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# The Voice as an Object of Desire in the Work of Ann Quin

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## **The Voice as an Object of Desire in the Work of Ann Quin**

By Jennifer Komorowski

### **Abstract**

This thesis is a discussion of the voice as an object of desire in the work of Ann Quin. In life Quin suffered from bouts of silence and after death her work was itself silenced; I believe investigating the voice as an object is a fitting way to think about her work. My first chapter discusses the object voice as a silent, interior voice using the concept of the voice which Mladen Dolar develops to expand on Jacques Lacan naming the voice as an object of desire. In the second chapter I continue my discussion of the object voice with a specific focus on the voice in the fictional journal entries and letters which Quin injects throughout her novels. My final chapter discusses Quin as part of a tradition of women's writing in literature and theory, which focuses on topics surrounding psychoanalysis and how she has influenced writers who follow her on this continuum.

**Keywords:** Ann Quin; Jacques Lacan; Mladen Dolar; Julia Kristeva; Kathy Acker; Joan Copjec; psychoanalysis; women writers; avant garde; experimentalism; *objet petit a*; object voice; Oedipus complex; Electra complex

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: The Silent Voice.....	4
Chapter Two: Letters and Journals.....	32
Chapter Three: Women Writers.....	62
Works Cited.....	80
Curriculum Vitae.....	85

## Introduction

Ann Quin is a British experimental writer who wrote from the 1960s until her death in 1973. Unlike contemporaries B.S. Johnson, Alan Burns, and Robert Nye, she was quickly forgotten after her death, and is only now regaining scholarly attention. Quin has been credited with influencing later writers, such as Kathy Acker and Stewart Home; and I believe her work plays a crucial role in understanding and contextualising the emergence of postmodern culture. Quin suffered through bouts of silence: once after a breakdown; but also on the stage, which hampered her aspirations of becoming an actor with the Royal Academy of Arts (Buckeye 37). Quin's writing was a way "to speak against the dominant, relentlessly petit bourgeois voice" (37), thus making it political; but it was also her "obsession" (38), which combined biographical elements into her fictional world. She published four novels during her lifetime: *Berg* (1964), *Three* (1966), *Passages* (1969), and *Tripticks* (1972); her final unfinished novel *The Unmapped Country* will be published in early 2018. *Berg* was well received and she was the first woman to be awarded the D. H. Lawrence Fellowship, allowing her to travel to the United States; she also received the Harkness Fellowship, awarded to the most promising Commonwealth writer under the age of 30 (Buckeye 13). Before her suicide in 1973, Quin's writing itself was silenced when two unpublished novels were destroyed while she was receiving psychiatric treatment.

The theme of silence in Quin's life and in her writing led me to examine the voice as an object in her novels; her writing style departs from tradition and she incorporates poetry, notes, lists, illustrations, catalogues, interviews, correspondence, and journal entries (38). It is through these different methods that Quin is able to undo the silencing of her characters, and herself, and reveal the voice to us as *objet petit a*. Silence is the preminent form of the object voice, and Quin wields silence throughout her works in order to expose the Borromean knot of the Real, the

Imaginary, and the Symbolic. By forcing the confrontation with the silent voice as *objet petit a* she exposes desire and reveals the possibility of discovering feminine jouissance. Following Renata Salecl's interpretation of Kafka's retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*, the concept of silence as a way to hold on to feminine *jouissance* is made clear. The sirens subjectivise themselves through the act of falling in love with Odysseus, and as a result they fall mute; Salecl interprets this silence as a way for the sirens to preserve their *jouissance*, and rather than become "ordinary" women by ceding this *jouissance* they are worthy of being made mythic. Like Kafka's sirens, Quin rejects symbolic castration through silence and death; the physical silence of her life is translated on the page into the written word which conveys to us the voice as *objet petit a*.

In the first chapter I discuss the Lacanian concept of the voice as *objet petit a*, with a specific focus on the object voice as a silent voice. Picking up from Mladen Dolar's discussion of the Lacanian object voice, this section of my thesis focuses on how the object voice is located at a theoretical impasse where the sonorous voice is divorced from the unheard, silent voice. I go on to provide close readings of Quin's works which work in conjunction with a continued discussion of the voice as the object voice *par excellence*.

I continue to discuss the silent voice in the second chapter with a specific focus on journal entries and letters found within Quin's novels. This chapter combines Maurice Blanchot's ideas on the work, writing, and journals with Lacanian theory. Quin uses a variety of techniques, such as letters and journals, to craft her writing so it reads like a stream of consciousness transposed onto the page. Continuing a close reading of her works, I discuss how Quin appropriates the writer's journal and incorporates it into her work as a method of transposing the internal, silent voice onto the page. I contend that letters serve the same purpose

in her writing, but also allow room for Quin to express the voices of other characters; these voices are haunting and often serve as the blaring voice of the superego.

In the final chapter I discuss Quin's work as part of a constellation of women writers active in the 1960s and 70s. In contrasting the work of Quin with Kathy Acker, an heir to Quin's experimental writing style, I consider the way in which women writers during this time period experimented with language and writing in order to find a way to express feminine *jouissance*. By putting writers like Quin and Acker in conversation with theorists like Joan Copjec and Julia Kristeva, we can discuss women's desire and how it has been expressed through the context of psychoanalysis.

## Chapter One: The Silent Voice

The concept of the voice as a psychoanalytic object is taken up by Mladen Dolar in *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), where he expands upon Jacques Lacan's theory of the voice as an object of desire, rather than as a metaphor for expression. In his earlier article "His Master's Voice" (2003) Dolar discusses the silent voice, an idea of central importance to Quin's writing because she suffered through bouts of silence in her life. Her writing is an attempt to express her voice and use it as a "means of resistance against a world which holds a gun to her head" (Buckeye 28). Dolar writes that in an election, an event which maintains a "ritualistic use of the voice," the electoral voice of the voters "has to be given in writing...in complete isolation, in complete silence" and must be "submitted to arithmetic...entrusted to a written sign" ("His Master's Voice" par. 56; par. 55). He continues the discussion of silence and its relation to voice in *A Voice and Nothing More*, where he determines that this division is "more elusive than it seems" and sometimes we do not hear all of the voice and that sometimes "the most deafening thing can be silence" (14). In solitude, another type of voice appears; the unconscious voice—this is "the internal voice, a voice which cannot be silenced" (14). In *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* (1996) Slavoj Žižek interprets Lacan's *objets petit a*, the voice and the gaze, as "empty [objects]" (*Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* 92). This leads him to conclude that the "object voice par excellence" is silence (92). This internal voice, "the epitome of a society that we carry with us and cannot get away from," also plays an important role in the novels of Ann Quin (*A Voice and Nothing More* 14).

Robert Buckeye views Quin's refusal of the writing tradition as a refusal for her writing to be engulfed by society, an idea which seems to conflict with Dolar's idea of the internal voice as the "epitome of ...society" (14). Instead of these ideas being at odds with one another, Quin's



internal voice can be viewed as the fantasy of a new society, one where rejecting bourgeois norms was possible; thus her writing serves as a screen which separates the real (bourgeois society) and her fantasy from one another.

Dolar departs from the phonocentric idea that “the [spoken] voice is the basic element of language” (37). The spoken voice consists of utterances which contain a “dimension of signification,” and in contrast the object voice arises from the paradoxical point of intersection between language and body (72; 73). This point is a theoretical impasse where we can find the *objet petit a*. It is here that the voice must be separated from the spoken voice and where we come to encounter “an unheard voice” that we must extract from the heard voice (73). Dolar writes that it is not the phonological “voice as a residue” that provides a “relationship to presence” but it is the “dead letter which disrupts the living voice,” which we find in writing (36, 37). Lacan believed that “the object voice has to be divorced from sonority,” and if we follow this logic, by putting pen to paper the physical voice is dismantled, leaving only a “residue” which is Lacan’s “paradoxical object voice” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 159; 38; 38). In Quin’s writing she experiments in several ways to divorce the voice from sonority. In her short piece “Motherlogue” (1969) from *The Transatlantic Review* she provides a dialogue between mother and daughter in which we are able to fully understand the conversation through only the dialogue of the mother. The daughter’s complete silence, a silence that can be read as a version of Quin herself, divests her of the sonic voice; instead of allowing “Motherlogue” to be read as a dialogue, Quin has interrupted it with complete silence. This disruption deprives us of the ability to read the dialogue aloud by completely killing the voice of the daughter.

Dolar continues his analysis of the voice by turning to Derrida, who believed that when “the voice is heard (understood)—that undoubtedly is what is called consciousness”; although

we cannot physically hear Ann Quin speaking, her writing is described by Robert Buckeye as often seeming to be “nothing more than stream-of-consciousness” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 38, Buckeye 39). The similarity between Derrida’s description of the voice and the interpretation of Quin’s written voice, when read together with psychoanalytic theory, is interesting because it illustrates how close the physical, spoken voice and the written word can be. The voice as silence undermines the privileging of the spoken word over the written word because it is in the process of writing that one exists in a state of silence and undergoes the inspirational process which always ends in reticence. Dolar writes, “the voice...is the royal road to the drives, the part which ‘doesn’t speak’” (157). Dolar then goes on to ask how we can hear this silence. He compares the silence of the voice to that of the analyst during psychoanalysis. The analyst is, as Lacan avers, “le Mort,” and is supposed to listen in silence to the analysand during their session, but what does the analyst actually *do*? She is the interpreter of the analysand. This means that when she sits in silence her own internal voice is giving meaning to the words of the patient, and then she proceeds to write down her interpretations; that said, she is also interpreting what unconscious knowledge surfaces above and beyond the denotative “value” of the spoken word. Thus, we receive a stream of consciousness through the analyst, not directly from the analysand, written down in the form of notes. In taking on this role the analyst must become “the perfect love object, neither smothering, nor absent” in order to meet the demands of the analysand’s fantasy (*The Lacanian Subject* 89); however, analysts must remain aware that they are not really part of the analysand’s fantasy, they are merely playing a role as the object of desire—as the “subject supposed to know.”

Quin’s writing takes on the role of both the analysand and the analyst at once. We receive a stream of consciousness from her which has been carefully crafted and interpreted in much the

same way that the analyst interprets the analysand's words. Explaining the relationship between analyst and analysand in *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (1995), Bruce Fink explains that analysands will tell analysts what they believe they want to hear, and it is the job of analysts to punctuate, or interrupt, the discourse of the analysand and in doing so create "an enigma of the analyst's desire" (*The Lacanian Subject* 66). The desire of the Other, *objet petit a*, in the relationship between the analyst and analysand is perfectly summed up in the object voice: the analysand provides a discourse through their physical voice which the analyst destroys by translating it, by putting it into writing in the form of notes. This theoretical impasse is the point at which the voice as *objet petit a* exists as a remainder. Like the double interpretation found in Freud's analysis of Little Hans, the internal voice is also interpreted twice. The first interpretation occurs when the internal voice becomes apparent and its content is revealed to Quin herself, acting the role of father figure. Rather than conform to the expectations of bourgeois society, Quin rebels and in so doing frames her internal voice through a sort of simulacrum to the societal or psychoanalytic framework. The second interpretation comes when the voice is put to paper and is reinterpreted into the written word. Quin reflects upon this process of interpretation in her final, unfinished novel *The Unmapped Country* where she tells the story of Sandra, a patient in a mental institution, who is subjected to interpretation by psychiatrists and also surrounded by voices. The novel begins with Sandra speaking with her psychiatrist; it is later revealed that she views this as a confrontation between them as both patient and psychiatrist, and "woman and man" (*The Unmapped Country* 252). The violence which Quin sees in the analyst's interpretation can be found in her descriptions of his writing and in the man himself. She writes that he had his "pen poised, ready to stab yet another record," and Sandra knows that even if she does not speak "he would continue writing...every gesture noted" (252).

Thus the audible voice is not required for interpretation; the silent body itself becomes a site of analysis: when she is in the company of this monstrous analyst, she is horrified by the “bunches of spiders on his knuckles” and the “black tentacles [creeping] from his nostrils” (252). These projections from the analysand are what Lacan would call “an inducement of paranoia,” and the subsequent projections of “bad internal objects” by the analysand onto the analyst are connected to the bad parent (Iversen 41). This analyst, as an object of transference, is a strange mixture of the mundane and the monstrous: he has thin hair, a stained waistcoat, and nicotine-stained fingers, but Sandra sees him as a monstrous clown and this influences what she says to him, verbally and non-verbally. He tells her, “don’t be influenced, don’t be moved, don’t be lured into reacting to me” (253). But it is this very hortation that brings forth the problem with analysis—we never really receive the stream of consciousness voice directly from the source; instead, it changes in reaction to its circumstances.

Sandra later writes out “Dialogue with Analyst” in her journal, a very different conversation than the one she has with her actual analyst. Here the patient tells the analyst her dreams and fantasies with no prodding or questioning from the analyst; he only speaks to agree with her by saying things like “ahh, it makes sense,” “ummhuh,” or “the logical sequence” (258-259). This conversation is written in order to juxtapose itself to the initial conversation with the psychiatrist, to whom Sandra will only say things like, “I don’t like your madness,” “no,” or “Fuck you” (252-253). The ease with which the patient in Sandra’s journal confesses things such as “I would find my father and stab him in the back, which of course means I really want him to fuck me (pause) ahh and then I was angry because of the guilt” satirizes the ridiculous things she believes the real analyst wants her to confess, but also reflects the self-interpretation of the stream of consciousness voice that Quin provides to us in her writing (258). What the journal

serves to show is that resistance that resides in the analyst, not the analysand—it is a structural dimension of analysis itself, one that points to the “incompatibility between desire and speech” (*Écrits* 275). In *Seminar II* Lacan says this about resistance: “the analyst resists when he doesn’t understand what he is dealing with. He doesn’t understand what he is dealing with when he thinks that interpreting is showing the subject that what he desires is this particular sexual object” (228). Thus the frustration caused by the resistance between analyst and analysand is reflected in Sandra’s writing. She refuses to tell him what he wants to hear, but nevertheless she believes she knows what the expected interpretations of psychoanalysis will be. In Lacan’s *Seminar VIII* Lacan says, “you should indeed not have in any preconceived or permanent way, as a first term of the end of your action, the supposed good or not of your patient, but precisely his eros” (7). The preconceived notions which Sandra believes the analyst wants to force on her attempt to fit her life within an Oedipal drama where she wants to simultaneously stab her father and have sex with him. Her knowledge of the analyst’s preconceived ideas about her also relate to the ideas which society has about women in general. The internal voice that drives her to write this dialogue with the analyst is influenced by the society in which she has lived and is a reflection of the patriarchal nature of psychoanalysis.

