Nin. The maidservant in "The Mouse" is abandoned by her lover after he gets her pregnant. The Mouse is unable to accept her abandonment and decides to abort her child. A similar situation is presented in "The Child Born Out of the Fog" but the results are different. Sarah has a love

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[49]Evelyn Hinz, The Mirror and the Garden, p. 113.

affair which does not work out. But she moves beyond this setback into a new relationship which results in the birth of a child. In "Hejda" Molnar abandons his sick wife but this abandonment frees Hejda from the restrictions of her impossible marriage.

The difficulties arising from a woman's initial contact with sexual love are treated in "The Labyrinth," "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth," and "Ragtime". In both "The Labyrinth" and "Through the Streets of My Own Labyrinth" the emotions of the volatile change from puberty to adolescence are explored in that "labyrinth" of memories fixed in the narrator's diary beginning when she was eleven. The reader is not told specifically that the narrator's movement into puberty is the "demon" which causes suffering, but he can safely speculate that this is the cause because of the diarist's age and because of sexual symbols like "soft hairy elbows" which are used in the story. In "Ragtime" the ragpicker shows the narrator her blue dress which she remembers having worn to a dance when she was seventeen. She recalls having walked up a hill and having kissed her loved one deliriously. These personal stories relate how, with suffering, the narrator has safely moved from adolescence into the maturity of encountering the opposite sex.

As a part of her own cure for neurosis, the narrator becomes more emotionally involved with the protagonists as the stories progress. In "The Mouse" the narrator was merely an observer who tried to help the Mouse. In "Under A Glass Bell" the narrator plays Cupid to Jeanne, attempting to get her romantically involved with the Prince. In "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists" she initially becomes attracted to the strange world of Pierre but then breaks with him least she become trapped in his unhealthy life. In "The All-Seeing" the narrator and Jean are strongly attracted, but Jean dwells in a dream world in which he concentrates his love on the dead Unknown Woman of the Seine. The narrator avoids falling into the trap of Jean's dream, as she must also avoid Hans' dream world in "The Eye's Journey." In "The Child Born Out of the Fog" and "Hejda" the narrator is attracted to women who seem to experience psychological growth. In "The Child Born Out of the Fog" Sarah's life fascinates the narrator because Sarah has moved from one love affair which did not work out to another in which she has children. And Hejda has attained freedom from a marriage which imprisoned her. After witnessing the suffering of the lives she touches, the narrator evidently decides to live herself, as she attempts to have a child in the final story, "Birth."

Closely related to the themes of interior fatality and love, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth appears throughout the stories. In both "Houseboat" and "The Mouse" water is used as a symbol of the unconscious and of birth. In "The Eye's Journey" water images such as "a bottom of the sea cluttered with objects from shipwrecks"(78) depict Hans' subconscious, death by psychological drowning being used to represent his condition of being controlled by interior fatality. In "Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealistes" such a death threatens others as well: "[Pierre] was sitting taut, with his vision burning in the pupil of his eye, and the intensity of the man who committed suicide every moment, but unwilling to die alone, and bringing all others down with him into his death"(48). Rebirth consists of overcoming interior fatality. Sarah accomplishes this in "The Child Born Out of the Fog", and the child she has symbolizes her rebirth after overcoming her interior fatality.

The dream often signals the existence of interior fatality. The mirror and the garden are used throughout the stories to symbolize the confrontation between neurosis versus psychological motion. In "Under A Glass Bell" Jeanne views her interior fatality within mirrors. She seeks and gets partial relief by moving to the garden. The image of non-movement (paralysis,

imprisonment, a sense of being lost, the labyrinth) versus movement (physical motion, travel, ability to think and dream freely) set up the contrast between neurosis and psychological motion. The most extreme example of non-movement to represent neurosis is Pierre's life in "Je Suis Le Plus Malade," which ends with him in an asylum bound by a strait jacket. In "Houseboat" the narrator's movement in her houseboat is an example of physical motion which represents psychological motion. The pattern of movement, non-movement, and movement corresponds to the birth, death, and rebirth theme and to the opposition between the paralysis of interior fatality and the possibility of movement beyond it.

The majority of the stories concern artists, perhaps because they usually live intense lives. In most of the stories the artist is misunderstood and is a victim of society. He is shown in the dual role of searching for the truth and of having a message which he must relate to society at all costs. But in most cases this vision does not encompass a solution to his own problems. He desires to save the world, yet he is unable to save himself. He seeks a temporary escape in the form of alcohol, drugs, perversions. He is surrounded by hoboes and cripples who are deprived of a normal existence and who heighten his own

abnormal existence. Doctors, nurses, and even the narrator are unable to help him since his cure lies within himself.