Further insight into the inner voice of consciousness can be found in *Lacanian Antiphilosophy and the Problem of Anxiety* (2015), in which Brian Robertson discusses the addition of the gaze and the voice to Lacan’s list of psychoanalytic objects. Discussing the metaphorical voice of conscience, Robertson says that Freud hypothesized that this voice was shaped by a real set of voices in one’s life. Thus, the inner voice is formed by one’s environment, our “fellow man, and public opinion” (Robertson 196). This supports Dolar’s contention that the inner voice is the “epitome of a society that we carry with us” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 14). In

*The Unmapped Country* Sandra's life in the hospital is filled with only two types of voices: those of the other patients, or the doctors and nurses. The patient's voices are impossible to remove from one's own mind as they dominate the dialogue, yelling things such as "may the Holy Mother of God bless you and be food for what we praise in God the fucking father and Satan in the Holy Ghost lamb brought to slaughter" (256). These obscenities serve to undermine the patriarchal control of psychiatry as an institution by insulting the name of the father through the substitution of the name of the Holy Father. Sandra's life in hospital is also filled with other inmates' conspiracy theories, and there always seems to be someone talking about dwarf invasions and making bombs to destroy them. The only escape from this chaos is to go to sleep, but the nurses also prevent this, causing Sandra to lash out:

Sandra it's time to get up. Sandra your meal is ready. It's time to go to bed. Sandra take your pills. It's time for your treatment. Sandra get your potty. You're late. Sandra do your homework. Pick that up. Are you in there Sandra? Don't do that. Stop snivelling and whining like a child. Sandra don't wear your best dress. Put on that coat Sandra. Put that book down when I'm talking to you. Don't go around like that in your bare feet you'll get athlete's foot. Don't go in for petting with men Sandra it leads to other things. Sandra do you hear me...? (257)

Sandra responds to her own vocalization of the inner voices by saying "Yes I hear you all my mothers and fathers will you never stop? Stop" (257). When Quin brings vocalizes Sandra's "mothers and fathers" of the inner voice, the voice of the superego, she is showing the degree of control and the values that bourgeois society place upon one's life, infantilizing the individual in the process. The control over Sandra's life, laws enacted originally by the primal father, stems from the superego, and it is the "blaring voice of the superego" which torments her (*A Voice and*

*Nothing More* 92). Dolar characterizes the voice of conscience, stemming from the superego, as not only an “internalization of the law, but a law endowed with a surplus of the voice” (40). Quin creates a space for the unspoken object voice to be revealed within the patient’s writing. Here they can use the ‘dead letter’ to uncover the object voice. In contrast to Sandra’s journals, her sessions with her analysts do not yield any results; the silence of the analyst is replaced with the silence of the analysand—instead the analyst is asking incessant questions—and the silence of the drives is not revealed. Dolar compares this to Socrates’ relation to his own inner demons, in which he makes “himself the agent of his own daemon” and in turn learns to apply this same relation to others, thus making the silent voice an act (157).

Sandra’s frustration with these voices seems to stem from her difficulty in understanding. She regrets not being able to understand birds any longer because she must use “all her time to understand her own language” (257). Sandra blames the electroshock therapy that she has received in her treatments, blaming them for no longer recognizing the “subterranean language with the underground forces” (257). She can no longer recognize what language “really [means] under the surface” and is so upset by this because she still remembers that she had been able at one point to communicate with the “spaces between words, and the echoes the words left” (257); in short, she has lost access to enunciation, to the unconscious voice that exists over and above conscious speech. Quin was hospitalized several times throughout her own adult life and also received electroshock therapy, as Sandra did. Her final published novel, *Tripticks* (1972), has been criticized for lacking the strength that is found in her earlier work, and in *The Unmapped Country* she seems to be responding to this criticism with a critique of what psychiatric treatment does to the individual and their inner voice. Sandra’s closest friend in the hospital is Thomas, who believes he is Judas Iscariot reincarnated. Thomas is in the process of writing his own book,

called *God's Joke*, which features other patients as his characters: God as Mrs. Carr, Bob as Jesus Christ, and Sandra is either John the Baptist or the Virgin Mary. In putting his voice to paper, Thomas has written something “absolutely illegible,” which requires him to read his book to Sandra aloud. This characterizes the difficulty of putting words to paper and undergoing the inspirational process. The state of silence is not possible if Thomas has to read his work to his audience, and he is not able to preserve his voice through the written word. Within Quin’s novel *God's Joke* is literally a theoretical impossibility in which Thomas has written down his words, thus leaving a remnant: an *objet petit a*. The point of impossibility comes when it needs to be read; because Thomas’ handwriting is unreadable he must say it aloud to Sandra. This can be compared to the use of the shofar in Dolar’s explanation of the voice. The shofar, used in Jewish rituals, is a horn that makes a loud sound; this sound is representative of, and a remnant of, “the voice of the Father, the cry of the dying primal father of the primitive hoard, the leftover which comes both to haunt and seal the foundation of his law” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 53). Later it is revealed that Thomas has a buzzing in his head which has been there for days—“as if a fly has got in or something” (*The Unmapped Country* 274). Whether Thomas’ conscious voice is being drowned out by this buzzing or if it has taken on the form of a fly speaking to him in its own foreign language is unknown, but serves to show that, like the difficulty Sandra experiences in understanding the object voice, the spaces between words, there is a barrier to understanding the interior voice. If the law and the superego can produce impediments to understanding one’s desire, so too does the object voice.

The voice in Quin’s work is often placed in the mouth of other important figures in the character’s life, such as the mother, peers, or lovers. Another example of this can be found if we return to Quin’s “Motherlogue,” and examine the one-sided telephone conversation between a



woman and her mother. Just as Lewis A. Kirshner states in his article “Rethinking Desire: The *Objet Petit a* in Lacanian Theory” that “the *objet petit a* represents an unconscious clinging to an impossible desire that cannot be shared or satisfied, although the child can elaborate a fantasy of its lost link to the mother,” Quin seems to be creating the fantasy of a link to a mother figure (88). This creates a connection to the mother through the recognition of voice as a “[replacement] for the umbilical cord and shapes much of the fate of the earliest stages of life” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 39). Dolar describes this as the “first problematic connection to the Other,” even before the subject’s fascination with the gaze as *objet petit a* (13). At the same time that she does this, she is also subverting this fantasy through the one-sided conversation where we can only access the mother’s dialogue. The problem with the fantasy is examined in Lacan’s lecture on the logic of phantasy where he explains that in order to articulate fantasy, writing must be involved; the problem with writing is “that it is not the same thing, after we have said it, to write it or indeed write that one is saying it” (Seminar XIV13). By putting the fantasy into writing, we create paradoxes. Once the fantasy of a connection to the mother is put into writing, the voice of the daughter is erased, and all we can see is the voice of the mother. This fantasy portrays the mother as a dominant figure, much like Quin’s own mother who sent her away at a young age to go to school in a convent. Our interpretation of the daughter’s side of the dialogue is filtered through the mother, creating both a link to the mother and a filter through which we can interpret what she is saying. In terms of Lacanian analysis the daughter is playing the part of the analyst, acting as a “rubbish dump” for her mother’s utterances (*Seminar III* 29). In playing the part of the analyst she is silent and allows her mother to speak while she serves to interpret her mother’s desire. Here the screen between the real and fantasy begins to dissolve; the daughter

is serving as both an object of her mother's desire which is present in the real, and also fills in the position of analyst for the mother.

To understand the purpose of the dialogue of "Motherlogue" we can refer back to Robertson's explanation of Lacan's introduction of the voice as *objet petit a*. When teaching students what he means by voice, Lacan refers them to read Otto Isakower's essay "On the Exceptional Position of the Auditory Sphere" (Robertson 194). One of the most interesting aspects of this essay is Isakower's understanding of the voice as having a "pure, *invocatory* function" that requires one to "respond before a radically other desire" (196). Thus the Lacanian voice requires one to respond through the symbolic order of language. Perhaps then the mother's voice in "Motherlogue" is a representation of this voice that calls one to respond through language. This voice is normally characterized as the voice of the father or superego, but Quin has rewritten it as the voice of the mother, rejecting phallic *jouissance* and instead following the idea that "that which arouses the subject's desire for another subject is the very specific mode of the Other's *jouissance* embodied in the object *a*" (Salecl 64). Renata Salecl's *(Per)Versions of Love and Hate* (1998) connects this type of *jouissance* to the partial drives of the voice and the gaze, providing the example of finding pleasure in the voice of the diva. In connecting to the physical voice of the mother, the daughter achieves a satisfaction which is not without pain.

Robertson states that the fact that the voice does call is more important than what the voice is saying when it does, but for Quin this is a complicated proposition, especially because the voice is representative of two things: the radical other, the societal filter through which our own voice flows, and possibly Quin's own mother. For the most part this voice concerns itself with women's relationships with men, whether it is a lover, a father, a boarder, or rapist. In this discussion of men in her life the mother voice provides the voice of the bourgeois society that

Quin sought to escape from. The daughter's response? Only silence. This silence is an undermining of the call to respond in symbolic language to the voice of authority; rather than positioning the mother's voice as that of authority, instead her voice is that of the analysand. Her daughter's silence is indicative of the silence of the analyst, and like Socrates who imitates his own internal daemon and thus turns "himself into the agent of a voice which coincides with the silence of the drives," she is putting on silence as an act (*A Voice and Nothing More* 157).

The mother's overwhelming focus on men can be summed up with her question, "when you might get married do you really think...hello...hello...are you there who who who's she...oh Richard's wife yes of course..." ("Motherlogue" 104). At the time of publication Quin would have been in her early thirties, and as any woman over the age of thirty knows, there is pressure to get married and have children which only grows with every passing year, often accompanied by comments like "can't put it off forever, you know. Tick-tock-tick-tock," and questions such as "how does a woman manage to get to your age without being married?" (Fielding 10,11). At the mention of getting married we can understand from the mother's dialogue that she is also receiving temporary silence from her daughter at the mention of marrying her already-married boyfriend.

Near the end of the dialogue the mother becomes hysterical, describing herself as "shouty" in her hysteria and speaking without leaving breaks for her daughter's silent replies (105). Hysteria, a common medical diagnosis for women in the early twentieth century, may have been a diagnosis Quin heard too often in response to her own writing and her own mind. In Alice Butler's "Ann Quin's Night-Time Ink: A Postscript" she states that Quin "writes her memoirs into dangerous fictions," dangerous because she reverses the "gag order" which has been placed on the autobiographical and which has "disavowed the female novelist from writing

with her eye in a mirror; her eye on her body; or even her hand *in* her body” (Butler 6). For women this form of writing is “too hysterical,” but for men it would be “an existential document of the times” (6). This hysteria is brought on in the mother when she reveals that a man has recently been caught for the sexual assaults of three women in the same area where the daughter had a man expose himself to her. Thus the hysteria can actually be linked back to the actions of the man who has committed these crimes and in turn is also silencing the daughter’s potential voice. Fink writes that hysterics were the driving force behind the development of “medical, psychiatric, and psychoanalytic elaboration of theories concerning hysteria” (134). Lacan characterizes hysterics as seekers of knowledge, and so it seems that the mother, as a hysteric, seeks the very information which incites hysteria in her and others. The mother is not subject to the possibility of sexual assault in this discourse, it is the daughter who is at risk, having already had a man expose himself to her. It is in Lacan’s discussion of Freud’s patient Dora where we can see the way in which the hysteric sustains the patriarchal discourse, all the while remaining an exception to it. In the case of a woman with hysteria Lacan contends that the condition is “problematic,” “unassimilable,” but also structured in a simplified way so that the easiest path to take is one of “identification with the father” (*Seminar III* 178). Through her identification with the father she wields the imaginary penis and sustains a discourse of patriarchal fantasy and control over women (178).

Dolar can also provide some insight to the hysteric and his discussion of the symptom of aphonia. This symptom includes “the loss of control over one’s own voice, the enforced silence—the silence that, all the more, makes the object voice appear, maybe in its pure form, for in its specificity it is, after all, devoid of phonic substance” (15). This symptomology is apparent, to a degree, in both mother and daughter. The mother loses control over her voice, shouting at

her daughter on the phone, while the daughter is the one forced into a state of silence. She is not able to interject with one of her silent comments in the dialogue for several lines and only when she finally does interject with “ ” does she break her mother’s hysterical outburst.

While the lives of men seem to dominate the dialogue of “Motherlogue,” this part of the conversation is superficial. The more interesting part of the dialogue appears in the lives of the women, which are often characterized by the mother as downtrodden. The most interesting of these women is Peggy, who died, was left to rot for a week and was only discovered because of the smell coming from her apartment. Peggy remains behind to haunt the apartment, like the remainder of the voice left behind. The mother describes “terrible things happening in the night bedclothes taken off furniture thrown about and one girl even had her nightie torn off” (“Motherlogue” 103). Peggy is just one of the dead women described by the mother, but unlike the woman who froze to death, or the woman “coshed to death by hooligans,” Peggy’s ghost is the remainder of voice left behind letting us know she is mad (104). Just like the “weak, disintegrated subject” of the female suicides (in reference to Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Anna Kavan, and Ann Quin), this is a label “inscribed by masculine ink,” and yet we still have the words of all these women left to tell us about their restlessness (Butler 15).

In Michel Poizat’s *The Angel’s Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera* (1986) there is a discussion of the objectification of the voice and “its singular propensity to be lost, stolen, or broken” (Poizat 93). These three categories (the lost, stolen, or broken voice) open up an array of fates that may befall the voice. For the silent daughter in “Motherlogue” we know that she is responding to her mother, but we do not know what she is saying. Quin has purposely omitted her words, causing her voice to become a lost voice, dislocated from speech and body. Poizat states many instances through which a voice may be lost: through distance, emotion,

amazement, and “particularly when emotion is aroused by the voice of the Other” (93). We could consider the voice of the daughter lost in two ways, by distance, trapped in the telephone lines, and there is also the possibility that Quin is imitating the instance of being dumbstruck through her emotions in response to the Other, once again the mother.

In his discussion of the stolen voice Poizat provides the example of the film *Diva*. This film involves the theft and later mix-up of the recorded voices of a diva singing and a prostitute providing sensitive criminal testimony. This example brings to light the possible commodification of the voice, but also the idea of stealing a voice out of love or desire. In Quin’s novel *Three* (1966) the voice of S has been preserved through both journal entries and audio recordings and both are coveted by a married couple, Ruth and Leonard, who are the focus of the novel. For Ruth and Leonard, reading the journals and listening to the recordings provides a connection to S, who has disappeared prior to the beginning of the novel. The discussion of possessing the journals has a passive aggressive quality to it. Both Ruth and Leonard are fascinated with these objects that have captured the voice of S, but neither seems to want to admit it to the other. When Ruth asks Leon where the journals are, and whether he has been reading them, he replies “Good God no practically impossible her writing so illegible takes an age to wade through a page” (*Three* 51). But after retrieving several journals for Ruth, he says, “there’s a life in here all right,” showing the value he places in the journals because they contain S’s written voice, and therefore preserve her life (51). Although the journals are a written remainder of S’s voice, they are not valued for their content, but rather the memories of S they can remind Ruth and Leonard of, and the *jouissance* that is produced by reading them. The *jouissance* of the other takes precedent over phallic *jouissance* because rather than take sexual pleasure in each other, Ruth rejects Leonard’s sexual advances and they both retreat to separate

rooms: Ruth to read the S's journals, and Leon to watch the reels he filmed of S. This triangular relationship continues long after S is gone, whether dead or disappeared, in the form of a competition for S's preserved, leftover voice.. According to Poizat, the idea of the broken voice is an inherent fear for those who enjoy listening to recordings. Ruth and Leonard never explicitly state this fear, but the journals and recordings are kept long after S has disappeared from their lives and they both engage in reminiscing on these preserved instances of her voice which function as *objet petit a*, a remainder leftover between her absent physical voice and its written incarnation.

Another useful interpretation of Lacan's theory of the voice is found in Žižek's chapter "I Hear You With My Eyes"; or The Invisible Master" from *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* (1996) in which he discusses the addition of the voice and the gaze to the Freudian "partial objects," the breast, faeces, and phallus. In regards to the voice Žižek believes that when we talk "whatever we say is an answer to a primordial address by the Other—we're always already addressed, but this address is blank, it cannot be pinpointed to a specific agent, but it is a kind of empty a priori, the formal 'condition of possibility' of our seeing anything at all" (*Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* 90). Žižek goes on to discuss the effect which psychosis has upon the object voice or gaze, saying "what happens in psychosis is that this empty point in the other, in what we see and/or hear, is actualized, becomes part of effective reality: in psychosis, we effectively hear the voice of the primordial Other addressing us, we effectively know that we are being observed all the time" (90-91). According to Lacan, in psychosis "the unconscious is present but not functioning," which does not allow for a solution through the unconscious, rather he describes this state as being "a very special state of inertia" (*Seminar III* 143; 144); our reality normally excludes the *objet petit a* "in order for us to have a normal 'access to reality'" but when

we experience a state of psychosis we are unable to repress the object, such as the voice, and this causes our reality to disintegrate and become lost (*Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* 91). In *Three* this same type of disintegration of reality happens to both Ruth and Leonard. It seems clear when reading the novel that S is probably dead, but the hold S's journals and recordings have on both Ruth and Leonard seems to indicate that S's voice as object is becoming ingrained in their reality and they live their lives largely as a response to it; thus Ruth and Leonard lose their sense of reality as the narrative proceeds.

At one point Leonard believes he has seen S out on the street near their hotel and attempts to run, without a coat or shoes, into the street to find her. Ruth is shocked at his behaviour saying, "fancy going out like that honest darling what will people think?" (*Three* 80). Although Leonard says that he was shocked to think he had seen S out in the street, "confronted by someone you've thought dead," the fact that he would run out into the street and attempt to follow the woman shows his disconnection from the reality of what has happened to S (80). He insists that he "had to see" if it was S that he saw, but when he was out in the street running after the woman he seems to just stop at the corner, not willing to go on and prove or disprove to himself that she is still alive (80). There is no confirmation of the woman's identity and Leonard seems convinced that it could possibly still be S because she appeared "so like the way she walks you know those long swinging strides turn of the head even the hair" (80). Later in the novel Ruth and Leonard watch a film which includes footage of S on the beach with the couple; Leonard tries to justify his belief that the woman he had run into the street after was S, saying "see how she walks Ruth just like the girl I saw this morning" (84).

Throughout *Three* we are given to understand that S is assumed dead, but we are not given any substantive evidence to support this assumption. Although the couple, especially



Leonard, lack the ability to repress S's voice, the novel concludes with two important revelations about S, but Quin does not reveal Leonard or Ruth's reactions to them. The first revelation is a newspaper article which reads: "The unclothed body of an unidentified young woman, with stab wounds in back and abdomen, was found yesterday by a lake near Sugarloaf Mountain. A blood-stained angler's knife and hammer were also found" (131). This appears to be confirmation of S's having been killed, but just like the woman Leonard saw on the street, we cannot know for certain that the victim is S. Quin does not allow us to know Leonard's reaction when he reads this news. Like so much else in the novel, it is left open for us to judge whether S's death will become part of our reality, or that we will cling to her journals. The second important piece of information is provided immediately after the newspaper article in the form of a series of journal entries written by S. This journal entry confirms Leonard's sexual relationship with S and justifies his over attachment to her memory. It also reveals important details about her disappearance that seem to confirm that she is the murdered woman from Sugarloaf Mountain. In her journal S reveals that she had been exploring Sugarloaf Mountain with Ruth and Leonard and planned on visiting one of the lakes there on the day of her disappearance. Although Leonard has access to these journal entries of her final days with the couple, he nevertheless clings to hope of her eventual re-appearance. We are left to wonder whether the newspaper article will shatter his current reality, or if he will dismiss it as coincidence until he sees her body.

The theme of disintegrating reality is a persistent theme throughout Quin's work; an important example comes from Quin's first novel *Berg* (1964) in which we experience this same sort of psychosis through Aly Berg, whose awareness of reality gradually diminishes. *Berg* begins with the famous first sentence, "A man called Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father..." (*Berg* n.p.). This uncanny sentence signals both

the entrance into a psychosis for Berg and a mission, in the killing of his father. When Berg changes his name to Greb, with the intention of disguising his true identity in order to get closer to his father, he is also (unwittingly?) changing his own reality; rather than creating a new identity separate from his father, Aly Berg becomes his father's mirrored double. This change in reality appears to suggest a falling into psychosis. As the novel progresses, the object voice of Berg's mother and others who influenced Berg's childhood gradually intrudes and become part of his reality. This incursion prompts Berg to lose his grasp on reality; in reading the novel, we find it difficult to distinguish between reality and psychotic fantasy.

Berg's disconnection from reality is present from the beginning, and becomes more disturbing as the novel proceeds. Throughout, Berg is bombarded with flashbacks of his mother's voice. As we follow Berg's thoughts, his mother's voice interjects with comments, no matter the subject. When Judith says goodnight to him after meeting properly for the first time he immediately hears the voice of his mother saying goodnight: "If they do give 'em skite—goodnight goodnight my darling boy sleep tight" (20). It seems at first that these instances of Edith Berg's voice are simply memories which Berg is associating with events in the present moment. But later, when Berg believes he will be arrested for attempted murder, he hears the voices of both his mother and Judith, the mother substitute, in his consciousness. He imagines that they will bring in his mother as a witness and she will say, "Oh Aly how could you, God's still in his heaven you know, some of us forget that" (*Berg* 154). Next, Judith's voice will irrupt and say, "Aly you should have saved the suit at least" (155). Quin writes the imaginary dialogue in the same format as the earlier memories of his mother's voice, causing confusion about the true nature of Berg's reality and the voices that haunt him.

When Berg misses his first opportunity to murder his father, when he has passed-out drunk in Berg's bedroom, Berg tries to steady himself for his mission saying, "I must recall the precise feelings that have nurtured the present circumstances, when nothing at all from outside interfered, not even thoughts of time past, present, or time future, when doubts of my own reality have dwindled away" (22). Berg appears to be acknowledging that his grasp of reality is disintegrating and clings to the drive to kill his father as a way to hold onto reality; this desire to kill his father is part of the need to keep the mother-child unity which developed due to the absence of Berg's father. The lack of what Fink calls a "'primordial' signifier" is key to the development of psychosis in a child because the child does not have the necessary separation from the mother, created by the presence of a father figure (*The Lacanian Subject* 55). The separation from the mother is also necessary for the child to undergo "the subject's expulsion from the Other," which in turn leads to the Other's desire (in this case the mother's desire) becoming the *objet petit a* (58). The turning point in Berg's disintegration of reality comes after he has wrapped a ventriloquist's dummy in the rug and eiderdown and wakes up believing he has successfully murdered his father. The purpose of the ventriloquist's dummy is to allow the spoken voice of the other to speak. That is to say, the dummy possesses neither a literal voice nor an internal voice of its own: it is merely an object. The dummy acts to create "a hold for disacousmatization," and serves to be what Dolar calls a "dummy location for the voice which cannot be located" (*A Voice and Nothing More* 70). This false hold on disacousmatization reveals "the impossibility for disacousmatization" of the voice and in turn reveals to us the *objet petit a*. In the same way the dummy as an object is being used to reflect the voice of a subject, Aly Berg has had the voice of his mother imprinted upon him. Rather than becoming his physical voice, it has become an internalized voice which emerges as something foreign from inside him.

By wrapping up the dummy, and symbolically murdering it, he is silencing the physical voice from coming forth from the body of the dummy and, acting as a double of both Aly Berg and his father, he is silencing his own internal voice. Upon seeing the dummy, but believing it to be his father, he says to himself, “at last I can rest in peace amen” (75). Rather than the deceased resting in peace, Berg believes the murder of his father will leave him in peace. This leads to the question—peace from what? Perhaps the voice of his mother, “a wooden spoon stirring the mixed murmurings in his head”—is the *objet petit a* that drives him in his psychosis to attempt to murder his father (79). Instead of succeeding in finding peace for himself, Berg further loses his grasp on reality. Finally, he imagines himself being referred to as Alistair Greb by the voice of authority, rather than Berg, completely losing both his identity and his reality. This voice of authority, the overpowering voice of the superego, and the voice of the father in the symbolic order, has rewritten Aly in the symbolic order as Greb, and he is no longer Berg. For Lacan, “the fact that a gentleman has been Mr. So-and-so in the social order requires that this be indicated on his headstone...it extends beyond his living existence” (*Seminar III* 96). This indicates that the symbolic order has changed somehow through Aly’s actions and that he has finally rid himself of the name Berg, the literal name of his father.

In their consideration of Lacan’s idea of the voice as *objet petit a*, both Žižek and Dolar discuss the written word in relation to the spoken voice. For Dolar he brings forth a series of questions about the residue left behind by the voice. He begins with the phonological viewpoint, asking if “pure presence” is the remainder produced by the traditional privileging of the spoken word over the written. Rather than following the argument that writing is a “parasitic supplement” which “merely fixes the spoken word,” Dolar believes that any remainder is to be found on the side of writing, rather than the phonocentric voice (*A Voice and Nothing More* 37).

In this case “it is not writing in its positive and empirical appearance that is at stake, but more fundamentally the trace, the trace of alterity which has ‘always-already’ dislocated the origin” (37). For Derrida, the voice was considered to be the interior voice of one’s consciousness, lying in “auto-affection and self-transparency” rather than “the trace, the rest, the alterity...” (42). By contrast, the Lacanian voice is an object which is an “obstacle to (self-)presence,” “leading to the impossibility of attaining auto-affection” (42). Instead of a coherent interior monologue, what is found is instead a void, “not simply a lack, an empty space...it is a void in which voice comes to resonate” (42).

We can see the difficulty of attaining auto-affection in Quin’s writing. In *The Unmapped Country*, Sandra’s journal appears to be an inner voice put into writing, but are we to believe that in Sandra’s journal entry “Conversation with Two Doctors,” she really does not see the pen? Sandra admits that she is unable to communicate orally what she really sees. She admits that she thinks the doctor “ridiculous...holding that pen, nodding, grinning up at the other doctor” and what she really wants is to just get away from them (*The Unmapped Country* 265). She is writing in her journal, unable to understand the intricacies of language and the silences between words, so what is written in her journal, while coherent, cannot be the true object voice. For Žižek the idea of needing to fix the spoken word into writing also resonates; he examines music history for the reason that the voice “threatens the established order” of writing, reversing the Western tradition (*Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* 103). In “I Hear You with My Eyes” Žižek explores the idea that to hear one’s own voice, a concept usually categorized as narcissistic, is actually undermining our own self-presence and self-transparency (103). Rather than reaching the same conclusion as Dolar: that the voice passes through an imaginary loop of the Other, a void which takes in the audible voice and returns an inaudible echo, Žižek labels the voice as “a parasite, a

foreign body in my very heart” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 160; *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* 103). Much like the sound of a fly buzzing in Thomas’ ear, our own voice seems uncanny when we hear it; this is a characteristic which is inherent to psychoanalysis and which Freud himself observed in “The Uncanny” when he says, “we ourselves speak a foreign language” (“The Uncanny” 301). In *The Uncanny* (2003) Nicholas Royle discusses the call of psychoanalysis to look within ourselves, “into [our] own depths”, and upon doing so we will hear this internalized voice which comes to us in a foreign language (Royle 59). He proposes that what Freud achieves in his discussion of the uncanniness of psychoanalysis is creating “an extended metaphor of voice, a fiction, a prosopopoeia of psychoanalysis” (60). Thus this internalized, foreign voice is what Royle describes as “the voice of psychoanalysis or the voice of the people” and in this line of thinking we can grant truth to both Dolar, with his explanation of the void of the Other—or the empty space within ourselves through which the voice resonates, and Žižek, who believes the voice to be more specifically foreign (60). We put our voice into writing in order to give it “stability of meaning,” but when we do this our voice becomes the “living dead,” living the “uncanny life of an undead monster, not the ‘healthy’ living self-presence of meaning” (103). Much like Dolar, Žižek believes that the object voice is an obstacle to our self-presence, but rather than creating a void within which our voice is able to resonate, what writing does is create an uncanny living-dead monster.

The idea that translating one’s own voice into the written word can be uncanny is an idea which resonates when reading many of Quin’s works. Lacan’s concept of the uncanny is very similar to Freud’s, which is something that is “both unfamiliar and, at the same time, disturbingly familiar” (Robertson 15). Where Žižek and Lacan differ is that Lacan saw the uncanny as something “superficial” and was not interested in “carrying out a deep, philosophical inquiry into

the uncanny nature of the human condition” (16). Like Freud, Lacan focused much of his discussion of the uncanny on the realm of literature, due to the fact that it is so hard to actually pinpoint a moment of uncanniness in one’s everyday life. In order to provide an explanation of Lacan’s understanding of the uncanny, Robertson uses the example of the Möbius strip, a mathematical object that is “a semirectilinear surface that is paradoxically bound by a *single* edge” (18). That is to say, a Möbius strip disrupts our normal Euclidean way of experiencing space by creating a figure that has only one side and one edge. At any point, the two sides can be seen, but the experience of travelling on the strip makes the two sides continuous. The example of the Möbius strip gives us an “orientable space in which the object [can] be situated” (19). Robertson continues by comparing this space which becomes uncanny to a game of musical chairs where the object has “usurped my place, or my ‘there’” (19). The physical space takes precedent in Lacan’s conception of the uncanny as he places importance on the idea of an individual who is unable to locate in physical space where he/she fits in relation to the desire of the Other. Adrian Johnston’s “The object in the mirror of genetic transcendentalism: Lacan’s *objet petit a* between visibility and invisibility” also addresses the Möbius strip; referring back to Lacan’s *Seminar XIII* he believes that “the desires of Others inscribe a Möbius-type twist within the surface of the mirror” (Johnston 256). Johnston’s interpretation focuses on the notion that the *objet petit a* is both specular and non-specular, but by incorporating Lacan’s mirror stage into the idea of a Möbius strip also implies how extimacy, the introduction of a foreign body to the internal sphere with which we can both identify and still recognize as other, is made possible. The reflection of the subject in the Möbius mirror will reflect back onto the other, thus prompting the subject to 1) identify something in the other which originates deep within the subject and 2) simultaneously create a feeling of uncanniness. The idea that writing down our

inner voice on paper and having it become a living-dead monster, as Žižek proposes, is to extract a foreign, parasitic voice from within us and still remain baffled by our own physical position in relation to the voice.

Quin's novel *Berg* has been labeled as "Oedipal, Freudian too," and one of the Freudian aspects of the novel is the ever-present uncanniness (Gordon x). As we know from the first sentence, Berg has come to kill his father, but as the novel progresses he waits, apparently with the aim of replacing his own father's position in the game of musical chairs. Rather than plotting the death of his father, Nathaniel Berg, Berg focuses his attention on thoughts of his mother at home and his father's new mistress, Judith Goldstein. His mother, Edith Berg, is described as "devoted unconditionally to her only son" and as a "lady of unequalled measure, [a] mother of genius..." in direct comparison to his father who is a "gentleman of unknown origins, [a] scoundrel of the first order" (*Berg* 3,6). The absence of Nathaniel Berg throughout Aly Berg's life has led to unresolved sexual desire directed toward Edith, and the resulting mother-son relationship is Oedipal in nature. Berg's love and commitment to his mother is made evident through his plan "to take his father's corpse back to Edith" as a "trophy of his triumphant love for her" (106). When Berg encounters his father and his new lover, he redirects his sexual desire towards Judith. Rather than resolving his Oedipal complex, he maintains the "wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with the mother" ("The Ego and the Id" 53). The unresolved Oedipus Complex and the conflation between the imaginary and symbolic orders both stem from the absence of Nathaniel Berg during Aly Berg's childhood. Rather than separating from the "mOther" and redirecting his desire toward the *objet petit a* he remains connected to his mother. Berg's potential relationship with Judith hinges on the elimination of the father, thus cementing her role as the mother figure and allowing him to achieve his desire, rather than maintain the



desire by not fulfilling it. Although Berg does not succeed in murdering his father, he does replace his father as Judith's lover and moves into her apartment. Berg and his father seem to have a slippery relationship which allows them to exchange roles almost seamlessly, like the Möbius strip, where you can "[pass] along the surface of the strip, [and] at any point on your journey, you would have the distinct impression that another side remained to be explored" (Robertson 18). Because there is only one side, the further you travel on the strip "the sooner you return, without interruption or break, to your original point of departure" (18). For Berg this journey leaves him feeling physically and mentally disoriented, causing a further disintegration of his symbolic reality.