A letter I received from Nin stated: "There is no consistency or purpose in the sequence of the stories." However, I believe that the stories are arranged in a logical sequence when examined in terms of my three psychological categories as follows:

"Houseboat" (+)
"The Mouse" (-)
"Under A Glass Bell" (+-)
"The Mohican" (-)
"Je Suis Le Plus Malade Des Surrealists" (-)
"Ragtime" (+-)
"The Labyrinth" (+)
"Through The Streets of My Own Labyrinth" (+)
"The All-Seeing" (-)
"The Eye's Journey" (-)
"The Child Born Out of the Fog" (+)
"Hejda" (+)
"Birth"

The stories of my chapter one are negative (-) since the protagonist is controlled by interior fatality. The stories of my chapter two are positive (+) since the protagonist overcomes her interior fatality. The stories of my chapter three are both positive and negative, or ambivalent (+-), because the outcome of the protagonist is uncertain. My chapter four, which contains "Birth," falls into none of the above categories, possibly because its stillbirth acts as

a metaphor for the cyclical polarities (death in life perhaps leading to rebirth) of the entire collection.

The stories are arranged so that they very nearly alternate between positive and negative psychological development. The last six of the final seven alternate between two positive stories, two negative stories, and two positive stories.

In the opening story "Houseboat" the protagonist/narrator moves beyond an awareness of interior fatality into a life of fulfillment. The middle group of stories ("Ragtime," "The Labyrinth," and "Through The Streets of My Own Labyrinth") concentrates on the narrator's interior fatality which develops from her sexual awareness during the age of puberty. In "Hejda," the final positive story, the protagonist becomes aware that she must leave her husband and the restrictions he imposes. In considering the positive stories as a group, we see how the protagonist becomes aware of her personal interior fatality and then moves beyond it toward the possibility of a more fulfilling life.

In the negative stories the narrator becomes aware of the protagonists' interior fatalities, and then when the protagonist fails to become aware or fails to move beyond his interior fatality, she breaks

off her relationship with the protagonist, lest she be destroyed by his interior fatality. In the positive stories either the narrator/protagonist or else the protagonist himself becomes sufficiently aware of the dangers of interior fatality to overcome it. In the ambivalent stories the protagonist becomes aware of interior fatality but the outcome is uncertain.

Nin's single greatest creation is her Diaries. Her form of the short story and novel must be considered a contribution to experimental fiction. Since science is constantly undergoing change in this, the age of the jet and Einstein's relativity, Nin asks why should the novel not change also? But "the novel still lags behind theater, film, and painting, behind modern dance and modern architecture."[50] And what happens to those writers who attempt to modernize the novel? "The writers who had explored the realms which in painting were acceptable as cubism, impressionism, abstraction, surrealism, or hard edge were the untouchables. They were "subjective," "personal," "esoteric," on the periphery of "mainsprings of American literature."[51] For Nin, America has rejected the novel of change or the novel of the future.

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[50]Nin, The Novel of the Future, p. 168.

[51]Ibid., p. 166.

The critic has difficulty placing Nin on a scale of value in terms of other authors in the twentieth century. Such an exercise may prove fruitless. Certainly the list of the top ten authors will change as authors gain and lose momentum much like the protagonists of Under A Glass Bell. One gigantic problem is that Nin is alive, and the critic of today is in the midst of her work, unable to look at her with the perspective of time and works which have been written by new authors based on her influence.

One method of assessing Nin, however, might be to compare her with two classic authors, Tennessee Williams and D. H. Lawrence. One need only think of Laura in The Glass Menagerie or Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire to realize that Tennessee Williams also presents protagonists who suffer from interior fatality. Like Nin, Williams also uses sensuous language to describe his view of American neurosis. Because of America's desire for the visual (drama, TV, movies), Tennessee Williams is famous whereas only a few are familiar with Nin and her literary work. The American acceptance of Williams' plays and movies proves that Nin has concentrated on the right theme but for the American public her medium has little popularity.

D. H. Lawrence was an important influence on Nin. In 1932 long before Lawrence was the classic he is today, Nin wrote a book of criticism on him, D. H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study. Her place in literary history may well be the female equivalent of Lawrence. Like Lawrence, she has been harshly criticized by critics who fail to understand what she is doing. Of her relationship with Lawrence, she relates in The Novel of the Future: "D. H. Lawrence was the most important influence because he sought a language for instinct, emotion, and intuition, the most inarticulate part of ourselves. Also from Lawrence I learned that naked truth is unbearable to most, and that art is our most effective way of overcoming human resistance to truth."[52]

Through her work with Lawrence Nin developed her poetic prose. She discusses her use of poetic prose in The Novel of the Future:

> In poetic prose a demand is made upon our senses and imagination. The magic use of words is intended as an invitation to participate. If one prefers objectivity one should read history, psychology, philosophy, science. Fiction has a different purpose. The function of the novel is to give you an emotional experience. To put you in direct contact with lives you may not otherwise have a chance to live. The writing is intended to sweep you along like a ritual. A living relationship to all things animates

> writing with life and warmth. A personal relationship to all things gives life.[53]

Nin's fiction sends forth the "invitation to participate" in life after overcoming interior fatality.

[53] Ibid., p. 168.

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