After travelling to Brighton to kill his father, Berg describes several strange physical experiences. Later, when his reality is disintegrating further, his physical space is threatened by the humiliation of having 'murdered' a ventriloquist's dummy instead of his father. He seems almost relieved that he has not killed his father, and this appears to be a moment where he attempts to abide by the law of the father. However, his lack of respect for his father continues and the desire to kill his father returns along with his psychosis. Berg's first instinct is to board a train and run away from the seaside town, but he is blocked by snow. After this plan fails, Berg feels "almost Lilliputian in comparison to the overcast sky, and the invading moon-craters that surrounded the station" (*Berg* 136). This feeling of smallness reinforces his inability to locate his physical space in relation to the Other. As soon as he describes this sensation, he sees his father, who begins doggedly pursuing him. Instead of describing his own escape from his father, Berg wonders "why this eternal escape" about his father's disappearance, making it unclear who is fleeing from whom (136). The instability of identity is a persistent problem for Berg, who, in addition to pretending to be Greb, declares in the moment of escape from his father, "I'm a

changeling really, my mother's an Eastern Queen, and my father's an Arab Prince, with a palace of gold in the desert and a hundred and one snow-white horses, that one day will belong to me" (137). Echoing the words of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, Berg once again takes on a completely different identity, disowning his own mother and father and becoming the unknown orphan with a desire for vengeance.

Berg and his father's uncanny interchangeability become more pronounced when Berg takes his father's place with Judith. Father and son become indistinguishable to Judith when she and Berg have sexual intercourse. She says to Berg, "Oh Aly make it last, he never could you know, well not more than—oh you are so gorgeous, so big, so beautiful there, oh it does feel good to be with you Aly, do you love me, say you love me a little Aly won't you?" (*Berg* 145). Judith begins by favourably comparing Berg's sexual prowess to that of his father, but ends their sexual encounter saying, "oh it's nice when you do that, do it again, oh it's lovely. Nathy, oh Nathy my darling" (146). This mistake on Judith's part reveals the interchangeability of father and son. Berg does not seem to react to being called by his father's name during intercourse with his lover; what he does notice is that the "gap in the wall [seems] wider" (146). This symbolic gap in the wall represents the barrier between Berg and his father's positions, beginning as a small gap and ending up a hole large enough that it must be covered over with a sheet and which gives Berg the ability to climb right through into the other room. This hole in the wall is representative of the hole in the symbolic order, described by Lacan as "doomed to conflict and ruin" and is linked to and doomed in the same way as the Oedipus complex (*Seminar III* 96). This hole has come to exist through the absence of the name of the father for Berg, and is indicative of his psychosis. The two rooms work in the same way as the Möbius strip, giving Berg the ability to climb through and take over his father's identity. Their identities remain

interchangeable at the end of the novel and we learn that Nathan Berg has not died; it was actually the scar-faced tramp, and a new boarder is moving into Berg's old room. This is assumed to be Berg's father when we read the description given by the landlady saying he "reminds me a little of Mr. Berg, first thing I thought when he entered the house, carrying the cage, why there's the old man himself, I must ask him for the rent. But this one's got a beard, looks older too, and I don't mind telling you either, he's more classy..." (166). While Nathan Berg is able to fool the landlady, it seems like a thin disguise, especially for a man who "had to dramatise every situation because he missed his true vocation, he should have gone on the stage" (148). Berg and his father's ability to "always [be] playing a part" makes it clear that this new boarder is his father, and they will both play each other's part until they eventually switch again.

Berg's physical disorientation is emphasized when he attempts to dispose of the ventriloquist's dummy by throwing it into the sea. After disposing of the dummy, Berg is attempting to hide in the seaside cliffs from his father and the men who are pursuing him, and he experiences a strange moment alone. He describes "voices that called, creating confusion. Cells tighter than shells, you spinning in spirals, quick-silver, thrashing the water, making stars scatter. Narcissus above, staring at a shadow-bat spreading out, finally disappearing into the very centre of the ocean" (*Berg* 152). This description of the voices Berg is hearing can be interpreted through Žižek's theorization of hearing one's own voice. Although Berg does not recognize the voice as his own, internal or external, his recognition of Narcissus leads us to believe that in some small way he recognizes the voices he hears are his own. This threatens his own self-presence and self-transparency and thus he is unable to consciously recognize the voices as his own, instead labeling them as foreign.

## Chapter Two: Letters and Journals

The Lacanian approach to the voice as a drive object is a radical one in that it “strips the drive objects of any real content” and thus leaves the voice without any phonic substance (Lagaay 59). This lack of phonic substance is representative of the lack at the heart of desire and signifies an absence which for the voice “refers less to the physical sound produced by a particular speaking subject than to an area of analytic impossibility, to a point of theoretical resistance” (60). In my first chapter I discuss Dolar’s conception of the internal voice as “the epitome of a society that we carry with us and cannot get away from” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 14). However, in Robert Buckeye’s biography of Quin, he views her refusal of the writing tradition as a refusal to have her writing engulfed by society. But rather than see this contention as a contradiction of Dolar’s claim, we should instead think of Quin’s internal voice as a fantasy of a new society, one where rejecting bourgeois norms is possible; following the Lacanian logic of the phantasy, when the phantasy is committed to writing it becomes paradoxical and thus Quin’s fantasy can still serve to represent the essence of her society because it continues to mask the real; for Lacan this type of phantasy continues to work because the fantasy is always kept at an unachievable distance, but is always close enough that we continue to strive to achieve it. In his introduction to *Berg*, Giles Gordon brings R. D. Laing’s ideas into conversation with Quin’s; Gordon believes that Laing’s notion that “those who think themselves sane are mad, and those society deems to be mad are sane” must have influenced the work of Quin (Gordon xi). This association between the internal voice and challenging societal norms is a consistent theme throughout Quin’s writing. In order to incorporate this internal voice so that it seems to jump directly from her stream of consciousness onto the page Quin carefully crafts her writing using techniques like the journal and the incorporation of letters in the novel.

In her novels *Three* (1966) and *Passages* (1969), Quin uses the form of the diary or journal to compose a fiction which reveals its truth through “the insignificant details which attach it to daily reality” (*The Space of Literature* 29). As Maurice Blanchot notes, the details of the journal are insignificant in their content but significant in their purpose: to create an attachment to daily reality. The content of the journal “represents the series of reference points which a writer establishes in order to keep track of himself when he begins to suspect the dangerous metamorphosis to which he is exposed” (29). For the characters in Quin’s novels the journal marks an absence rather than the presence of the person who has written them because the journal does not tell “one’s own story” and it is written in relation to themselves, not to the reader (29). Blanchot believes that the writer of the journal is “the most literary of all” writers, based on the idea that “literature is the fascinating realm of time’s absence” (*The Space of Literature* 29; 30). For the writer who engages in the act of writing a journal, it is a surrender to the absence of time itself, by memorializing one’s own memories in the journal—an act which gives the writer the power to free her own memories from the past and make herself timeless. These recorded memories exist in the journal “without end, without beginning...without a future” (30).

In Quin’s novels she appropriates the journal as a memorial, as opposed to the way that we might typically think of the journal as “essentially confessional” (*The Space of Literature* 29). While Blanchot considers the journal a recourse for the writer to turn to when she feels she is “losing [her] grasp upon [herself],” as a result of writing the work, Quin has turned the form of the journal into a piece of work in itself (28). This tension between Blanchot’s use of the journal and the way Quin uses it in her novels reveals a parallelism with Blanchot’s concept of writing the work, but rather than turning to her own journal to memorialize her own daily reality she

instead creates journals within the work which have the converse effect—they attach the characters, not Quin, to reality. Following Blanchot’s position that a piece of writing becomes a work when “the work becomes the intimacy between someone who writes and someone who reads it” when we read Quin’s journal entries, whether biographical in nature or completely fictional, they become a literary work (23). The journal entries found throughout her novels are always ambiguous and connect the reader to “the shadow of events” which depict “images, appearances—not signs, values, the power of truth” (24). It is not the substance of the journal, or even the phonic substance if it were to be read aloud that is important to the other characters in the novel, it is the aporetic intersection of the representation of unresolved desire and the voice being recorded in the journal which “signify an absence” (Lagaay 60). The journal itself is particularly meaningful as a tool for expressing the internal voice within the novel due to the everyday insignificance it embodies. Blanchot describes it as “a convenient way of escaping both silence and the extravagance of speech” (*The Book to Come* 185). The act of recording this internal voice, privy to private thoughts on the day-to-day and the “roughness of vanity” allows us to live each day twice (185). For the characters in Quin’s novels each day is not only lived twice, it is lived through someone else’s perspective; it is to be dwelt on and not only records that internal voice, but also signifies the lack at the heart of the desire to write which is present in her novels. This desire is a compulsion for Quin, who would rather spend her time at “a sanatorium somewhere in the mountains” where she could dedicate herself fully to writing and not have to deal with day-to-day living (Buckeye 14).

The disintegration of the clear divide between the writer’s journal and the novel is discussed by Blanchot in the chapter “Joubert and Space,” from *The Book to Come* (1959). The case of Joseph Joubert, whom Blanchot describes as one of the first modern writers, is an

instance of someone who has blurred the distinction between the journal and the novel. Joubert employed a notebook which he wrote in daily, but never wrote or published any actual 'books'; instead all his writings are considered journals. The writing within the journals is characterised by Blanchot as futuristic and attempts to lead to the "development of a thought that does not yet think, or of a poetic language that tries to go back up toward itself" (*The Book to Come* 50). Each entry in his diary was dated, "grounding them in the days," although it is not "a reflection of them" (53). Joubert sought to go beyond this and even though he never wrote a novel, his writings are still in the "pure region of Art" (54). Much like Joubert, Quin's writing is not constricted by novelistic conventions; in fact, Buckeye argues that "Quin's achievement is that she never learned how writing should be written" (39). Although the journals found throughout her novels are fictitious, Quin's writing is based on her own experiences and fantasies and these journals illustrate how the subject of her writing is grounded in reality. She says of her own experiences: "I did fantasize a lot about being in bed with a man and a woman, and I introduced a boy friend of mine to a girl friend of mine and they both knew it was one of my fantasies, so we explored it together. It was important to my writing that it extended the fantasy" (Buckeye 29). Like Joubert's journals, reality serves as a point for artistic creation, whether it is Quin's sexual experiences, travels, or personal relationships. What does it mean then, to blend the journal, the real experiences of one's life, with the form of the novel? For Blanchot the journal represents a "safe-guard against the danger of writing," preventing the complete disappearance of the writer and their work; perhaps then the use of the journal imbues the work with the quality of truth, which Blanchot characterizes as being found in the "insignificant details which attach it to daily reality" (29). He later goes on to contemplate what is written in the journal: "Perhaps what is written there is already nothing but insincerity; perhaps it is said without regard for truth"

(29). These contradictory statements reflect the inability for us to tell the difference between the real and the fantasy, but it is also irrelevant because they work hand in hand. The letters function as a way to bring credibility to Quin's writing because we expect the writer to commit the real to their personal journal as a way to hold on to himself or herself. The product of the process of writing is therefore a way of engaging in Quin's fantasy, and in doing so it becomes the drive; in creating the drive through the fantasy of letter writing Quin is creating a connection between the desire of the subject and the desire of the Other.

According to Blanchot, the writer of the journal is "who he is when he isn't writing, when he lives daily life, when he is alive and true, not dying and bereft of truth" (29). Insignificant details fill S's diary—details such as whom the cat adores and ignores, or the detail about Leonard's property being vandalized and dumped on by locals (Quin 53, 54). These kinds of details are, "parallel to, overlooking, and sometimes skirting around the other path—the one where to stray is the endless task. Here true things are still spoken of. Here, whoever speaks retains his name and speaks in the name, and the dates he notes down belong in a shared time where what happens really happens" (*The Space of Literature* 29). The "other path" which Blanchot refers to is the "search for art" where the work of writing becomes literature. For Quin these two paths intersect in her novels, combining literature with the journal. The fictitious journals in her novels are a strange mixture of reality and fantasy, but then so are the novels themselves; her writing serves as the division between the real and her fantasy, a screen which is used to separate these two worlds and keep the real hidden from plain view. Her work always has an autobiographical basis—the most significant of which are her relationships with her father, mother, and brother. The prevailing theme throughout her writing is the triangular relationships among characters thus directing us back to Lacan's question: "what is the first encounter, the



real, that lies behind the phantasy?” (*Seminar XI* 54). In *Three* we see this in the relationship of Ruth, Leonard, and S and in *Passages* the relationship between the woman, her lover, and her missing brother. Forbidden relationships are a predominant theme in Quin’s life—something that is reflected in the triangular relationships she imagines in her novels. After growing up without a father, she met her half-brother at the age of fourteen and fell in love with him. He died five years later and in narrating the relationship, Quin described herself as Antigone—never at home and forever banished from Brighton (Buckeye 10). The screen of fictional writing separates Quin’s real and her phantasy, allowing her to use repetition to engage in her own fantasies.

In *Writing and Reality: A Study of Modern British Diary Fiction* (1993) Andrew Hassam analyses Quin’s use of the diary in *Three* (1966). His discussion focuses on the diary as a part of Ruth and Leonard’s “closed circuit of self-reflection,” an undertaking prompted by the presence of the diaries and tape recordings of S (Hassam 134). Although we are privy to the journals of both Ruth and Leonard it is S’s journals that hold the most importance to the novel and, as Hassam notes, over half the novel actually consists of S’s narrative in the form of her journal entries and recordings. Even though S has disappeared from Ruth and Leonard’s lives prior to the beginning of the novel, the presence of her voice as an object represents the lack at the heart of desire for the couple. After her disappearance, there is an unattainable desire for both Ruth and Leonard to be in her presence or hear her physical voice once again. For the readers of the journals, Ruth and Leonard, the voice of S as an object is stripped of any real content in two ways: the lack of “masculine realism” in her diaries and the inability of Ruth and Leonard to locate S after her disappearance (138). Both Ruth and Leonard seem to be haunted by her uncanny presence, left behind in the form of audio recordings and journal entries. The voice as object is situated between two opposing tendencies: the desire to find the meaning behind the

words and the desire to aestheticize the voice. While it may seem like Ruth and Leonard are guilty of both these extremes, they suffer from an inability to commit to either of them. This leaves the journals and audio recordings to become an uncanny presence in their lives—listening to the recordings and reading the journals while away on vacation, at home, preventing the couple from accepting the truth behind S’s disappearance.

Hassam believes that in contrast to male diary writing, which is written in “documentary mode,” “the reality of being a woman necessarily entails a new type of writing, one that must break with patriarchal realism” (138). Quin juxtaposes S’s voice with Leonard’s diary entries, to whose diary we are first introduced. His diary is simply a note of events that occurred on certain dates, and it is called upon to check facts, such as the date of S’s arrival and the date of her disappearance. In comparison, the S’s diaries are unclear about dates and require an effort to be made in order to interpret the content and find the meaning. Our first introduction to S is through twenty-two pages of audio recordings, which read like diary entries transcribed into the novel. They are written in a poetic form and require significant interpretation to come to a full understanding. In order to comprehend the transcriptions of S’s recordings it is useful to adopt Glyn Maxwell’s idea from *On Poetry* (2012) that “poetry is an act” (Maxwell 5). In taking up the role of the actor Quin rejects the traditional form of prose in her novel and instead writes S’s recorded voice as poetry. Maxwell contends that “form has a direct effect on the silence beneath it,” thus revealing to the reader not only the importance of S’s recordings but also the importance of the silent pauses that surround her spoken voice, and in turn reveal through their empty remnant on the page the voice of S as an *objet petit a* (5). The choice made by Quin to write in poetic form over prose can be explained through Blanchot’s poetics; he did not view poetry as a work of art or a process, he saw it as “a ceaseless, open-ended movement toward what is always

elsewhere” with no finish in sight (Bruns 88). Just as desire remains unsatisfied and sustains itself, in this way the form of poetics is itself unfinished and unsatisfied. When Ruth and Leonard finish listening to these recordings the only thing they comment on is what she has said about her father, placing importance on significant relationships in the lives of the characters, while neglecting to say anything about S’s comments on the couple themselves and the events which have been occurring at their home. What they reveal are the facts around S’s disappearance, but are only understood by Ruth and Leonard as an object of desire, as representative of the lack which is now present in the place of S. Following Julia Kristeva’s discussion of the melancholic in *Black Sun* (1989) I contend that S has become a “melancholy Thing [that] interrupts desiring metonymy, just as it prevents working out the loss within the psyche” (*Black Sun* 14). In the symbolic realm the Thing (S) becomes “a captivating *Object of desire*,” ensuring the continuation of desire and thus the continued pleasure derived from its delayed fulfillment (14). The solution Kristeva puts forth to return the Thing back to “the Thing” instead of an object of desire is transformation through the poetic form. The poetic form is the only way which she sees the possibility of “[decomposing] and [recomposing] signs,” essentially saying the letter (in the form of poetry) kills and is thus able to rewrite the fantasy of S (14).

Hassam points to a trend in women’s diary writing in which the rejection of the male documentary mode is replaced by a discursive style which allows women freedom from the confines of society (138). The transcribed audio recordings jump from topic to topic, open to different lines of flight. Quin reaches a point of self-reflexivity in the audio recordings through the description of Aunt Polly, one of S’s aunts she had previously shared a home with before meeting Ruth and Leonard. One of several female characters memorialized in S’s recollections Aunt Polly is described in this passage:

Aunt Polly Aunt Polly where's my dolly Polly?

She crouched in the middle. Of stained coverlet. Fingers

find

plait

purse. Marks of her dress. On the floor.

Polly Polly put the kettle on. Her mouth parted. Over yellow

pieces of paper

letters. She wrote to herself. They said. Sound of the wind.

A north wind through the door. Growled under the mat. (*Three* 28).

It seems as if S has followed Kristeva's advice and she speaks about her Aunt Polly as if she were reciting poetry. This poetic form allows her to memorialize the aunt without transforming her into an object of desire. This use of the poetic form can also be an act according to Maxwell, who recommends "being an actor for a while" (Maxwell 4). Interestingly, Dolar considered silence to be an act and rather than these two different acts being at odds with one another, we can combine them into one theory: while acting out poetry, silence is an important part of the performance. Maxwell contends that when we see the white spaces in between the words in poetry we should "call it a silence...one of its other guises" (4). In between these white spaces of silence the black letters represent "a human presence" (11). When we read the passage on Aunt Polly we should realize that those black letters, surrounded by silence, represent S and her attachment to her Aunt Polly and what she stands for in her life. Although Aunt Polly is described as keeping to her room, she has a freedom through writing that the other female family members do not have—the letters to herself. These letters are comparable to S's diaries, which

have the freedom to explore taboo topics and family secrets. In conjunction with the freedom of her writing Aunt Polly also experiences freedom as a woman by dancing with the wind.

The discursive manner of S's diary also allows for more significant meaning and truth if it is read as more than the object voice. The reference S makes to Ruth as a "Priestess Prophetess Clytemnestra" reveals the complicated three way relationships which Quin places her characters in (*Three* 26-27). As we know, Clytemnestra was the wife of Agamemnon and the mother of Electra. Implying a relationship which S views within the concept of Jung's Electra complex. However, these implications are overlooked when Ruth and Leonard listen to S's recordings and read her diaries. They appear to be looking for a clue or an answer to her disappearance, but what they are doing is confining her voice to the role of *objet petit a*, the uncanny presence of which they do not want to rid themselves. The act of repeatedly listening to S's recorded voice and reading her journals sustains the need to satisfy the drive, allowing them to achieve jouissance; but if they did end up using the diaries to find out S's fate, their desire can no longer be sustained.

When we gain access to S's diary entries, we notice that in comparison to Leon's entries with precise dates, hers are marked as "March," "Friday," "Sunday," or just "midweek" (*Three* 53-67). She begins her diary asking, "Today but what day? Nevertheless a day, a time. In Spring. Air, sounds, odours remind" (53). Quin's use of the diary memorializes S in the same way which Blanchot explains the writers use of the journal, "The journal is not essentially confessional; it is not one's own story. It is a memorial" (*The Space of Literature* 29). To memorialize one's memories is an act which, as Blanchot explains, "frees me from what otherwise would recall me; it frees me by giving me the means of calling freely upon the past, of ordering it according to my present intention" (30). By utilizing a discursive style which jumps from memory to memory

Quin is not only freeing S from the confines of society, she is freed from the confines of time itself. In regards to memory, Blanchot says,

Memory is freedom of the past. But what has no present will not accept the present of a memory either. Memory says of the event: it once was and now it will never be again. The irredeemable character of what has no present, of what is not even there as having once been there, says: it never happened, never for a first time, and yet it starts over, again, again, infinitely. It is without end, without beginning. It is without future. (30)

Ruth and Leonard are both stuck in the contradiction of time by reading the diaries and listening to the recordings of S. When they attempt to experience S through the voice as object what they are doing is experiencing a kind of fascination—the fascination of “time’s absence” (30). This experience of memory allows them to experience

the being deep within being’s absence, which is when there is nothing and which, as soon as there is something, is no longer. For it is as if there were no beings except through the loss of being, when being lacks. The reversal which, in time’s absence, points us constantly back to the presence of absence, to absence as its own affirmation. (30)

The connection between memory and time is a fascination for Ruth and Leonard; they derive pleasure from reliving the experience of reading and listening to S’s journals and recordings and prolonging the desire. This fascination is explained by Gerald Bruns in *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (1997) where he explains that fascination “deprives us of our concepts and so leaves us powerless to grasp what we see” (Bruns 60). This neutralization explains why Ruth and Leonard can never fully understand what has happened to S; they are drawn into the “essential solitude” and it is in this void—where Blanchot says the writer always sees the work as unfinished—that the “aesthetic experience is turned inside out” (*The Space of Literature* 23,

Bruns 60). Bruns describes the work in Levinasian terms as “bearing down on us from all sides, preventing escape” (60); this envelopment into the work of the writer, in this case S, leads to her readers writing their own diaries, in order to continue the timeless memorialization of themselves, which ceased when S disappeared. Through this process Quin’s characters use the voice as an object which is never satisfied and must be “perpetually enacted for their pleasure” (Dimovitz 148). The idea that the drive can achieve satisfaction without achieving the goal explains Ruth and Leonard’s need to read the journals of S and listen to her recordings and also their own desire to record their lives in writing. It seems as if they can never get S back but, as Alenka Zupančič says in *Ethics of the Real* (2000), “the object of the drive is not an object supposed to provide some satisfaction to the subject, but this satisfaction itself” (Zupančič 142). The character’s desire “sustains itself by remaining unsatisfied,” while they continue to achieve *jouissance* through the drive which is able to achieve satisfaction from everywhere and everything (242). For Quin this concept also ties together her novels, all of which convey the same consistent theme of complex, three-way relationships in which there is a constant search for an absent character; this search reveals the paradoxical relationship of the drive and desire in that the desire to find someone remains unfulfilled but the drive achieves satisfaction.

The timelessness of *Three* shows up consistently throughout the novel and we are again confronted with this in the journal when we come across the entry which S dates “Absurdity,” rather than marking it with a month or day of the week (70). The entry begins:

A book. On the fly-leaf, inscribed with L’s recognisable horizontal writing: For you with love from me in remembrance of that day in June. I turned the page over, a few more, put the book down, opened it again, stared at the inscription. Which June, what

day, why? A time possibly when I knew neither of them—beginning of a hot summer perhaps, when they first met, made love? (70)

Like S's own diary entries this inscription has an ambiguous time written down in remembrance—June—and she seems to find it absurd that she has encountered time's absence; in Blanchot's terms the surrender to time's absence is not "a purely negative mode, it is on the contrary, a time without negation, without decision, when here is nowhere as well" (*The Space of Literature* 30). This inscription signals the dead present, which Blanchot describes as "the impossibility of making any presence real—an impossibility which is present, which is there as the present's double, the shadow of the present which the present bears and hides in itself" (31). This book with the inscription on the fly-leaf serves as a memorial for an anonymous day in a June but as much as S desires to know more about it the memorial is a mere shadow of the day which Leonard and Ruth once experienced.

The inability on the part of Ruth and Leonard to interpret S's messages turns the diaries and recordings into objects that lack any real content. After listening to the second set of audio recordings Ruth and Leonard are surprised that there is "not a word not a clue" about what has happened to S (*Three* 116). In her recordings S says:

There is a lake in the middle of the mountains. They say. (24).



This statement is surrounded by silence, placing emphasis upon the mountain lake and the ‘they’ that told her about it. The identity of ‘they’ remains anonymous, but is most likely Ruth and Leonard who seem to be the only people S associates with in the area. The lake is referenced several more times throughout the novel, including the newspaper article Leonard discovers near the end. It says: “The unclothed body of an unidentified young woman, with stab wounds in back and abdomen, was found yesterday by a lake near the Sugarloaf mountain. A blood-stained angler’s knife and hammer were also found” (131). The final journal entry, which ends the novel, describes how S is drawn to the lake and reveals her plans for journeying there in a boat. Even with all these clues located in the journals the novel ends ambiguously, leaving us to wonder if S has purposely disappeared, been murdered, or committed suicide.

In Quin’s novel *Passages* (1969) she once again explores a relationship between three people: a woman, her lover, and the woman’s missing brother who they are searching for. The novel alternates between the narrative of the woman and the journal of the lover. On the first page we are introduced to the lover’s journal, being told by the woman “he takes notes. For a book. Journal.” (*Passages* 5). Like Joubert he is writing a book which serves as a journal, but which is written in a poetic style that is also a form of art; although he writes notes about their travels, lists, dialogue, and side notes about mythical beings, he also provides internal reflections (*The Book to Come* 54). An example comes near the end of the novel when he writes: “I am on the verge of discovering my own demoniac possibilities and because of this I am conscious I am not alone within myself” (*Passages* 111). Here we are exposed to the internal voice of the woman’s lover where his secret observations are recorded, this particular reflection shows Quin’s self-conscious reflection on the voice as *objet petit a*. Like Socrates the lover has realized the presence of the internal voice within himself and he questions the possibilities for the object

voice, asking “who is it today that inhabits me?” (111). Thus, with his discovery of this internal, silent voice the lover has discovered the same realization as Blanchot’s questioning poet: “that language whose whole force lies in its not being, whose very glory is to evoke, in its own absence, the absence of everything. This language of the unreal, this fictive language who delivers us to fiction, comes from silence and returns to silence” (*The Space of Literature* 39). Through learning to write in this language of the unreal the lover is able to create a fiction in his journal, thus leading us to view the journal itself as a piece of literature.

These journal entries are shadows of the events taking place, which allow us to learn about the fantasies which the woman has shared with her lover, and his own thoughts about them. One of the lover’s first entries dated “June” says, “Easier letting go when she isn’t around. Easier sitting back and thinking. Allow thought to go in any direction” (*Passages* 28). The lover’s journal, a book described by Blanchot as “altogether solitary” and “often written out of fear and anguish at the solitude which comes to the writer on account of the work” must be written in solitude (*The Space of Literature* 29). He is writing in response to his “everyday history” –the experiences which have happened on the adventure to find the woman’s lost brother. Like S’s journals in *Three* the lover also dates the entries—“June,” “Tuesday,” “Monday,” “1 am,” “2 am,” arbitrary dates which are interrupted and their historical context destroyed by the notes added to the side of the entries.

The process of transcribing his own internal voice into the journals is a process which involves realizing the lack of a coherent interior monologue and being able to confront the void inside oneself where the “voice comes to resonate” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 42). This void which is, according to Blanchot, found in the writer’s solitude, originates from the writer’s belonging in the work, and “to what always precedes the work” (*The Space of Literature* 24). It

is within the solitude of writing and when the writer approaches what Blanchot refers to at the *other* night that the possibility for the voice to resonate within the void becomes a real possibility. Evoking Kafka's beast in *The Burrow* Blanchot contends that it is when the writer approaches the *other* night that the beast hears the other beast. This "muffled whispering" is described as the "seeping sands of silence" where the writer must confront her own absence and is where she "becomes the other" (168; 169). Rather than Quin writing the journal entries in *Passages* in her own voice, or even the voice of a woman, she adopts the voice of the other and writes them from the perspective of the male lover. She crafts the journal as the object voice to speak against bourgeois society and in doing so creates new roles for women and men. In one of the lover's side notes he writes: "The illusion she creates is the most real thing for her. The dress she wears becomes the foundation of the part she'll play, and he'll take his cue from there" (*Passages* 43). He goes on to describe the different faces which the woman wears, the mature woman, femme fatale, the mystic, and a country girl 'at heart' (43-44). In as far as she exists as his symptom, the lover fantasizes that she is able to wear these different faces and he exists through her in order to both follow her in her journey to find her missing brother and to express his own fantasies. Indeed, his fantasy depends on the woman to exist as his symptom; if we look back at Lacan's conception of woman as the symptom of man and the shift in the way he thought about this concept later in his career, then we can understand that the lover "exists only through woman qua his symptom" (*Enjoy Your Symptom!* 155). Žižek expounds this idea in *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (1992) where he goes on to explain that man's "entire being lies 'out there,' in woman" (155). The woman enjoys the freedom from her relation to man, and her separation from the phallic signifier is encapsulated in Lacan's notion of feminine *jouissance*. This

expression of feminine *jouissance* occurs through the woman's adventures without her lover; while he is left behind to write in his journal she is out searching for her lost brother.

Her lover's entanglement with her fantasies is then a way to externalize his own symptom; when she leaves, however, his own symptom dissolves; therefore in order to ground himself he must record his thoughts in the journal (*Enjoy Your Symptom!* 155). To travel with the woman is an overpowering experience and he finds it "Almost a relief to be on my own. More and more unable to observe, determine the truth of things, share an experience. Is knowing this as clear as the thing itself? Writing these thoughts, if only to see what I might think. Lucid—well fairly so—at the moment. She has her own lucidity in fantasies, sometimes shared. The need to follow these. The need for sharing mine vicariously" (*Passages* 29). He is not only memorializing his own thoughts, he is also recording her fantasies "making love on the edge of a bank/ cliff. A space capsule: 'Imagine floating around in all that space and copulating at the same time.' With two men—one under, one above. Another woman" (29).

Her fantasies also include the pursuit of her lost brother and while she is out looking for him her lover is left behind in the hotel room. In his journal he records his side of the adventure: "September  
Hotel room with large red roses on yellow wall-paper. Geography of dust behind air conditioner. Hard mattress, broken lamp switch. Curiously enough gives a sense of liberty" (84). The yellow wallpaper is reminiscent of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), but rather than a woman locked up and writing in secret journals it is the male lover left behind in the woman's search for her brother. His frustration at being left behind is made clear several times in his journal. In an entry dated Thursday he writes:

Ah how much cooler it is

cool

cool

cooler. So play it cool. Not wonder if she'll return before the sun sets. Not measure the space between where I sit, crouch, bend back from the table. The space is no distance now. I can stretch a hand out slowly, be held fascinated by my own fingers. (33).

The journal entries continue throughout the night, he realizes it is "Darkness already. She hasn't returned. Shirt soaked, lips dry, eyes bloodshot. 6'3" of smelly flesh floating in a foreign city." (33).

The woman's journey is a search for her lost brother, and in this three-way relationship her lover is the outsider. He is the one left behind at the hotel while she is out in pursuit of "men who resemble, if only by a gesture, a hand raised, a large ring on the middle finger" (99). Just as S observed Ruth and Leonard, the lover observes the woman's search for her brother and records it in the journal. When the novel ends, with a journal entry dated Saturday he is planning on beginning another journey. He says he has committed to the moment and in doing so has committed to memorializing the moment, while "she still has her obsession to follow through and her fantasies to live out" (112). Just as S's fate is never fully discovered, the woman has considered several possible fates for her brother, even as she continues her unrelenting search for him; these fates are compiled by her lover in a list in his journal:

shot through the head

Taken another name

Gone to another country

That he walks a deserted beach

A yard

A cell

Parks

A museum. (99)

All of these possibilities serve to sustain the woman's fantasy of finding her brother; they help to sustain the desire all the while never actually finding him. The drive, which is satisfied everywhere, finds *jouissance* in "men who resemble, if only by a gesture, a hand raised, a large ring on the middle finger" (99). The role of the male lover and the function of his journal writing reveal how Quin has transposed the roles of the man and woman in her writing. In Hassam's writing on diaries his characterization of the diaries written by men is revealed in his chapter devoted to fictive sea journals. In comparison to women's diaries, the sea journals written by men illustrate the traditional view of the male and female roles in society: women are part of the interior, while men are allowed to become part of the exterior world, where they are able to experience great adventures. Quin chooses to write the diaries through the voice of a man as well, but from the references to the yellow wallpaper and the master-slave relationship (she as the master, he as the slave) it is the woman who is actually having the adventure.

Along with journal entries Quin fills her novels with letters, both imagined and real, which provide us with the same type of exposure to the inner, silent voice afforded by the journal entries. Blanchot compares the letters Van Gogh wrote to his brother to the diary of the writer because both have the ability to act as "the anchor that scrapes against the bottom of the day-to-day and clings to the roughness of vanity" (185). In *Berg* Quin uses letters to reveal the past relationships between characters in this parody of an Oedipal drama. The novel reveals that Aly's penchant for letter writing comes from his father Nathaniel Berg, who used to leave letters and love notes for his mother before he left his family. These letters are all Aly Berg had for a

father growing up and he both memorizes and emulates them. In this way Quin uses the Lacanian notion that “the letter kills” to symbolically kill Nathy through his own written words. Fink expounds Lacan’s idea that “the letter kills” what came before language and words, explaining that the “symbolic creates ‘reality,’ reality as that which is named by language and can thus be thought and talked about” (*The Lacanian Subject* 25). Since the symbolic can be written and rewritten innumerable times Nathy—the symbolic father in this parody—can be killed repeatedly by his son through the act of writing his own letters. While enacting his Oedipal drama Berg asks himself, “Should I write a note to Judith, slip it under the door, arrange to meet her?” (*Berg* 80). In doing this to court Judith he is copying the way his father used “used to leave little notes on [Edith’s] pillow” (80). His notes to Judith are never revealed, but we do get to read his letter to his mother, Edith. In Aly’s letter his true thoughts are exposed, the ones he never says aloud but is able to commit to paper. He writes to his mother, “I’ve seen my father, but so far haven’t revealed who I really am (how Dickensian can one get, and what can I really put—that he’s been fucking another woman next door, and probably a dozen others besides over the past fifteen years, is about to go on tour with some friend in a Vaudeville show, trailing a dummy around, that he’s in love with a budgie...?)” (58). His father’s repulsiveness seems to fascinate him; in this letter, he fails to mention his plan to kill his father, only that he now plans “to fuck [Judith] too” (59). This temporary delay in his plan is simply another part of the Oedipal plot in which Judith has taken on the role of the mother.

In his pursuit of Judith, it seems as if Aly does not feel the need to actually murder his father in order to usurp his position; he must simply take his place with the mother figure (Judith) and he uses letter writing as a means to help him execute his plan. Growing up with Edith he would leave notes for her, who told him (in regards to his letter writing) that he is “just

like [his] father” (80). Although it is clear he never mails the letter informing Edith that he has found his father, the letter allows him the ability to “[free] himself by writing” (*The Book to Come* 208). In Blanchot’s brief discussion of Proust’s letter writing he discusses how writing letters incessantly worked to free Proust from the “alienation of writing” and moves into “the gesture of writing that will become his own” (208). The fixation on letter writing found throughout *Berg* should allow the characters that engage in it to free themselves from the restrictions of traditional literary language and find a new language that “stems from our secret inwardness” (208). For Aly Berg the writing of the letter reveal his Oedipal desire to have sex with both Judith and Edith (implied by the statement at the end of the letter, “I’m going to fuck her too” (*Berg* 59)). Berg’s own approach to letter writing reveals that he considers the letter to be a mixture of the true and the false. The letter allows him to transform Judith into “a projected fictional love: the image of a Ruth, a Helen, Beatrice, Cleopatra,” in addition to providing a means to courting her (67).

The intimacy and the potential for the letter in *Berg* are revealed in the old letter from Nathaniel Berg to Edith. He writes, “I’ve been thinking of buying some land on the moon, and thereby staking my claim, and go up in the second or third rocket—would you come with me?” (102). This fanciful speculation is in direct relation to Nathaniel’s everyday history—he is contemplating travel to the moon as a solution to the real problems of sustaining a home and paying taxes. He goes on to say, “I could take out little budgie, and she could do the cooking, as well as the washing up, and fly to earth every week to bring the milk back” (102). This letter, which Aly describes as “nonsensical yet coherent,” is one of the many letters which he has memorized and recalls throughout the novel (103). Adrian Johnston situates the *objet petit a* as existing in a place between the specular and non-specular, as yet another example of the



theoretical impasse in which the subject's relation to the *objet petit a* is situated. Considering Aly's letters through the lens of Johnston's discussion on *objet petit a* I believe they serve as placeholders for Aly's desire, and both letters and journal entries in Quin's novels can be considered the vehicles by which the "coordinates marked by entities and events are situated in space and time and amenable to apprehension as *Vorstellungen*" (Johnston 252). The term *Vorstellungen* is translated by Lacan in *Seminar XI* as "that which takes the place of representation"; the term is expanded on by Fink in "The Real Cause of Repetition" where he discusses *vorstellung* not as an idea but as something real which cannot be "rendered into words," but is instead "unthinkable, unnameable, unspeakable" (227). These silenced images of the letters illustrate the struggle of representing the *objet petit a* in literature. As we find in *Berg* the letters alone do not contain the object voice, they are interior to Aly; even when the letters are not physically with him it is understood that they still remain with him, "like a vampire, whose menacing shadowy presence is disturbingly palpable and yet an invisible blank in the clear surfaces of surrounding mirrors, *objet petit a* tangibly haunts its subject in a similarly elusive, hard-to-see fashion" (Johnston 253). Thus the letters have become Lacan's *objet petit a* and will continue to follow him like a spectre in order to sustain the fantasy of the Oedipus complex. The fact that the letter haunts Berg reveals that it is language which threatens Berg with castration, not his father. According to Lacan, the Oedipus complex is a mask for desire of the Other, in this case the mOther, and the father is determined as "this impossible real that we have been talking about" (Seminar XVII 129). Lacan goes on to say "that fantasy dominates the entire reality of desire, that is to say, the law" (129). The conflation between the fantasy of the Oedipal relationship between Berg and his mother and father and language is a problem with translating the unconscious.

The letters haunt Berg so thoroughly that when we are exposed to his inner, silent voice it is almost impossible to distinguish between the letters from Edith and her voice inside his head. When Aly thinks about catching a midnight train home from Brighton his mother speaks to him, “When will you be back Aly, write and let me know won’t you? I can make your favourite puddings, and we’ll buy you some nice new shoes for Christmas, do all the things we used to do” (Berg 94). This internal voice provides Aly with all the comforting qualities, but it also works to bring back his insecurities. While being pursued by his father Aly considers “[fleeing the place altogether,” but instead of following the same path of erasure as S and the missing brother in Quin’s later novels he questions the act of “eternal escaping” (136). Instead, his act of escape is within his mind through his own memories, dwelling on “Proust-like” letters and teas with “platefuls of cream cakes, doughnuts with sly clots of jam, and meringues with nipples on top” (136; 137). These memories eventually bring him back to the voice of his mother, the internal voice which for Aly has shaped his life: “Of course their bread isn’t any different from what you have here Aly; Mr. Dobbs supplies the whole neighbourhood, so don’t keep saying their’s [sic] is any better than ours, because it’s not true” (137). Rather than only considering this voice inside his head to be memories coming back to haunt him, like the letters which Aly has memorized, this voice is Aly’s internal voice, which Dolar describes as an embodiment of the society which has shaped us, and haunts him and judges his future actions. When Aly considers what will happen if his father dies in the English Channel and he is held responsible, Edith’s voice comes to him again, “Oh Aly how could you, God’s still in his heaven you know, some of us forget that” (154). Much like Sandra in Quin’s unfinished novel *The Unmapped Country*, Aly Berg is tormented by the voice of the superego; it is, according to Dolar, the “law endowed with a surplus of voice” (*A Voice and Nothing More* 40). While Sandra characterizes the voice as that

of all the mothers and fathers, Berg's tormenting voice most often takes on the form of his mother Edith. This interior voice that speaks to Aly from the void inside himself, as if he is remembering a piece of correspondence, is both the internalization of the law and the personification of his own society speaking to him. The significance of the voice speaking as the voice of Edith is reflective of Žižek's interpretation of the mother as one of the names-of-the-father. Berg's quest to kill his father is therefore futile in the symbolic order because the voice of his mother will continue to haunt him and as another iteration of the name-of-the-father it keeps the threat of castration looming over him.

In Quin's final book to be published before her death in 1973, *Tripticks*, the middle section of the novel is made up of a series of letters from the man's mother, step-father, ex-wife, father-in-law, and various other people. These letters indicate that while he has run away from the marriage, he has also been replying to the letters. Although we do not see his return letters to these four individuals, much like the telephone conversation in "Motherlogue," all the letters address his actions and behaviour in his marriage. Although *Tripticks* has been described as Quin's "least personal novel, and the one which does not fit into the tendency for internalized writing which Quin otherwise exemplifies," these letters provide us with an idea of the voice which make up the society the narrator exists within (Booth 524).

The majority of the letters are criticisms of the narrator, which reveal what others think of him and his actions; the letters act as a mirror and provide a reflection of who he is. The first letters he receives are from his mother and stepfather. His mother warns him, "St. Patrick is alive and well in the breasts of all his faithful. Beware! What he did to the snakes, he can do to you too." (*Tripticks* 88). This warning acts as a moral judgement on his behaviour and also places a symbolic, religious father figure as the enforcer of the law, in this case St. Patrick. His mother

acts as his superego and thus her judgements of her son give her written words more meaning; they are imbued with the remainder of the object voice which is left behind when her words are committed to paper.

Accompanying the letters from his mother are letters from the narrator's step-father. These also contain judgements of his actions, such as "May God have mercy on your soul," or as one letter begins, "I do not mean to reproach you, or even to give you the impression that I think you'd care if I did. But it appears to me that you have obviously graduated to the oldest juvenile delinquent in the nation" (89). This letter serves to act both as the voice of the superego for the narrator and to infantilize him at the same time. As Dolar posits, the physical voice of the mother is the "immaterial tie that comes to replace the umbilical cord", but Hélène Cixous contends that, for men, syntax itself is "a surrogate umbilical cord" (*A Voice and Nothing More* 39; Cixous 886). Although the step-father believes that the narrator will not care about the chastisement coming from his parents, the narrator has saved these letters and will later go on to illustrate the value he places on the symbol of the letter itself.

The letters from the narrator's first ex-wife initially contain pleas for him to return to her and their marriage, but as the letters progress she eventually gives up on him returning and writes, "Towards the end of our marriage I really did find that it had all turned into ugly realities and violent fantasies, and instead of illuminating them, you simply lay down and rolled around in them" (108). Her letter goes on to chastise him and, like his mother and step-father, infantilize his fantasies, by telling him, "you live in a fantasy world like Disneyland" (108). In terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis the narrator's desire to 'roll around' in his "ugly realities and violent fantasies" is a way for him to map himself out in relation to the object voice and in doing so "the experience of the fundamental phantasy becomes the drive" (*Tripticks* 108; *Seminar XI* 273). In

*Seminar XI* Lacan poses the question: “How can a subject who has traversed the radical phantasy experience the drive?” (273). His answer is ambiguous; Lacan claims that this has never actually been approached through analysis, but if it were to be accomplished it would be through a repeated loop of psychoanalysis. Quin replicates this loop through the repetition of the narrator. He has three marriages and is always running away from the first ex-wife. The relationship between the real and fantasy always comes back to the first ex-wife, reminding us of Lacan’s contention that “the real supports the phantasy, the phantasy protects the real” (41). His tendency to relive his first marriage by marrying Karate Kitten and then Snowey Unicorn connects the real and the fantasy via a screen. This takes us back to “something quite primary, something determinant in the function of repetition” (60). In addition to infantilizing the narrator, his first ex-wife also emasculates him in her letters; she explains that we are “taught about three genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter” and now that their relationship is over she finally understands the neuter gender (*Tripticks* 108). Dwelling on the intricacies of the English language, she insults his manhood and his writing simultaneously. Revealing his preoccupation with letters and the written word, her letter says, “Some day you might meet a girl who wants to take a correspondence course. You use letters like scattershit.” (108). It is not only her disillusionment with the narrator and their marriage which drives her to insult his predilection for letters. He already has a new girlfriend, Karate Kitten, and her letters also insult his letter-writing abilities. She begins one of her letters by saying, “I didn’t find your letter all that inspiring—pleasant enough but the energy level was almost zero” (114). The narrator uses his letters to build a relationship with the women he is involved with, but the relationship he is trying to create is one of fantasy. The letters play an important role in what Lacan would call the “dialogue of lovers,” in which the narrator attempts to gauge “*What value has my desire for you?*” (*Seminar XI* 192).

As an *objet petit a* the letter creates a link between the desire of the subject and the desire of the Other (215). In Karate Kitten's next letter to him she says, "your sense of an orgy is a bourgeois fun machine," revealing his masculine fantasy (*Tripticks* 115). In "Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father, or How Not to Misread Lacan's Formulas of Sexuation," Žižek clarifies how Lacan's formulas of sexuation reveal "the fantasmatic, obscene figure of the primordial father-*jouisseur* who was not encumbered by any prohibition and was as such able to fully enjoy all women" and also the "figure of the Lady in courtly love" ("Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father" par. 1). The narrator fantasies himself as this obscene figure and attempts to live this out through his relationships with women. What he does not realize, though, is that Karate Kitten is also able to be a "capricious Master who wants it all" and in this way Žižek characterizes Woman as another one of the names-of-the-father (par. 1). In his interpretation of Lacan, Žižek interprets the courtly Lady as another depiction of the primordial father. He interprets the Lady as holding the power to charge her "knight-servant with arbitrary and outrageous ordeals" and, just as the father is, is above the Law. The ability for Woman to become another interpretation of the name of the father hinges on holding the power which brings the symbolic order into being (par. 2).

The letters that the narrator has saved reveal his focus on a *ménage à trois*, another aspect of the novel which ties it together with Quin's other novels and the focus on three-way relationships. Although Karate Kitten mocks his fantasy of a threesome by describing it as "a bourgeois fun machine," she is still willing to accept the three of them living together (herself, the narrator, and another woman) (*Tripticks* 115). One of the final letters included in the series is from the narrator's 'snowey unicorn,' who appears to be the second woman in his fantasy of a

threesome, and his third wife. She reveals in her letter that Karate Kitten has left, thus destroying his fantasy of a threesome and revealing the life she has planned for them together in marriage:

Can't you just see us hitting that middle road: you'll wear white starched shirts, suits with baggy pants, white ankle-high cotton socks. Toothpicks. Lunch in a paper sack. Off-duty bourbon and 7-up. And I'll wear a wire stiff bouffant, girdle, at-the-knee print dresses and save Green stamps, and be active in the Girl Scouts and PTA. A Bible adorns the coffee table, and there'll be a flag decal on the family car. I'll live for 'the kids'.

(*Tripticks* 120).

This fantasy put forth by Snowey Unicorn conjures up the ironic image of a bourgeois marriage to serve as an alternative fantasy to the masculine fantasy in which the narrator plays the role of the primordial father who is able “to enjoy all women” (“Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father” par. 1). Through the juxtaposition of the two fantasies: Snowey Unicorn transformed from the third woman in the relationship into the woman in courtly love, destined for bourgeois marriage and the narrator as the “obscene figure of the primordial father-*jouisseur* it is revealed that there is a “grotesque discord” between both fantasies and reality, which in turn reveals the emptiness of these fantasies (“Woman is One of the Names-of-the-Father” par. 7).

The fantasy world that the narrator attempts to create is insulted by his parents, his ex-wife, and also Karate Kitten; she describes his erotic fantasies as “the kind that make horny, middle aged-businessmen sibilate the litany ‘this is shit—what is this shit?’ (115). She believes he has some sort of virulent disease, but does not want to refer him to her analyst because “he’s a schitzzy shrink with hidden camera and two-way mirrors, and somehow he always gets me into the state of a white-faced nympho sucking my polyploid fingers as I writhe on a tabletop, and his favourite slogan for almost any trauma is ‘don’t panic’” (115). The novels contain several

criticisms of bad psychoanalysis and this quote reveals the criticism of the role of the analyst. As discussed in the previous chapter the analyst plays a role as the object of desire for the analysand and must remain aware of their temporary place in the fantasy. Lacan describes this analyst's desire in playing the role as "not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it" (*Seminar XI* 276). The analyst plays this role, then, in order to allow the analyst to learn something about themselves; however the problem with Karate Kitten's analyst is revealed in her description of him as a "schitzy shrink," which indicates the role that he plays, as the schizophrenic is "one who specifies himself by not being caught up in any discourse" (Miller 10). Since she believes that the analyst is merely playing a role which turns her into a nympho, she labels him as a schizophrenic because he is not truly involved in her discourse. Her criticism stems from the analyst's inability to act his role in the analyst's discourse; this prevents Karate Kitten from understanding her unconscious desire because she is unable to undergo the process of transference with her analyst. Rather than providing the silence needed for this discourse to happen, the analyst believes he already knows everything about her. This causes the analyst's discourse to transform into a perverse fantasy. We see this perverse analyst near the end of the novel when the narrator is witness to a confrontation between a Women's Liberation group and sadistic psychiatrists who reject the analyst's discourse in favour of becoming an instrument of the law in which they have the power to label the patient; the disagreement ends with the psychiatrists diagnosing on the spot that one woman is "a paranoid fool and a stupid bitch" and another woman who was previously diagnosed as a borderline schizophrenic as "past the borderline now" (*Tripticks* 173; 173). This turn towards schizophrenia is interesting because she has always had an interest in writing against how society expects



writing to be written, and in doing so creates a new way for language to be used. Jacques-Alain Miller writes that “Language...has the effect of annihilation” (Miller 14). The separation of the symbolic and the real ceases to happen in the world of the schizophrenic and in this way it changes the word so that rather than the word acting as the murderer of the thing, “it *is* the thing” (14). In this way the letter not only kills what came before, it both consumes and assumes the world of the symbolic and the real and makes the letter the thing.

### Chapter Three: Women Writers

When Ann Quin was writing in the 1960s and 70s she was considered part of a group of British avant-garde writers who were challenging the state of the British novel. B.S. Johnson, described as the “leading British ‘experimentalist’” by Giles Gordon, named a group of writers in his biography “who are writing as though it mattered, as though they meant it, as though they meant it to matter,” and most of whom made up this new group of avant-garde writers: Samuel Beckett, John Berger, Christine Brooke-Rose, Brigid Brophy, Anthony Burgess, Alan Burns, Angela Carter, Eva Figes, Giles Gordon, Wilson Harris, Rayner Heppenstall, Robert Nye, Ann Quin, Penelope Shuttle, Alan Sillitoe and Stefan Themerson” (Gordon xii; xiii). In response to Karl Miller’s *Writing in England Today* (1968), Gordon and Johnson planned their own anthology as an “antidote” to Miller’s tome on “deadening social realism” (xiii). Miller’s anthology characterises literature as a “division of journalism” and looks back on fifteen years of British realism in which the British novel suffered as an art form; in contrast Gordon and Johnson’s anthology compiles together eleven writers who were part of the *avant-garde* literary movement, and whose work would have an impact on the future of British fiction so much so that in 2001 Gordon wrote that Quin’s novels now seem “almost traditional” (xiv). The idea for an anthology came to fruition two years after the suicides of both Johnson and Quin, and Gordon dedicated *Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction* (1975) to their memory.

Rather than relegating Quin’s work to a bygone era of experimentalism, I contend that her work is better viewed as part of a continuum of women writers who emerged over the course of the twentieth century. Gordon himself also recognized the re-emergence of women writers during this time period and proposed that the publishing house Secker & Warburg do a series of interviews with female authors, including Quin. Looking back, women writers like Quin, Kathy

Acker, and Angela Carter were doing the same thing with writing literature that theorists in France were doing in the 1970s: rewriting writing to create a feminine *jouissance*. In “Laugh of the Medusa” Cixous writes:

women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word “silence,” the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word “impossible” and writes it as “the end.” (Cixous 886)

Women’s writing leaves the possibility of “sweeping away syntax,” which, for men, acts as “a surrogate umbilical cord,” in essence serving the same purpose which Dolar ascribes to the mother’s voice—“the first problematic connection to the other” (Cixous 886; 886; *A Voice and Nothing More* 39).

In my previous chapters, my discussion of Quin’s novels highlighted her preoccupation with three-way relationships, particularly the Oedipal relationship. This “Oedipal norm” in psychoanalysis is something which Lacan himself attempted to go beyond, as well as the theorists and writers who would follow him (Miller 12). This is important to the understanding of Quin’s writing and how she expresses the voice as an object of desire and the absence/loss at the heart of her novels.

Quin’s first published novel, *Berg*, is most well known for being an Oedipal story and the first sentence summarizes the plot of the novel: “A man called Berg, who changed his name to Greb, came to a seaside town intending to kill his father...” (*Berg* n.p.). *Berg* is the most traditional novel in terms of its form and does not specifically address female desire, but it does create a satirical version of the Oedipal story. What we fail to realize at the outset of *Berg* is that

in Lacanian terms the father is already dead. The Oedipus complex has long been under scrutiny from both Lacan and female psychoanalysts; Kristeva touches on the problem in her discussion of the oedipal triangle deciding that “the triangle, Ego-object-Other, is not set in place with sufficient strength” (Beardsworth 87). In her discussion of Kristeva in *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (2004) Sara Beardsworth characterizes the father’s position as having been weakened, the primary example being Little Hans’ father playing too much of the mother role. For Little Hans his symptoms are a result of the lack of the real father; Hans was able to vocalize his symptoms, but when this same situation presents itself in an adult, the adult’s speech becomes phobic and “void of meaning” (88). The unresolved Oedipus complex leaves the subject unable to “identify with something on the outside [and] finds the impossible within” (89). According to Kristeva, the failure to separate from the mother initially leaves the subject prone to phobias, and she characterizes the relationship between mother and child in this case as abject. The later rejection takes place “where language does not speak” (90). Therefore, we know from Lacan that when subjects attempt to locate the father within themselves, this results in the emergence of the voice of the superego which, serving as a replacement for the dead father, “heaps reproaches in oneself” (*Discourse to Catholics* 25). The blaring voice of the superego is found inside oneself where the silent voice plays the part of the symbolic father, chastising ourselves because the real father is no longer here to play his part.

Lacan’s analysis that “the decline of the Oedipus complex is the mourning of the father” leads to the realization that Berg cannot kill his father because he is already dead; instead he must kill the symbolic father, all the while being haunted by the voice of the superego which has emerged as a result of his father’s absence during his childhood (25). As a substitute for killing his father Berg attempts to kill the ventriloquist’s dummy, one of his father’s prized possessions,

and he rolls it up in an eiderdown in an attempt to hide his crime. This dummy is a substitute for both his father, Nathaniel Berg, and also himself, as a repository for the internalized voice of his mother. The dummy is also a satirical iteration of the symbolic father, dressed in Nathaniel Berg's suit, created for the sole purpose of allowing the real father's voice to speak through it. After killing the dummy Aly Berg considers it his duty "to take his father's corpse back home to Edith" as a "trophy of his triumphant love for her" (106; 106). This is not only the triumph of Aly Berg's love for his mother Edith, but also the triumph of the son over the father, thus allowing Aly to avoid castration. The novel ends ambiguously, with a man who resembles Aly's father moving into the rooming house in Aly's old room after he has moved in with his father's mistress Judith. This unidentified man is yet another iteration of the symbolic father and reveals that his victory over the father is not really a victory, but an empowerment of the superego and the rejuvenation of Berg's fear of castration from the symbolic father. This represents the inability to escape the Oedipal norm which hovers over society, waiting, in the same way that the symbolic father does, to restore the overarching father figure.

Quin's later novels also contain complicated three-way relationships, such as the possible *ménage à trois* in *Three* and the pursuit of the brother by a woman and her lover in *Passages*. Quin's last published novel, *Tripticks*, continues the theme of three-way relationships, but also introduces the theme of schizophrenia and a clearly negative relationship with bad psychoanalysis. The theme of schizophrenia, coupled with writing against the patriarchal institution of psychoanalysis, was later taken up by Kathy Acker throughout her novels; Acker is one of the only women writers who gives credit to Quin for inspiring her writing. She continues Quin's Oedipal drama in *Blood and Guts in High School* (1978), published five years after Quin's suicide. Rather than following a traditional Oedipal narrative, she places the emphasis on

the subject as woman and instead gives us a case of an Electra complex. In light of the influence which Quin had upon Acker and the continuity in subject matter, it is useful to discuss their work in conjunction with one another; as women writers it is also interesting to see how psychoanalysis was contemplated in Anglo-American literature and in comparison to French women psychoanalysts. In the discussion of psychoanalysis in women's writing both Quin's *Berg* and Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School* can be read as satirical representations of the triangular relationship that lead us to ask what the real is behind the fantasy? Acker's novel picks up on this question and attempts to show us the "desire behind and beneath Oedipal representations" (Buchanan 117). This desire is to kill the father, or in the case of the subject of the Electra complex, to kill the mother; but the problem here is that the real father is already dead. Thus the subject is left to kill the symbolic father/mother instead and, as we saw in *Berg*, the result of an absence of the real parental voice of authority is that the subject is haunted by the voice of the superego.

In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) Freud discusses the barrier against incest and says, "the parents' affection for their child may awaken his sexual instinct prematurely (i.e. before the somatic conditions of puberty are present) to such a degree that the mental excitation breaks through in an unmistakable fashion to the genital system" ("Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" 225). In 1920, in an added footnote, he goes on to discuss the phantasies of the "pubertal period" and connects them back to the infantile sexuality that had been previously overcome (226). Acker creates a parent-child relationship in which the Oedipal complex/Electra complex, as described by Freud, is brought to life between Janey and her father Johnny; in this relationship the daughter Janey has direct access to the forbidden object, her father, and the real mother is absent. This results in a relationship where Janey speaks to her

father as if they were a married couple and becomes jealous of her father's girlfriends who act as symbolic mother figures.

In the first paragraph of the novel Janey's relationship with her father is defined for us as "everything"; he is her "boyfriend, brother, sister, money, amusement, and father" (7). This univocal relationship means that all these titles that Janey holds for her Johnny always lead back to the Electra relationship, with the father at the head of it. This exposes the problem Kristeva finds with the absent/weak parental figure; for both single parents (Johnny and Edith) the boundaries of the parent-child relationship are significantly altered through the absence of the other parent. When Janey's father starts seeing another woman she become jealous and believes he is going to leave her. Like a wife being left for an older woman Janey sees herself as "tough, rotted, putrid beef" (18). We can once again go back to Kristeva's analysis of the unresolved Oedipal complex here, and the idea that the subject becomes abject when they lack the proper separation from the parent of the opposite sex. In the case of Janey she does not only suffer from abject feelings, she describes her physical body as rotted beef. The arguments that Janey and her father engage in early in the novel and the accusations she makes, that he has "always liked WASP girls," that he will leave her, or that he doesn't want to commit to her, draw attention to the ridiculousness of the Elektra complex which defines the father-daughter relationship (18). Janey is only ten years old at the beginning of the novel, yet she acts like a jealous wife, calling up Johnny's friend Bill about his affair and accusing him of wanting to leave her.

The innocence of ten-year-old Janey makes the sexual relationship between her and her father even more shocking. Her innocence is highlighted not only by her age, but by her childlike naiveté. An example of this is when she compares her friendship with Peter, a stuffed animal, to her father's relationship with his new girlfriend Sally (9). Before Janey leaves, we discover that

she has an infection from a sexually transmitted disease, but still allows her father to “fuck her in her asshole cause the infection made her cunt hurt too much to fuck there, though she didn’t tell him it hurt badly there, too, cause she wanted to fuck love more than she felt pain” (21). The sexually transmitted disease brings physical pain and abjection to the body; in comparison to the corpse, which Kristeva describes as “the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life,” the sexually transmitted disease brings the same type of physical abjection and will end in Janey’s death (*Powers of Horror* 4).

In comparing Quin’s *Berg* and Acker’s *Blood and Guts in High School*, the most obvious difference is the Oedipus complex versus the Electra complex. This changes the relationship between the subject and the mother. Following Lacan naming the objects of desire (gaze, voice, breast, phallus), Joan Copjec traces their naming back to the split from the primordial mother. She goes on to describe Lacan’s conception from two different forms of representation which can structure the mother’s role: the first has a “constant structure and stays together as a thing,” and the second relies on memory to come to an understanding through the body of the subject (Copjec 33). Within the second form of representation the various aspects of the mother “will be captured by the *Vorstellungen*.” When we come across an aspect of the primordial mother that does not translate into an object of desire coinciding with a body part, however, a hole “opens in the system of signifiers,” which in turn leads to what Lacan refers to as “the first outside” (34). Copjec contends that in this system, “as we gain access to language and thus thought, we lose our access to that being which is the material Thing” (34). However, the concept that thought itself completely severs the link to the mother is not accepted by Lacan who, according to Copjec’s historical analysis of the development of the objects of desire, insisted that there is an “unforgettability of the Thing, or lost *jouissance*” (35). Following Copjec’s historical tracing



of Lacanian thought, she reveals that after the drive is added, and through an understanding of Freud, Lacan would come to define the term *Vorstellungrepräsentanz* as “a matter of that which in the unconscious system represents, in the form of a sign, representation as a form of apprehending” (35). According to Copjec, the development of the drive and *Vorstellungrepräsentanz*, out of the earlier concept of *Vorstellungen*, means that *jouissance* is not lost, but rather it is now “attainable by the subject” (36). This form of *jouissance* can be achieved through the object “such as a breast or a voice, that has been detached from the mother” (36). When we bring Copjec’s writing into discussion with Quin and Acker’s Oedipus/Electra complexes the differences between the two women’s writing becomes clear: for Quin, her character Berg has a relationship with his mother Edith and through the *objets a* can achieve *jouissance*, but for Janey the *objets a* are not recognisable because she did not have a childhood attachment to her mother and thus the only *jouissance* she seeks is phallic *jouissance* through sex with various men.

I believe that the significance of the developmental difference between Berg and Janey is revealed through Kristeva’s chapter “The Life and Death of Speech” in *Black Sun*, which provides an analysis of a patient who, due to a skin disorder, lacked close skin contact with her mother and identification with the mother’s face in a mirror at an early age (*Black Sun* 58). The resulting analysis informs the patient that “since you couldn’t touch your mother you hid beneath your skin...and in that hiding place you enclosed your desire and hatred of her in the sound of your voice, since you heard hers from afar” (58). This analysis is important to understand both the voice as an object in Quin’s work and the character Janey in Acker’s work. In psychoanalysis it is necessary for the analyst and the analysand to each play a part: the analyst is required to function, in their relative silence, as an *objet a* for the process of transference to occur; in this

way, it is the analysand who is required to speak. Since this patient speaks in “concealed vocalizations” or a “secret language,” the analyst must learn to interpret these “vocalizations” at “the level of words” (57). This emphasizes language and the importance it plays in the analyst’s discourse. When unable to communicate with the analysand, Kristeva considers language empty; but when a level of trust is reached the patient opens up and communicates through words language “is revitalized and may become a space of desire” (57). This analysis, in conjunction with Copjec’s writing, opens up the question: how is the development of language affected when we do not have access to the material Thing (in this case, the mother) in the first place? If we follow Kristeva’s logic, we can understand that “melancholy persons are foreigners in their mother tongue,” because the loss of the mother affects language in such a way that they will then lose an understanding of the mother tongue; thus the “loss of meaning” makes the language they speak a “dead language” (53). Perhaps individuals who lack a mother they never become completely fluent in their mother tongue, and this lack of “verbal representation” leads to an arresting of desire (58).

Acker uses the acquisition of language in *Blood and Guts in High School* as part of Janey’s journey after being sent away from her father. Having never known her mother, she herself could be a foreigner in relation to her own mother tongue; when she is held as a sex slave she begins a journal which includes “The Persian Poems.” These poems are Janey’s way of learning the Persian language, through which she communicates both desires and truths. An example of a desire which she translates into Persian is:

A wonderful man  
 whose large prick is  
 in Janey’s cunt says

to Janey 'I love you.' (Acker n.p.)

Another example from "The Persian Poems" reveals the truth about her father:

See my father!

My father is dead.

My father is blue.

This is my father. (Acker n.p.).

This poem reveals the truth that the real father is always dead, according to Lacan, and also that there are many symbolic iterations of the father. While her real father is dead to her everywhere Janey goes she meets a new symbolic father with whom she can act out her Electra fantasy.

Janey's attempt to learn Persian, which she imagines may possibly be her dead mother's "mother" tongue, also connects her to Aly Berg. He imagines himself to be "a changeling really, my mother's an Eastern Queen, and my father's an Arab Prince, with a palace of gold in the desert and a hundred and one snow-white horses, that one day will belong to me" (Berg 137).

This literary allusion to Brontë's Heathcliff emphasizes the way in which being separated from the figure of the mother makes the individual feel disconnected from language, thus being drawn to a romanticized foreign language, believing it to be their real mother tongue rather than the language they were raised to speak.

Acker hijacks the language of the capitalist regime in order to create a new plane where she creates lines of flight, and also uses the language of nonsense and howl-words to depart from the traditional sign regime. While in New York City Janey frequents the club CBGB, where she describes her existence as "BOOM BOOM was reality, slimy slimy BOOM BOOM slimy slimy" (Acker 121). Afterward, in describing her desire to be loved by President Carter, her diary entry says "PUKE MUSHY MUSHY I GO MUSHY I AM REPULSIVE. NO I AM HOT." (123).

These instances of nonsense language are interspersed in Janey's diary entries along with paragraphs of Deleuzian thought and pseudo-plagiaristic multiplicities. For example, Janey writes in her diary:

EVERY POSITION OF DESIRE, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, IS CAPABLE OF  
 PUTTING TO QUESTION THE ESTABLISHED ORDER OF A SOCIETY; NOT  
 THAT DESIRE IS ASOCIAL, ON THE CONTRARY. BUT IT IS EXPLOSIVE;  
 THERE IS NO DESIRING-MACHINE CAPABLE OF BEING ASSEMBLED  
 WITHOUT DEMOLISHING ENTIRE SOCIAL SECTIONS. (Acker 125)

Here, Acker clearly states her experimental use of language, from the nonsensical words of the madman to the appropriation of historical texts and figures in order to rewrite them as part of a new regime.

Part of Acker's nonsense word vocabulary is the extreme obscenities she frequently uses in her writing. In Janey's diary entry Acker creates a text in the words of Erica Jong, fellow second-wave feminist and novelist. As each entry (or multiplicity) is read, the language gets more obscene, finally ending in:

WHAT WAS I SAYING? OH YES, MY NAME IS ERICA JONG I WOULD  
 RATHER BE A BABY THAN HAVE SEX. I WOULD RATHER GO GOOGOO. I  
 WOULD RATHER WRITE GOO-GOO. I WOULD RATHER WRITE: FUCK YOU UP  
 YOUR CUNTS THAT'S WHO I AM THE FUCK WITH YOUR MONEY I'M NOT  
 CATERING TO YOU ANYMORE I'M GETTING OUT I'M GETTING OUT I'M  
 RIPPING UP MY CLOTHES I'M RIPPING UP MY SKIN I HURT PAIN OH HURT  
 ME PAIN AT THIS POINT IS GOOD DO YOU UNDERSTAND? PAIN AT THIS  
 POINT IS GOOD. ME ERICA JONG WHEE WOO WOO I AM ERICA JONG I AM

ERICA JONG I FUCK ME YOU CREEP WHO'S GOING TO AUSTRALIA YOU'RE LEAVING ME ALL ALONE YOU'RE LEAVING ME WITHOUT SEX I'VE GOTTEN HOOKED ON SEX AND NOW I'M MY NAME IS ERICA JONG. IF THERE IS A GOD, GOD IS DISJUNCTION AND MADNESS. (Acker 126).

This diary entry engages us in three ways: in the recreation of Jong's historical identity (while simultaneously writing the 'body' of Janey); in the nonsense words being attributed to Jong, such as "WHEE WOO WOO I AM ERICA JONG" ; and in creating a multiplicity whereby Janey writes several of the numerous ways of *being* Erica Jong. By writing her body Janey is attempting to connect to the "system of signifiers" which we normally learn through our relation to the mother (Copjec 34). Since Janey did not have a mother, she is just now learning the language of the symbolic world, and doing so affects her understanding of language. The nonsense words which become part of Janey's language allow Acker to create a discourse whereby she defies the regime imposed upon her by capitalism's co-opting of psychoanalysis through her non-traditional language, her utterances in the voice of Erica Jong which appropriate her as a cultural figure, and her numerous lines of flight that are created in through the multitude of introductions "Erica Jong" provides to us.

Acker's novel begins with the Electra complex fantasy involving Janey and her father, but she proceeds to break it up, setting Janey free to try and grasp the world on her own without access to language through the mother. Before Janey actually leaves her father we are faced with a series of multiplicities all beginning with the following:

A few hours later they woke up together and decided they would spend the whole day together since it was their last day. Janey would meet Johnny at the hotel where he worked when he got off from work.

They ate raw fish and salad (*ceviche*) at a Lebanese joint and tea at a Northern Chinese place. They held hands. They didn't talk about Sally or anything heavy. Johnny left her, telling her he'd be home later. (Acker 21)

This section is repeated six times, followed by different headings and dialogue, until Janey has departed for New York City. In her use of repetition, a signal of the uncanny, Acker draws our attention to what the act of repetition means for Janey; in Royle's *The Uncanny* he emphasises the point made by Neil Hertz that the uncanny feeling brought on by an act of repetition stems not from what is actually being repeated, but "by being reminded of the repetition compulsion," otherwise called the death drive (Royle 90). In conjunction with the uncanny signalling of the death drive, in Copjec's discussion of repetition she contends that it appears "where one stumbles against the real or internal limit that refuses to admit a metadimension and thus splits historical phenomena from within" (101). This act of repetition is the haunting of woman by the part object (breast, voice) due to "her radical giving up of the mother" (101). Although Janey's mother died when she was an infant, in leaving her childhood home she leaves behind any remaining attachment to the idea of a mother and in so doing initiates a series of repetitions which are simultaneously uncanny in themselves as an act of repetition and also tied back to the loss of her mother.

In the diary of her travelling companion, Genet, we see how he seeks the "sex of traitors, deviants, scum, and schizophrenics," while rejecting the boredom produced by nice boys. Being with these types of men make Janey and Genet feel alive; it is their way of rebelling against the hegemonic control of high school, the police, and any other form of authority which can stand as the name-of-the-father. At the end of the novel, just before Janey dies of cancer, she is travelling in Egypt with Genet. The novel turns to the dialogue format of a play and is divided into scenes.

This signals to us that Janey has re-entered an Oedipal/Electra relationship with an older man and, although they are not involved in a sexual relationship, she still tries to make him happy and in return is treated with contempt. When Janey is sent to the gaol in Alexandria, the judges “tell her who she is” (133). Judge 1 tells her, “You’re a woman” ; Judge 2 tells her, “You whine and snivel. You don’t stand up for yourself. You act like you do totally to please other people. You’re a piece of shit. You’re not real” ; Judge 3 says, “You’re a whore a thief a liar a smelly fish a money dribbler an egotistic snob” ; and Judge 4 tells her, “you have every vice in the world” (133). These judgements passed on Janey reflect the impossibility of escaping chastisement from the name-of-the-father; because the real father is dead the superego has taken his place.

Second-wave feminists often saw popular culture as a “site for the reproduction of gender inequalities,” and so these women sought to produce “affirmative images of women in the media and popular culture” (Arrow 214, 215). In this context Acker’s work can be viewed as part of the genre of second-wave feminist writers, popularized by the work of writers such as Marilyn French, Erica Jong, and Marge Piercy (215). But unlike these feminists, who wrote popular books that were an attempt to reach a “mass audience that was not necessarily (or not yet) part of the organized feminist movement,” what Kathy Acker was doing in her writing was rejecting popular society and inventing a new language as a way to achieve feminine *jouissance* (215). Larry McCaffery states that when Acker “began writing in the early ‘70s there were any number of intriguing new possibilities that had been left unexplored” (104). During the 1970s, second-wave feminism was simultaneously hostile toward popular culture (an example of this is seen in Acker’s own hostility toward Erica Jong) but also “attributed enormous power to it” and believed it could be used in such a way as to “empower women” (Arrow 214).

In “The Greatness of Kathy Acker,” Robert Glück discusses how all Acker’s heroines are in search of sex. In terms of power, he writes that “Acker takes revenge on power by displaying what it has done; she speaks truth to power by going where the power differential is greatest, to a community of whores, adolescent girls, artists and bums, the outcast and disregarded” (48). Through the “realities of oppression, loss, and degradation” we are able to see hegemony; by writing in a language which exposes the realities of class, rhetoric, and partitions Acker is fulfilling Cixous’ hope for a new way of writing (48). This hegemony that Acker is fighting against is the regime of capitalism which attempts to control us through methods such as the subversion of psychoanalysis. In Lacan’s *Seminar XVII* we discover that, in Marxist terms, *objet a* is figured as surplus *jouissance*; but in this system psychoanalysis is itself a victim of capitalism as well and that which the analyst works toward—surplus *jouissance* for the analysand—is lost in the system of capitalism. It is also surplus *jouissance* that is tied to our use of language, or as Lacan says, “Language employs us,” but since this surplus *jouissance* is consumed by capitalism, we are required to find a new language to free our *jouissance* from hegemonic control (75). For Janey, after her father rejects her and sends her to New York, she pursues desire by means of sex rather than through language. It is in New York that she has multiple sexual partners, has two abortions, and then gets kidnapped by sex slave traders. The imprisonment by the Persian sex slave trader is where we see Janey’s true desire: it is love she seeks through sex, not sex itself. She does not want to be a prostitute; she wants to find someone who will love her. Once she is released from sexual slavery (due to cancer) she meets the man she refers to as President Carter. As a President he is a symbolic father for Janey and she re-enacts her Electra complex through him. After meeting President Carter she says, “President Carter was just THERE, that’s the only way I can describe it. I didn’t want to fall in love with



him because I didn't want to put something in my life, but he was screwing me so GOOD and beating me up that I knew I was going to fall in love with him" (Acker 123). Her desire for love is always tied to sex and Acker ties her pursuit of desire and sex to the undermining of the "established order of a society" (125). Janey's descriptions of President Carter (the president at the time of the novel's publication) undermine his position in the hierarchy of authority but also replace her own 'dead' father with a symbolic father figure who yields authority. She writes: "President Carter's centre is an enormous HOLE. This HOLE'S DIAMETER, COLOUR, and ODOUR, resemble a NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY TOILET that hasn't been CLEANED for THREE weeks. It DOESN'T resemble any ASSHOLE I've ever seen" (119). This example shows that Janey is capable of wielding language for her own means, symbolically attacking the symbolic father figure with whom she has just had sexual intercourse.

Although Acker seeks to subvert capitalism's control over psychoanalysis by bringing the Electra complex to its limit, she understands the difficulties associated with this task. Janey writes down a journal entry with three demands:

1) I NEED LOTS OF LOVE, 2) YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE US ALL YOUR MONEY 'CAUSE YOU HATE YOURSELVES AND 'CAUSE YOU KNOW 3) ALL POWER SYSTEMS SELF-DESTRUCT WITH THE ADVENT OF ROBOT CANASTA PLAYERS WHO SHOW THE GIRLS WHAT THEY'RE REALLY LIKE. I'M GOING TO SLEEP GOODNIGHT. (122)

These demands outline Janey's difficulty in obtaining love, the capitalist control over society, and the hope that still exists for the failure of capitalism through the advent of a new regime. Still, pessimism clearly still exists when we see the message "THIS MESSAGE IS A PUBLIC SERVICE PAID FOR BY THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK OF NORTH AMERICA"

underneath the diary entry, which signals the reterritorialization of Janey's diary into the regime of capitalism (122). This also signals Janey's death; according to Kristeva in the world of language "if I am no longer capable of translating or metaphorizing, I become silent and die (*Black Sun* 42).

Within the patriarchal society in which psychoanalysis operates, women writers must always remember that "anatomy is destiny" (Carter 4). This reminder of Freud's words coming from Angela Carter in 1979 must lead us to remember that two things came out of May '68: a renewal of psychoanalysis and the emergence of feminism in France. In the United States and England this would roughly coincide with second-wave feminism. This renewal of both psychoanalysis and feminism sets these two movements in opposition to each other, and women like Quin and Acker responded through their writing. In *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1979), Carter addresses psychoanalysis when she says:

Since that female, oracular mouth is located so near the beastly backside, my vagina might indeed be patronisingly regarded as a speaking mouth, but never one that issues the voice of reason. In this most insulting mythic redefinition of myself, that of occult priestess, I am indeed allowed to speak but only of things that male society does not take seriously. I can hint at dreams, I can even personify the imagination; but that is only because I am not rational enough to cope with reality. (Carter 5)

This gets to the heart of the problem with psychoanalysis and women. For the object voice to come from a woman and be taken seriously means placing her interior voice on the same level as Lacan's original inspiration for the voice, that of Socrates. Because they are not always taken seriously, women like Quin and Acker have taken it upon themselves to challenge the very foundation of what can be thought and said; in challenging patriarchal language they allow

women to express desire and in turn both make use of and simultaneously challenge the institution of psychoanalysis.

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**Publications:**

Komorowski, Jennifer (2017) “A Space to Write Woman-Becoming: Reading the Novels of Kathy Acker as Simulacra.” *The Word Hoard*: Vol 1 : Iss. 6.

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